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THE POSTCOLONIAL JEWISH QUESTION: JEWISH AND ARAB ENTANGLEMENTS IN POSTWAR FRANCE

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Abstract

"The Postcolonial Jewish Question" tells the story of the political, philosophical, and epistemic shifts in the category of Jewishness, its relation to the broader structures of Western modernity, and, especially, its affiliation and disaffiliation with other marginalized and oppressed groups. I situate this transformation in the post-World War II Francophone world from the 1950s through the early 2000s and the particular ways that France's colonial history has shaped the relationships between Jews and the nation-state, Jews and Arabs, and anti-Semitism, colonialism, and Islamophobia. The proverbial "Jewish Question," has often been a site for debating issues of religion, race, nationalism, and universalism in France. However, with the end of colonial rule, the "Muslim Question" has been at the center of renewed tension around these issues. I argue that Jewish thought was shaped in distinctive ways by the relationship between these discourses and the ways they evolved in the latter half of the 20th century.

The dissertation illuminates the primary historical and theoretical contours that have shaped the postcolonial development of Jewish thought. Chapter 1 focuses on the Tunisian Jewish writer Albert Memmi and considers the broad trajectory of his work. Specifically, I show how the Jew and the colonized went from being almost interchangeable figures of oppression in his early writing to entirely separate and distinct figures in his final portrait. This historical and theoretical trajectory, I suggest, illustrates some of the central problematics of thinking across colonialism and anti-Semitism and how these have evolved in the postcolonial period. In chapter two, I analyze how Jewish writers and thinkers responded to the movements for decolonization in North Africa in the 1950s,

especially the Algerian War of Independence, and the ways that it shaped Jewish political life. Decolonization, I suggest, was one of the first moments in the postwar period in France where the relationship between Jews and other oppressed minorities was put into question. Chapter three considers the effects of Zionism, and in particular the 1967 war, on the discourse of the Jew as other. I argue that this constituted a turning point for the viability of this discourse—even if it was not always acknowledged or recognized as such. Chapter three looks at North African Jewish writers and intellectuals in the 1980s in order to illuminate the ongoing legacies of colonial division between Jews and Arabs. It foregrounds the figure of the Arab-Jew as a lens through which to think about these conversations as well as a vector through which to resist the paradigms of division. The final chapter takes up the question of race, racism, and anti-Semitism and illuminates how these went from being almost synonymous with one another in the immediate post-Holocaust period to becoming separate regimes by the late 90s and early 2000s. Understanding this separation, I suggest, is essential for making sense of the so-called "new antisemitism" that appeared in the early 2000s and the ways it marshaled Islamophobic sentiments and panic in the name of protecting Jews.

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Introduction

Historically, the Jew has been perceived as one of the quintessential outsiders of the Christian West. They have been a symbol for deprivations of every kind and a provocation for thinking about central issues of modernity, including universalism, capitalism, citizenship, religion, and race, to name only a few. Indeed, it is no surprise that so many scholars have found "the Jew" an invaluable figure to think with. As David Nirenberg describes in his monumental *Anti-Judaism,* thinking with and about the Jew has literally "shaped the history of thought" and constituted a continuous, constantly evolving means for the Western world to construct its sense of identity and power.[1] Even in places where Jews were not entirely excluded from social-political life, the subalternization of the Jew has historically been a central feature in the construction of what we now call "the West." As Cynthia Baker argues, the very term Jew has been determined by a sense of alterity and difference. "The most persistent meanings and force of the term *Jew(s)* derive, then," she explains, "from an antique Christian worldview in which *the Jews* functions foundationally as a kind of originary and constitutional alterity, or otherness… *The Jews,* in other words, serves instrumentally to name the key *other* out of which *and* over against which the Christian *self* was and is constituted."[2] Throughout much of the history of the West, the Jew has served this foundational role as a figure through which to understand, analyze, and often critique its exclusionary structures and patterns of thought.[3]

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[1] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 2.

[2] Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017) 4. Baker italicizes the word *Jew* to signal the instability of meaning around the word and who gets to define it.

[3] Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Chad Alan Goldberg, *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Jewish responses to this condition have provided a set of philosophical and political reflections on alterity, difference, universalism and particularism, diaspora, and exile. In some of its most sophisticated versions, Jewish writers have recast the discourse of otherness and reclaimed the very paradigms of deracination, dis-identification, and non-belonging as themselves constituting a positive ethical and political mode of being. As Sarah Hammerschlag argues, the figural Jew serves as "an archetype for a new kind of difference in particularity whose function is to suggest that there is a positive moral valence to resisting the discourse of belonging that dominates both the universalist and the particularist versions of political identity."[4] There are modes of un-belonging and exile, in other words, that might be valuable for disrupting our hegemonic notions of citizenship, universalism, and identity that do not conform to what Aimé Césaire once referred to as either a narrow particularism or a disembodied universalism.[5] For figures like Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida, the Jew becomes a site for rethinking the distinction between the universal and particular and for illuminating the possibilities of an ethical mode of non-belonging. In this way, Jewish thought has historically provided a rich set of provocations and challenges to the dominant norms of Western modernity.

This manner of thinking about the Jew and the Jewish Question—and there are many such accounts—understands the Jew as an other, a figure of alterity, and a cipher for various forms of religious, national, and racial difference. To the degree that Jews were included in the social fabric of

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[4] Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 18.

[5] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001) 25. For more elaborations on this idea, see Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (1993): 3–725; Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

everyday life, their liminal status as insider-outsiders often only exacerbated their condition.[6] In response to their exclusion and marginalization, Jews developed incisive analyses that confronted the exclusionary paradigms of the nation-state, liberalism, and universalism. Accordingly, thinking with "the Jew" and various modes of Jewish thought has historically offered a rich set of challenges to the dominant structures of Western modernity. The premise of this dissertation is that in the post-Holocaust postcolonial world, this foundational way of thinking about the Jew no longer holds true.[7]

Today, Jews no longer constitute the others of Western modernity in the same ways as previously. It is true that anti-Semitism has not disappeared, yet it has become something the Western world uniformly opposes. Every incident is documented and reported on in detail; Jewish institutions enjoy exceptional protection on the state and national levels; purveyors of anti-Semitism are immediately ostracized from public life. Rather than a figure of difference, the Jew has come to be *included* within the structures of Western modernity. Consider, for example, the response to the attacks on a kosher supermarket that occurred in conjunction with the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris. French Prime Minister Manuel Valls stated, "today, we are all Charlie, all police officers, *all Jews from France… France, without the Jews of France, is no longer France…* Let us not be afraid to be journalists, to be police officers, to be Jews, to be citizens."[8] There is something opportunistic about

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[6] David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[7] For a similar argument, see the special issue of *Jewish Studies Quarterly:* "Jewish Friends: Contemporary Figures of the Jew." In their introduction, Hannah Tzuberi and Elad Lapidot describe a "paradigmatic shift" from the antagonistic figure of the Jew to one as a friend. Elad Lapidot and Hannah Tzuberi, "Jewish Friends: Contemporary Figures of the Jew," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2020): 103, 104 Other scholars have also considered a similar shift in the American context, see for example Ben Ratskoff, "James Baldwin's Black Critique of Jewish Whiteness," *JSQ* 27, no. 3 (2020): 240.

[8] "Valls : «La France, sans les juifs de France, n'est pas la France»," *Le Parisien*, January 11, 2015, my emphasis.

such public performances and their display of affection and friendship. Yet, the condition of their appearance has been created through a transformation of the Jew in the Western world. Similarly, Enzo Traverso argues that the period of Jewish modernity, where Jews were subversive figures on the margins of Western power, has now come to a close. Instead, Jews have come to be included within the hallowed halls of a "Judeo-Christian civilization."[9] "Jewish modernity," he writes, "has reached the end of its road. After having been the main focus of critical thought in the Western world—in the era when Europe was its centre—Jews today find themselves, by a kind of paradoxical reversal, at the heart of the mechanisms of domination."[10]

Accordingly, our paradigms for thinking about the Jew as other no longer maintain the same critical salience. Thinking with and about the Jew today evokes a different set of questions and responses than it once did. To put it differently: The questions that animated a range of Jewish intellectuals, from Moses Mendelssohn to Emmanuel Levinas, from Bernard Lazare to Hannah Arendt, and from Martin Buber to Theodor Adorno, are no longer our questions.[11] The problematics of Jewish exclusion to which these thinkers were responding, politically, philosophically, or religiously, are no longer the same problematics that the question of Jewish difference poses today. Consider the pariah Jew that Lazare and Arendt championed. The pariah took stock of their position and used that awareness to politicize and rebel against the dominant

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[9] The construction and utilization of this term has come under increased scrutiny in recent years, especially for how it purports to include Jews and exclude Muslims. See Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski, eds., *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective* (Germany: de Gruyter, 2016); Anya Topolski, "The Dangerous Discourse of the 'Judaeo-Christian' Myth: Masking the Race–Religion Constellation in Europe," *Patterns of Prejudice* 54, no. 1-2 (2020-3-14): 71–90.

[10] Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 3.

[11] I have been influenced here by David Scott's notion of "problem-spaces" and his argument that our criticism should first and foremost attend to the kinds of questions to which we provide answers. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

frame, becoming, as Arendt described it, a "champion of an oppressed people."[12] However, what context were these thinkers responding to? Lazare began writing against the backdrop of the Dreyfus Affair when the paradigms of assimilation and emancipation were crumbling. Arendt's recovery of that figure appeared in 1944 at the height of World War II. That is to say, their motivation for a critical reevaluation of the problems and possibilities of the pariah Jew arose from a specific historical conjuncture wherein the Jew was one of the primary representatives of an oppressed people. Today, however, those dynamics have changed.

The impetus for this dissertation is that we still need to develop adequate historical and conceptual vocabularies for describing this change in the Jewish Question. While I continue to think that the Jew is generative to think with, I believe that the ways in which this is the case have fundamentally shifted. This transformation subtends many contemporary public debates surrounding Jews, anti-Semitism, and especially Israel/Palestine. This dissertation, however, does not address these directly. Instead, I take a historical approach that illuminates the Jew's steady if circuitous integration into Europe and the consequences this has had on Jewish thought in the post-World War II period. I situate this transformation in the Francophone world, from the 1950s through the early 2000s, within the legacies of colonialism, decolonization, immigration, and the emergence of the Muslim Question in France. This historical approach allows us to better understand the challenges that Jewish writers faced in the postwar period, the various debates and events that shaped their decisions, and how, ultimately, they were transformed in and through them. These developments were neither linear nor immediately given. Paying close attention to how, why,

[12] Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 6, no. 2 (1944): 108.

and in relation to what they occurred gives a richer and more textured ability to understand our present.

Let us briefly consider the function of the Jew in a recent work of decolonial theory, where I think one can see the shift in the perception of the Jew both in its relation to the structures of Western modernity and other racialized and subaltern figures of difference. In *Local Histories/Global Designs,* Walter Mignolo develops the notion of "border thinking" to describe subaltern modes of thought that resist colonial knowledge and power.[13] Central to this idea is that while colonialism created differences between the colonizers and colonized and relegated some groups to the status of the subaltern, decolonial critique challenges those hierarchies from the historical position of the dominated.[14] However, in this topography of colonial geopolitical differentiation and subalternization, what place does the Jew occupy? Which side of the colonial divide are they perceived to speak from? One might trace an interesting trajectory within Mignolo's text, where, in the two instances that the Jew appears, it does so on either side of the colonial question. In the first, Mignolo is discussing the Frankfurt School and their critiques of the mechanization of reason and the violence of the Enlightenment. He notes that it is essential that key members of the group were Jewish. Their being Jewish, akin to other forms of subaltern theorizing, signals a positionality and enunciation from the other side of colonial difference.

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[13] Many of the paradigms for thinking about coloniality as a broader structure of modernity come from Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533–80. A number of decolonial writers have in fact turned to various Jewish thinkers to help articulate their models. See especially Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008) and Enrique Dussel, "'Sensibility' and 'Otherness' in Emmanuel Levinas," *Philosophy Today* 43, no. 2 (1999): 126–34. For a larger attempt to bring these discourses together, see Santiago Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[14] On the difference between postcolonial and decolonial approaches, see Gurminder K Bhambra, "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues," *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014-4-3): 115–21.

> In a sense, then, critical theory as practiced by the Frankfurt School theoretician is, like post/Occidental/colonial theorizing, a kind of "barbarian theorizing": a theoretical practice by those who oppose the clean and rational concept of knowledge and theory and theorize, precisely, from the situation they have been put in, be they Jewish, Muslim, Amerindian, African, or other "Third World" people like Hispanics in today's United States.[15]

In this reading, Jewishness and subaltern reason converge on the margins of the modern colonial world qua post-Occidental border thinking.

In the other moment of Mignolo's text where the Jew appears, perhaps most notable is not the reference to it on one side of colonial difference or another, but its total lack of signification. Mignolo articulates his concept of border thinking by drawing on several thinkers, including Abdelkébir Khatibi, the Moroccan poet and philosopher, whom I will discuss later. Mignolo draws out the many valences of what Khatibi calls "other-thought" and "double critique" and suggests that they illustrate a form of border thinking that disrupts the coloniality of knowledge and power from the margins. Mignolo does this by commenting on a disagreement between Khatibi and Jacques Derrida concerning bilingualism and colonialism.[16] Though Derrida was deeply invested in a critique of logocentrism and Western knowledge, Mignolo argues that his critique was launched from *within* colonial modernity. In contrast, Khatibi's critique is anchored in his experiences of subalternization

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[15] Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 109.

[16] For overviews of this debate and its context see Dominique Combe, "Derrida et Khatibi—Autour du monolinguisme de l'autre," *Carnet: Revue électronique d'études françaises* Séries II, no. 7 (May 2016): 6–11; Dominique Combe, "Khatibi and Derrida: A 'Franco-Maghrebian' Dialogue," in *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond*, ed. Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamlahy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020); and Tina Dransfeldt Christensen, "Towards an Ethics of Bilingualism: An Intertextual Dialogue Between Khatibi and Derrida," *Interventions* 19, no. 4 (2017-3): 447–66. Khatibi and Derrida were close friends and colleagues, and Khatibi often attested to the importance of deconstruction for his own thinking. As he once wrote, "J'ai toujours pensé que ce qui porte le nom de 'déconstruction' est une forme radicale de 'décolonisation' de la pensée dite occidentale." Abdelkebir Khatibi, "Lettre ouverte à Jacques Derrida," *Europe* N. 901 (2004): 202–11 203

and colonial differentiation. "While Khatibi is clearly thinking and writing from the colonial difference in the modern/colonial world, Derrida insists on a universal perspective supported by his monotopic radical criticism of Western logocentrism understood as a universal category uncoupled from the modern/colonial world."[17] For Mignolo, "Derrida remains 'in custody' of the universal bent of the modern concept of reason."[18]

Whether or not one agrees with this assessment of Derrida, conspicuously absent from Mignolo's account is any discussion of Derrida's relation to Judaism or even his origins in Algeria and, say, his expulsion from school by the Vichy regime—all of which feature heavily in Derrida's book *Monolingualism of the Other* which Mignolo is commenting upon.[19] Mignolo suggests that the difference between Derrida and Khatibi is between a "Judeo-Franco-Maghrebian" genealogy and an "Islamic-Arabo-Maghrebian" one; however, this only serves to reinforce the different sides of colonial difference from which they purportedly speak.[20] Thus, despite the almost heavy-handed emphasis on the issues of biography and identity out of which Derrida develops his critique of monolingualism, and despite the privileged position that Derrida sometimes attributes to Judaism and its relation to deconstruction, being Jewish fails to signal here in the same way as it did in

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[17] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 83.

[18] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 84.

[19] On the notion of the biographical in Derrida, Gil Anidjar writes that "the question of the 'I' in those texts, the question of autobiography insofar as it has been reduced to the inscription of 'life only' (the biographical as philosophically irrelevant *fait divers*), this 'I' in Derrida's texts has yet to be fully comprehended. It is indeed surprising to consider how what is commonly referred to as 'life' in Derrida (Derrida's so-called life) in spite of its being repeatedly inscribed in his texts, is rarely more than a curiosity that appears to demand only a cursory gloss at best." Gil Anidjar, "Introduction: 'Once More, Once More': Derrida, the Arab, the Jew," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002) 8

[20] One might note as well the elision of the Arabic marker from Derrida's genealogy, considering how Derrida would elsewhere refer to himself as "a little black and very Arab Jew." ("Circumfession" in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 58)

Mignolo's reading of the Frankfurt School.[21] "One can say," Mignolo concludes, "that Khatibi and Derrida are not on the same side of the colonial difference."[22]

The Frankfurt School and Derrida bookend two opposing conceptions of the Jew in Mignolo's text, whose temporal and geographic coordinates constitute a historical trajectory. In the first moment, the Frankfurt School is still framed by the violence of Enlightenment reason and the Nazi genocide, and Mignolo understands Jewish difference within the same frame as the subaltern. Both speak from their place on the margins of the modern colonial world and challenge that paradigm from the outside. In the second instance, however, which is located firmly in the postwar period, the Jew here fails to signal on the side of the subaltern in the same way. Instead, Mignolo understands Derrida's critique of Western logocentrism to exist inside colonial modernity. I suggest that we understand these two moments in Mignolo's text, the appearance and disappearance of Jewish difference, to reflect a more significant historic shift in how the Jew and its relation to colonial modernity and the subaltern is articulated, mobilized, and understood. Between 1945 and the end of the 20th century, how did we move from the overdetermining centrality of the Jew as other to the Jew as insider whose relation to the oppressed seems, at best, questionable?

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[21] I do not intend here to reassert the centrality of Judaism as a category of identity for Derrida, it is after all from the *lack* of an identity that *Monolingualism* operates. I only indicate how certain features are registered, or not, in Mignolo's reading and what that might tell us about the relationship between Jewish and colonial difference. For more on Derrida and Judaism see Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew*, 2010, Chapter 5 and Sarah Hammerschlag, *Broken Tablets: Levinas, Derrida, and the Literary Afterlife of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). For Derrida in relation to the Jew and the Arab see Anidjar, "Introduction," 2002 and Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), Chapter 2

[22] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 83.

THE FRENCH CONTEXT

The Postcolonial Jewish Question tells the story of the political, philosophical, and epistemic shifts in the category of Jewishness, its relation to the broader structures of Western modernity, and its affiliation and disaffiliation with other marginalized and oppressed groups. I situate this transformation in the post-World War II Francophone world and the particular ways that France's colonial history has shaped the relationships between Jews and the nation, Jews and Muslims, and anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. As we'll see more, the Francophone context is unique in many respects, and I do not mean for it to stand in for Europe or the West as a whole. Indeed, its very specificity shapes the events, debates, and writers I address here. Instead, I consider this constellation of discourses as a specific, though particularly generative, instance of the broader shifting valences of the Jew in the aftermath of WWII. During this period, France and its Jewish communities were still reeling from the effects of the Holocaust and contending with what the Jew and Jewish thought would look like. Yet, as I'll show, Jewish writers and thinkers continually developed this project in relation to and in parallel with the colonial question and its afterlives. By thinking about these in relation to one another, we can better understand the shifting paradigms of Jewish difference, or what I call the postcolonial Jewish Question.

I refer to this new age of the Jewish Question as "postcolonial" to index several features. First is the historical context of the Francophone world in the latter half of the 20th century and the

ways that it continues to be traversed by the history of colonial rule and its afterlives.[23] In this sense, the "post" of postcolonialism is less a temporal marker indicating a past history of colonialism than a critical engagement with the ongoing forms and structures of colonialism and the ways they continue to impact social and political life in France and its colonies. Ann Laura Stoler argues that the continuities and discontinuities between colonial and postcolonial power are differentially distributed across forms of domination and discourse that are not always readily available or easily described. "Colonial pasts," she writes, "the narratives recounted about them, the unspoken distinctions they continue to 'cue,' the affective charges they reactivate, and the implicit 'lessons' they are mobilized to impart are sometimes so ineffably threaded through the fabric of contemporary life forms they seem indiscernible as distinct effects, as if everywhere and no-where at all."[24] Moreover, although Postcolonial Studies is often derided in France as an "American import," this changed in 2005 when France passed a law that instructed educators to teach about "the positive role played by the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa." As Joan Scott writes, "the colonial past, with its legacy of discrimination against, and denigration of, North Africans,

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[23] The term postcolonial has undergone various revisions and theorizations since the proliferation of Postcolonial Studies in the 1970s and 80s. See especially Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'," *Social Text*, no. 31/32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992): 99–113; Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks and Fawzia Afzal-Khan, eds., *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What Was Postcolonialism," *New Literary History* 36, no. 3 (2005): 375–402; Sunil Agnani et al., "Editor's Column: The End of Postcolonial Theory? A Roundtable with Sunil Agnani, Fernando Coronil, Gaurav Desai, Mamadou Diouf, Simon Gikandi, Susie Tharu, and Jennifer Wenzel," *MLA* 122, no. 3 (2007): 633–51; Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?" *New Literary History* 43, no. 2 (2012): 371–90; Robert JC Young, "Postcolonial Remains," *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 19–42; Robert JC Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

[24] Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

continued to trouble the nation in ways that seemed endless and insoluble."[25] 2005 was also when Houria Bouteldja, Sadri Khiari, and others launched what has now become a famous appeal entitled "We are the Indigenous of the Republic."[26] "Indigenous" [indigène] was a colonial classification used to legislate and maintain the inferior status of natives under the Code de l'indigénat. By referring to themselves as the indigenous of the Republic, the group argued that France continued to operate as a colonial power where North African immigrants and their children were discriminated against similarly to indigenous people in the colonies. Far from existing in the past, the "colonial fracture," as some scholars have referred to it, continues to structure economic, political, and social life in the hexagon.[27] This, then, is the historical and political context in which I situate the evolution of the Jewish Question.

Second, by thinking about the Jewish Question in a postcolonial frame, I mean to foreground a comparative and entangled analysis of the ways that Jews and Jewish thought have been shaped by their interaction with the various others of Western modernity.[28] Although

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[25] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 87. For work specifically on postcolonialism in the Francophone world, see Emily Apter, "French Colonial Studies and Postocolonial Theory," *SubStance* 24, no. 1/2 (1995): 169–80; Margaret A Majumdar, *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension* (Berghahn Books, 2007); Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, eds., *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "French Intellectuals and the Postcolonial," *Interventions* 14, no. 1 (2012): 83–119; Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Arnold, 2003); Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, "Un postcolonialisme à la française?" *Cités* 4, no. 72 (2017): 53–68; Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Dominic Thomas, eds., *The Colonial Legacy in France: Fracture, Rupture, and Apartheid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

[26] Houria Bouteldja and Sadri Khiari, eds., *Nous sommes les indigènes de la République* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2012).

[27] Bancel, Blanchard, and Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*.

[28] I draw the language of entanglement from Ethan B Katz, "An Imperial Entanglement: Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1190–1209. See also Jonathan Judaken, "Rethinking Anti-Semitism: Introduction," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1122–38.

historically anti-Semitism has often been considered a sui generis form of exclusion, I situate the evolution of Jewish thought within a broader set of questions, including the struggles for decolonization, the challenges of immigration, the rise of the so-called Muslim Question, and other forms of colonial racism. Jewish thought was shaped in distinctive ways by these issues. I argue that in the wake of WWII, there emerged a new age of the Jewish Question that was distinctly postcolonial—and we can only grasp this through understanding these relationships and the ways they brought together and divided Jews from other struggles against oppression.

The background to this postcolonial evolution of the Jewish Question has been shaped in particular ways by the French context. Historically in France, anti-Semitism and colonialism were intimately entangled with one another. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both Jews and the colonized were subject to mutually reinforcing regimes of control. As Dorian Bell suggests, not only did colonialism impact the forms and patterns of anti-Semitism, but the same was true in reverse, and "antisemitic topoi carved from the material of empire also acted in the other direction to influence the trajectory of imperialism itself."[29] Racially inflected forms of anti-Semitism developed in the nineteenth century due to the colonial apparatus. France expanded and solidified its empire in the late nineteenth century through ethnology, physical anthropology, and scientific racism.[30] This also fueled a more racially-inflected anti-Semitism. In 1886, Édouard Drumont published his anti-Semitic tome *La France juive,* where he drew heavily from philological work on Semitic languages to argue for the interminable racial differences between Semites and Aryans. "[While] the generic name Aryan… designates," he wrote, "as everyone knows, the superior branch

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[29] Dorian Bell, *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 18.

[30] Alice L Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

of the white race… which alone possesses the notion of justice, the feeling for liberty and the concept of beauty, the Semite, by contrast was 'not made for civilization.'"[31] Drumont's success, Bell argues, was to combine economic, religious, and racial elements in a new anti-Semitic doctrine.[32] The Jew, in other words, was never alone in defining the parameters of universalism or the Imperial Nation-State.[33]

The work of the Tunisian Jewish writer Albert Memmi is a generative site to explore these relationships (I explore Memmi's trajectory and what it tells us about these relationships in Chapter 1). Although he is most well-known for his anti-colonial classic *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* Memmi devoted numerous studies to thinking about the Jew and other oppressed figures. The Jew and the colonized existed in a symbiotic relationship in his work, and Memmi even once suggested that one could substitute "Jew" for "colonized" in almost every instance of *The Colonizer and the Colonized.* Although he understood anti-Semitism and colonialism as distinctive forms of oppression and suggested that all oppressive regimes must be analyzed for their unique characteristics, he considered them two interlocking elements of a larger story of European domination and oppression. As he wrote late in his life, "the condition of Jews, like the condition of the colonized, revealed to me what, more generally, is a permanent condition of oppression."[34] The Jew and the colonized, Memmi's early work suggests to us, need to be understood in relation to one another as two of the primary figures of Western oppression. However, this began to change in the aftermath of World War II.

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[31] Cited in Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Anti-Semitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Portland, Oregon: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1982) 457

[32] Bell, *Globalizing Race*, Chapter Two.

[33] Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[34] Albert Memmi, *Testament insolent* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2009), 88.

The strictures of French Republicanism and its insistence on universalism, secularism, a race-blind approach, and the abstract categories of man and citizen have exerted enormous pressures on minority communities to conform to those standards. Historically, the Jewish Question was often at the center of these debates. Going back to the French Revolution in 1789, as people debated the boundaries of the Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen, the Jew featured prominently in the discussions. Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre famously argued, "the Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals."[35] Jews would not be granted emancipation as a people or a group but as individuals. This has led scholars like Maurice Samuels to suggest that "French universalism has evolved in the modern period largely as a discourse on Jews. Despite representing a tiny minority of the French population, Jews have played an outsized role in the French political imagination since 1789, shaping the ways in which universalism has been theorized and implemented."[36] After the Jews' emancipation, Napoleon felt their wholesale assimilation into the French nation was incomplete, and he organized an Assembly of Jewish Notables to help legitimize his vision. French Judaism required "regeneration." Through this and other initiatives, such as the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin and the creation of a consistory system

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[35] Cited in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 115.

[36] Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) 5. Similarly, Jonathan Judaken writes, "the battle over national identity throughout the twentieth century (and continuing today) has depended in crucial ways on the image of 'the Jew' and on the perception of Judaism in the French cultural imagination." Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-Antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006) 18. For a small selection of writing on the tensions of universalism, see Mayanthi L Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Naomi Schor, "The Crisis of French Universalism," *Yale French Studies* 100, France/USA:The Cultural Wars (2001): 43–64; Joan Wallach Scott, *Parité: Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism*, vol. Parité (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Tyler Stovall, "Universalisme, différence et invisibilité: Essai sur la notion de race dans l'histoire de la France contemporaine," *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 96-97 (2005): 63–90.

in 1808, Napoleon attempted to redefine Judaism in distinctively French terms that decoupled religious and racial identity, rendering the former a uniquely private affair. French Judaism has been shaped by negotiating these forms and the tensions between them. What scholars have referred to as "Franco-Judaism," describes the convergence of perspectives that emerged after the Revolution, where Jewish rabbis and intellectuals argued that the values of France and Judaism were entirely consonant with one another. To be a Jew and to be French were to serve the same purpose and goals.[37]

France's colonial expansion in the 19th century allowed French Jews to apply the "regeneration" model to other Jewish communities, especially in the Middle East and North Africa.[38] In 1842, two French Jews wrote what has come to be known as the Altaras-Cohen report, in which they argued that Algerian Jews must be assimilated and transformed into Europeans: "The Consistoire Central must promote and assure the assimilation of the Jewish population of Algeria to the European population, and more particularly the French population. We must, in the more-or-less long term, turn Jewish Algerians into European Jews, which really means French Jews; this will allow them to become an important part of the French colonial mission."[39] To facilitate this, they argued for a slew of reforms, including banning traditional garb, recruiting Jews into the military, and especially, a regenerative form of education that would counteract "their native masters, rabbis or cantors… who bring to bear on their pupils this harmful influence that distances them from the

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[37] See, for example, Zadoc Kahn, "Speech on the Acceptance of His Position as Chief Rabbi of France," in *Modern French Jewish Thought: Writings on Religion and Politics*, ed. Sarah Hammerschlag (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018), 18–29.

[38] Pierre Birnbaum, "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Aglerian Jewry," in *Jews and the State*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[39] Cited in Kimberly A Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 34.

institutions founded by French society."[40] The *Alliance israélite universelle* set out to accomplish just that. A French-Jewish philanthropic and educational organization founded in 1860, it sought to protect Jewish communities across the globe, especially in the Middle East and North Africa.[41] To do so, the *Alliance* sought to remake Middle Eastern and North African Jews in the vision of Western Judaism, and its founding documents describe its goal "to cast a ray of the civilization of the Occident into the communities degenerated by centuries of oppression and ignorance… by opening their spirits to western ideas, to destroy certain outdated prejudices and superstitions."[42] In large part, this was carried out through the *Alliance's* extensive network of schools across the Mediterranean basin. As Aron Rodrigue writes, "by World War I, the Alliance had managed to establish a near monopoly over the field of education in most Sephardic communities, considerably weakening or displacing altogether the traditional educational system. It was responsible for the schooling of generations of Jews and had left its mark on wide sections of Jewish society. The organization acted as the central and most significant conduit which channelled European ideas and practices to the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa."[43]

The dominance of the Franco-Jewish paradigm began to wane in the aftermath of World War II as many Jewish writers and intellectuals began developing new models for Jewish thought

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[40] Cited in Birnbaum, "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Aglerian Jewry," 89.

[41] There is now an abundant literature on the AIU. See André Kaspi and Valérie Assan, eds., *Histoire de l'Alliance israélite universelle de 1860 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010); Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Aron Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); André Chouraqui, *Cent Ans d'histoire: L'alliance Israélite Universelle Et La Renaissance Juive Contemporaine (1860-1960)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965); Michael M Laskier, *The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Jewish Communities of Morocco, 1862-1962* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983).

[42] Cited in Paula E Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 83

[43] Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews* xiii.

that countered the predominance of the Christian West and its insistence on the abstract universal subject. As Hammerschlag explains, "for a number of French Jewish thinkers, this meant questioning the assimilationist and apologetic postures that had characterized Judaism's self-definition in France before the war. Instead of attempting to show the myriad of ways in which Judaism was consonant with French values, Jewish thinkers began looking to Judaism for an alternative to the wisdom of the Christian West."[44] Over the rest of the 20th century, Jews gradually began to insist on Judaism's particular nature and values in a distinct counterpoint to the Christian West, a shift epitomized in the very language used to refer to Jews. If the Jewish community had once been referred to as *Israélites,* a private and confessional marker, by the end of the 20th century, the more marked term *Juifs* acceded as the dominant nomenclature. At the end of the century, Annette Wieviorka wrote that "whether one likes it or not, the republican model is behind us. There are no longer Frenchmen of the Jewish faith in our country."[45]

One such forum for this was the *Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française,* an organization that helped revitalize Jewish intellectual life in the postwar period, which we will encounter again later.[46] André Neher, one of the organizers, once described the role of the Jewish intellectual and the place of the *Colloque* in the following terms:

> To be a Jewish intellectual in France, to be part of this intelligentsia, was still, even after the events of 1940 to 1945, for many intellectuals, to fuse with the Western

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[44] Sarah Hammerschlag, ed., *Modern French Jewish Thought: Writings on Religion and Politics* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018) xvii.

[45] Annette Wieviorka, "Le Judaïsme laïque n'a pas d'avenir," in *Nous, juifs de France*, ed. Olivier Guland and Michel Zerbib (Paris: Bayard, 2000), 7–30; I first found this quote in Thomas Nolden, "À La Recherche Du Judaïsme Perdu: Contemporary Jewish Writing in France," in *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe: A Guide*, ed. Vivian Liska and Thomas Nolden (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

[46] Sandrine Szwarc, *Les intellectuels juifs de 1945 à nos jours* (Lormont: Le Bord de L'eau, 2013); Perrine Simon-Nahum, "«Penser le judaïsme». Retour sur les Colloques des intellectuels juifs de langue française (1957-2000)," *Archives Juives* 38, no. 1 (2005): 79–106.

> humanitarian tradition, to fuse in the current of Judeo-Christian civilization in which Judaism was always either in tow or on the sidelines. We organized these conferences precisely so that things might change so that there this trend can be transformed so that the Jewish intellectuals of France can become aware of the fact that Judaism has value [est une valeur], that it is even the fundamental and central value, and that it is only when this Jewish value is itself incorporated into our person that a dialogue can be fruitfully engaged with non-Jewish values, with Western values.[47]

The renewed interest in the politics and place of Jewish thought directly coincided with the ends of colonial rule and was intimately shaped by that context. In Chapter 2, I consider the anti-colonial struggles for decolonization that swept North Africa and the Jewish responses to it. The decolonization movements challenged the hegemony of the European world. They profoundly altered the material and political relationship between colonizer and colonized and how people engaged with and thought about the structures of Western civilization and power. Many Jewish thinkers at the time understood their work to exist within a similar set of concerns that challenged the dominance of Western ideas through the Jewish tradition. In the post-WWII Francophone world, this was one of the first instances where the relationship between anti-Semitism, fascism, and colonialism was debated internationally. How, then, did they respond to the challenges posed by anti-colonial thinkers and activists? In what ways did they see themselves reflected in or separated from the struggles for decolonization and liberation? How did it change their understanding of their position as minorities, their experience under fascism, and their relation to the broader structures of Europe? These questions get to the heart of understanding the place of the Jew and the ways it evolved in reference to other figures and regimes of oppression. By considering the ways that Jews perceived themselves to be—or not to be—a part of the broader challenges to Western hegemony, I

[47] Éliane Amado Lévy-Valensi and Jean Halpérin, eds., *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire: le pardon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 153.

begin to provide a template for how to think about the broader changes the Jewish Question underwent in the second half of the twentieth century.

From 1954 to 1962, the Algerian War pit France against Algerian revolutionaries in a violent and protracted struggle for decolonization. Many Algerian Jews felt caught in the crossfire.[48] A significant number joined the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), Algeria's national-political party, and fought for Algerian independence and freedom. Daniel Timsit, for example, a member of the Algerian Communist Party and later the FLN, wrote that "although I cannot speak on behalf of the Jewish community, I can say that I am representative of many Algerian Jews who joined the Algerian Communist Party and who, as Algerian Jews, were sensitive, very sensitive to national aspirations."[49] Most Algerian Jews, however, avoided getting too involved in the war and attempted to remain politically neutral. Until the end, most could not imagine they would have to leave Algeria. By 1962, however, this proved impossible. At the war's end, hundreds and thousands of Jews, Muslims, and large contingents of former French settlers, or *pieds-noirs,* immigrated to France. The Algerian Jewish historian Benjamin Stora describes three moments when Algerian Jews were alienated from their land and traditions: the Crémieux Decree, which transformed them into French citizens, WWII and the Vichy regime, which abrogated that decree, and the Algerian War, which constituted the third and final exile of Algerian Jews from their land and identities.[50]

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[48] For more on Algerian Jews during and after the war, see Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale: Trajectoires dissidentes (1934-1965)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015); Sarah Beth Sussman, "Changing Lands, Changing Identities: The Migration of Algerian Jewry to France, 1954-1967" (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 2002); Jessica Hammerman, "The Heart of the Diaspora: Algerian Jews During the War for Independence, 1954-1962" (PhD thesis, City University of New York, 2013).

[49] Daniel Timsit, *Algérie: récit anachronique* (Saint-Denis: Editions Bouchene, 1998) 21. For a recounting of Timsit's life and work see Jean Laloum, "Portrait d'un Juif du FLN," *Archives Juives: Revue d'histoire des Juifs de France* 29, no. 1 (1996): 65–71.

[50] Benjamin Stora, *Les trois exils: Juifs d'Algérie* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2006).

Although the war concluded in 1962 and, with it, the formal end of French colonial rule in North Africa, colonialism and its afterlives continued to shape the structures of postcolonial life and the meaning and function of the Jewish Question. Unlike the exodus of Jews from other Middle Eastern countries, most North African Jews did not immigrate to Israel but to France.[51] This had significant implications for the structures of French Judaism and radically changed the community's demographic makeup. Between 1950 and 1969, 220,000 North African Jews moved to France. By the 1980s, over half of the Jews in Paris had North African origins.[52] In the metropole, North African Jews often clashed with the institutional forms of French Judaism, and they occupied a more liminal space within the hierarchies of race and difference in postcolonial France.[53] Chapter 4 considers the position of North African Jews in more depth. In it, I illustrate how the legacies of colonialism continued to shape the relationship between Jews, Arab-Muslims, and France well into the 1980s. I argue that thinking with and about the figure of the Arab-Jew offers a particularly generative window into unpacking these remnants and the transformations wrought in the postcolonial period.

In the 1970s and 80s, the question of immigration launched to the top of the political agenda. During the economic slowdown in the 1970s, France instituted stricter controls on immigration. By the late '70s and '80s, there was a proliferation of discourses around the figure of the immigrant and its perceived challenge to national identity. In 1983, the far-right party, *Front*

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[51] For the Iraqi context, see Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017). For Iran, see Lior B Sternfeld, *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[52] Doris Bensimon and Sergio Della Pergola, *La population juive de France: socio-démographie et identité* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1984), 36, 46.

[53] Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*; Naomi Davidson, "'Brothers from South of the Mediterranean': Decolonizing the Jewish 'Family' During the Algerian War," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 33, no. 2 (2015): 76–96.

National, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, won double-digit vote percentages in multiple local and national elections and fueled widespread racism and moral panic around the figure of the immigrant. In October 1985, the right-wing *Le Figaro Magazine* published a special issue titled "Will We Still Be French in Thirty Years?" On its cover was a photograph of a veiled Marianne.[54] On the opposite end of the political spectrum, *Les Temps Modernes,* the leftwing journal run by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, published a special issue entitled *L'immigration maghrébine en France* which highlighted the ways Maghrebi immigrants were being made into scapegoats for problems of unemployment and insecurity.[55] By the end of the decade, the figure of the immigrant, particularly the Muslim immigrant, had solidified its place within the national imaginary.

Indeed, despite the central place of the Jewish Question in thinking about universalism, arguably the most prominent vector of Republican moral panic over the last 50 years has not been the Jew but the figure of the immigrant and the emergence of the Muslim Question.[56] The postcolonial evolution of the Jewish Question has been indelibly shaped by this context and the ongoing question of Jewish-Muslim encounters.

Recent historical work by Ethan Katz, Maud Mandel, Kimberly Arkin, and others has shed light on the intertwined histories of Jews and Muslims in the Francophone world and provided

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[54] "Serons-nous encore français dans 30 ans ?" *Le Figaro*, October 26, 1985; I first discovered this issue in Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 71.

[55] Sami Naïr, Claire Etcherelli, and Claude Lanzmann, eds., *L'Immigration Maghrébine en France: dossier de la revue Les Temps modernes* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1985).

[56] Despite large scale resistance to research on this topic in France, there have been numerous studies, see for instance Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed, *Islamophobie: Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le "problème musulman"* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Thomas Deltombe, *L'islam imaginaire: La construction médiatique de l'islamophobie en France, 1975-2005* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); Anne Norton, *On the Muslim Question* (Princeton University Press, 2013); Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*; Jim Wolfreys, *Republic of Islamophobia: The Rise of Respectable Racism in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

generative avenues for thinking about these categories and identities in less reified and oppositional terms.[57] The very separation of Jews and Muslims as two distinct categories can be traced back to various colonial mechanisms of control. In 1870, a French Jewish lawyer named Adolphe Crémieux helped pass a decree which imposed French citizenship on most Algerian Jews.[58] Overnight, Jews in Algeria were legally transformed from natives of their country to French citizens and became a separate and distinct category from their Muslim neighbors. Beyond a classical divide and conquer tactic, the decree can be understood as part of a colonial process of producing, elaborating, and constructing the very oppositional identities of Jew and Muslim. As Gil Anidjar argues, in addition to dividing between colonizer and colonized, colonialism manufactured legal, racial, and hierarchical divisions within native groups, elevating some groups into elite "subject races."[59] The production of legal, cultural, and racial distinctions was subsequently naturalized by Europe as two distinctive identities. To speak of Jews and Muslims in Algeria as separate categories is, in some sense, to

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[57] Ethan B Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Maud S Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*; Rebekah Vince and Samuel Sami Everett, eds., *Jewish-Muslim Interactions: Performing Cultures Between North Africa and France* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020); Ben Gidley and Samuel Sami Everett, eds., *Jews and Muslims in Europe: Between Discourse and Experience* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2022). Katz and Mandel have also been at the center of a growing interest in Jews and colonialism, see Ethan B Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

[58] For a history of the Jews of Mzab, who were not granted French citizenship, and their place within French colonial imaginaries, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[59] Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, 2003.

already talk in a language furnished and produced by colonial rule.[60] Other scholars have also pointed to more entangled histories of Jews and Muslims that challenge the division between these groups.[61] My story begins with the assumption that one cannot consider these groups apart from one another. It asks us to consider the entangled histories that Jews and Muslims brought with them and how those were reshaped and remade in the postcolonial world.

By understanding how and in what ways the Jew was affiliated or disaffiliated with other racialized and minoritized figures in France, I suggest that we can gain a clearer picture of how the position of the Jew changed over the twentieth century. Through this interrogation, I demonstrate sites of affiliation where Jews aligned themselves with other marginalized voices and took strong stances against the Algerian War and Islamophobia. But more often, it shows how many Jews sought to differentiate themselves from the position of the colonized, Muslims, and other

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[60] These divisions were not unique to Jews and Muslims and were a common feature of colonial rule. The Kabyle Myth is another prominent example. According to colonial scholars and administrators, Arab tribes were nomadic, unstable, communal, too religious, fanatic, fatalist, and difficult to assimilate. Berbers however, were more sedentary, individualistic, less religious, and thereby more easily assimilable and prone to democracy. In a sense, the Kabyle Myth mirrored the division between Jews and Arab/Muslims. See Paul A Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Chapter 2; Patricia ME Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Edmund Burke, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

[61] Ella Shohat's work has also been indispensable for thinking about these issues, especially in relation to orientalism, see Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19/20 (Autumn 1988): 1–35; Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'," 1992; Ella Shohat, *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements* (London: Pluto Press, 2017). Ammiel Alcalay was also at the forefront of thinking about Jews, Arabs, and the postcolonial context, see Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). My own thinking on this subject has also been heavily indebted to Gil Anidjar, see Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, 2003; Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). See also Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2005). Arguably it was Edward Said who first opened up this avenue of inquiry when he wrote regarding his work on orientalism that "I have found myself writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism." Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 27-28

marginalized groups and cement their place within the dominant frames of Western modernity. Consider, for example, the discourse that emerged in the early 2000s around "Muslim antisemitism" (which I address in more detail in Chapter 5). According to proponents of this discourse, the paradigms of anti-Semitism have shifted. The primary vector for anti-Jewish hatred is no longer the state or right-wing groups but Muslims and leftwing anti-Zionists. Proponents of this theory, many of whom are Jews, include Alain Finkielkraut, Shmuel Trigano, Emanuel Brenner, and Raphaël Draï. Their work has led to a proliferation of the trope of the "Muslim anti-Semite," which now circulates amongst academics, governmental organizations, and public intellectuals. By rendering Muslims the primary purveyor of anti-Semitism, this discourse entrenches Islamophobic rhetoric predicated on separating Jews and Muslims. It also ensures the continued exclusion of Muslims from national identity via the inclusion of Jews. Among these writers, the opposition to anti-Semitism has become a new barometer for what it means to belong to France—and Muslims do not belong from the get-go.

POSTCOLONIAL AND JEWISH STUDIES

This dissertation builds on several recent conversations in Jewish and Postcolonial Studies while adopting a different perspective on how to approach that relationship. Work across these fields has argued for more comparative and generative frames for thinking about the entangled histories of Jews and the colonized, anti-Semitism and colonialism, and the historical matrices from which these

discourses evolved.[62] Michael Rothberg, for example, has identified the need for a "multidirectional" framework to understand how memories of the Holocaust and decolonization might be mutually illuminating rather than a zero-sum game. He argues against the widespread tendency to isolate the Holocaust as a unique event that bears no comparison. Instead, he shows how its memory can help situate, expand, and shed light on other sites of colonial and racial violence. Similarly, in their introduction to a special issue on Jewish and Postcolonial Studies, Ato Quayson and Willi Goetschel suggest that the affinities linking these two fields offer a way to consider "the deeper structural moments that connect Jewish and postcolonial conditions beyond their victimhood" and to gain an ability to reimagine the field's "critical reciprocity."[63]

The Postcolonial Jewish Question contributes to this growing body of literature by situating the evolution of the Jewish Question within the problematics of postcolonial politics in the

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[62] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Aamir R Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Isabelle Hesse, *The Politics of Jewishness in Contemporary World Literature: The Holocaust, Zionism and Colonialism* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016); Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Daniel Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science'," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Jonathan Boyarin, "The Other Within and the Other Without," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J Silberstein and Robert L Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 424–52; Jonathan Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Susannah Heschel, "Revolt of the Colonized: Abraham Geiger's Wissenschaft Des Judentums as a Challenge to Christian Hegemony in the Academy," *New German Critique* 77 (1999): 61–85. See also the debate between Cheyette and Rothberg regarding some of these issues: Bryan Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 4, no. 03 (2017-8-30): 424–39; and Michael Rothberg, "For Activist Thought: A Response to Bryan Cheyette," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 5, no. 01 (2017-11-27): 115–22. For a good overview of these conversations see Willi Goetschel and Ato Quayson, "Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism," *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–9 as well as the rest of the articles in that special issue.

[63] Goetschel and Quayson, "Introduction," 3.

Francophone world. However, I take a different approach than previous studies. Aamir Mufti's work, for example, explores how the Jewish Question in Europe provided a template for thinking about majority-minority relationships, secularism, and liberal democracy on a global scale. He calls for a "postcolonial understanding of the Jewish Question" that globalizes its problematics and modes of thinking. I am indebted to Mufti's provocation, yet I propose redirecting our orientation to this problem. Rather than ask how the Jewish Question has informed various colonial and postcolonial forms of liberal democracy, I want to explore what a postcolonial reading of the Jewish Question *itself* might look like. This postcolonial Jewish Question indexes the histories in and through which the Jewish Question has changed its shape and invites us to rethink the parameters of the Jewish Question for our postcolonial world.

Thus far, many of the conversations around Postcolonial and Jewish Studies are oriented by a set of historical and theoretical questions about how to contend with the relationship between anti-Semitism, fascism, colonialism, and racism, but without considering how the nature of these discourses has changed or evolved in the postwar period. Two figures have been central for articulating the historical relationships between anti-Semitism and colonialism, Hannah Arendt and Aimé Césaire. I suggest that their centrality in this emergent field of research also tells us something about the templates and problematics that have shaped the field thus far. Both Arendt and Césaire analyzed the rise of fascism within a broader history of imperial expansion. For each of these figures, in different ways, the Holocaust and imperialism constituted a "boomerang effect," a redirection of colonial mechanisms and patterns of control into Europe. In Césaire's memorable words, what disturbed the bourgeoisie about Nazism was not so much the violence it wrought as the fact that it was now directed against White people, that Hitler had "applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and

the 'niggers' of Africa."[64] For Arendt in the *Origins of Totalitarianism,* the Nazi genocide was an instance of nonutilitarian and irrational violence that produced a new kind of human being subject to its power. However, she situated the evolution of that violence within a broader constellation of imperial movements and the foundation of the racial state.[65] What animated Arendt and Césaire, as Paul Gilroy describes, was "a moral obligation to consider the connections that might exist between the genocidal terrors perpetrated inside Europe and the patterns of colonial and imperial slaughter that preceded them under Europe's colors but outside its Continental boundaries."[66] In the face of two instances of world-historical violence, these mid-twentieth-century thinkers provided an invaluable template for thinking across forms of power and domination.

This kind of capacious world-historical analysis that demands thinking about entangled histories has remained imperative for our times. Yet, to what degree do Arendt and Césaire's questions remain our own? Arendt's and Césaire's work was animated by a specific historical juncture in which anti-Semitism and fascism were spreading across the globe, and colonialism was taking its final breaths. Their analysis of the relationship between imperialism and fascism reflected their attempts to understand the history of their present. Does their present, however, continue to be the same as our own? Today the Jewish Question and its relation to colonial and postcolonial violence does not sit within the same set of historical-political relations. Anti-Semitism no longer occupies a fundamental place in Western societies, while the effects of colonialism and racism

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[64] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 36; on this, see also James Q Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[65] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, vol. 244 (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973); Rothberg has critically analyzed Arendt's O*rigins* both for the ways it illuminates this constellation and upholds a Eurocentric view of imperialism that fails to see its victims as agents of history. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, Chapter 2

[66] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 76.

continue to structure global politics. My postcolonial reading of the Jewish Question, then, invites us to attend to our particular historical-critical conjuncture and asks us to consider how and why it has evolved.

This is why I take a different approach to Bryan Cheyette's arguments about postcolonial studies' supersessionist relation to the figure of the Jew. Cheyette has been essential to advancing more comparative and interdisciplinary work in Jewish and Postcolonial Studies. However, he worries that postcolonial theory and history have superseded the Jew, rendering it an object of the past. In the classical supersessionist model, Christianity fulfills and annuls Judaism, rendering it obsolete. In a secularized version, Cheyette suggests, Postcolonial Studies has replaced the Jew with the colonized as the prime victim of the modern world. Out of an anxiety of influence and a fear that the memory of the Holocaust might cloud the analysis of colonialism and racism, postcolonial studies does away with the Jew and assimilates them into Western Judeo-Christian modernity. On the one hand, I think he is right to point out that these figures have more entangled histories which can and should be narrated in relation to one another. The colonized does not merely replace the Jew in nineteenth and twentieth-century politics but rather co-develops with it. Postcolonial Studies failed to critically engage this history—though it has also been an equally glaring gap in the majority of Jewish Studies. On the other hand, in a contemporary world where anti-Semitism no longer constitutes a fundamental feature of modern society in the same way as the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and the genocide of Indigenous peoples do, there are theoretical, historical, and even merely strategic reasons for thinking about the Jew in the rear-view mirror, as it were. Rather than a supersessionist move, deflating the Jew as a victim of Western modernity is simply a response to a changed historical-political condition. Must we continue to insist on the paradigms of Jewish exclusion in order to address contemporary historical victims? Is it a form of supersession to say that Jews are no longer primary objects of oppression and that other figures, with different histories

and different historical trajectories, have now—unfortunately!—assumed that role? Later in his career, Albert Memmi was once asked whether or not the Jewish Question continued to be a helpful paradigm to think with, given that Jews were now generally more secure than Muslims and other immigrants. Memmi responded in the affirmative and said that it's true the Jew is no longer the most enlightening figure—and you know what, he suggested, "so much the better for the Jews!"[67]

I do not mean not to suggest that we shouldn't analyze the historical relationships between Jews and other figures of oppression or that those systems of control and domination aren't linked, far from it. Nor is it to say, as I will discuss shortly, that the Jewish Question has lost all significance in the contemporary moment. It has undoubtedly not. But it is to suggest that in our post-Holocaust postcolonial world, we need new paradigms and analytical grids for understanding how those relationships play out.

The flip side of Cheyette's concern about the replacement of the Jew is the refrain that "Muslims are the new Jews." In this argument, while the Jew was once the primary other of Western modernity, today, the Muslim is cast as an outsider, and Islamophobia dominates European anxieties about difference. Though he doesn't explicitly use the phrase, Matti Bunzl's influential text, *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia,* has been central for articulating this argument. To some degree, as I've already suggested, this is undoubtedly the case. Amid a wave of stigmatizing rhetoric in France around so-called "Islamo-leftism"—a phrase with distinct links to the earlier "Judeo-Bolshevism"—the same Manuel Valls who extolled Jews' place in the Republic stated with regard to "radical Islam" that "a territorial, social, ethnic apartheid has spread across our country," and referred to

[67] Gary Wilder and Albert Memmi, "Irreconcilable Differences," *Transition* 71 (1996): 174.

Islamophobia as the "Trojan horse of the Salafists."[68] In 2020, after the murder of Samuel Paty, over 100 academics published an open letter in *Le Monde* concurring with the government's claims and arguing against "Islamism and Islamo-leftism in the university."[69] France's government soon passed a controversial law on separatism, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the most prominent NGO working against Islamophobia.[70] It is undeniable that Muslims, and not Jews, dominate French fears over the Republic.

However, I have significant misgivings about framing our historical conjuncture as one where Muslims replace Jews. Bunzl's argument rests on the assumption that Islamophobia is a relatively new phenomenon that has not been deeply ingrained in European history and thought and has only recently come to dominate political discourse. Yet, this entirely fails to consider the long history of colonialism and orientalism for which Islam and Muslims were central. This reflects a common failure to understand the contemporary postcolonial context and how discourse about Islam has been centrally embedded within European colonialism for centuries. Moreover, this portrait and its binary approach eschews a more integrated and intersectional analysis of the ways these two figures have been historically linked. By casting Muslims as the new Jews, one obscures the co-development of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Orientalism and the ways that both Jews and Muslims have been excluded from Europe. To suggest that these merely replace one another is to miss the larger story by which these have each formed entangled elements of European power.

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[68] Maïa de la Baume, "French Premier Says 'Apartheid' Is Leaving Minorities on the Fringe," *The New York Times*, January 20, 2015; Sonya Faure and Sylvain Mouillard, "'Islamophobie,' mot de l'époque ou mal du siècle ?" *Libération*, April 26, 2015.

[69] "Une centaine d'universitaires alertent : « Sur l'islamisme, ce qui nous menace, c'est la persistance du déni »," *Le Monde*, October 31, 2020.

[70] Eva Cossé, "French Court Confirms Dissolution of Anti-Discrimination Group," September 27, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/27/french-court-confirms-dissolution-anti-discrimination-group.

Finally, while I agree with the general point that anti-Semitism is less prevalent today, I think it continues to serve a very particular function that needs to be addressed and engaged with. It is not as if the Jew has been entirely left behind. My approach thus avoids both the desire to collapse anti-Semitism, colonialism, and Islamophobia or to see one as merely replacing the other.

THE JEW TODAY

Although the Jewish Question has been transformed in our postcolonial world, the Jew and anti-Semitism continue to exert immense rhetorical power over our conceptions of politics, identity, and difference. The pivotal role played by the Holocaust in discourses of contemporary European identity offers one such example. In the postwar period, the Holocaust emerged as a primary vector for thinking about racism, and Jews, in some sense, became the principal object associated with racist dogma. The Holocaust and resistance to Nazism quickly became foundational for Europe's fight against racism, and opposition to anti-Semitism was a defining feature of the late twentieth century. Yet simultaneously, the univocal focus on Holocaust memory and the fight against anti-Semitism can mask Europe's ongoing colonial and racial wars. Indeed, rather than serve as a preventative measure against similar genocides, the very institutionalization of the Holocaust as a central mythology served to inoculate Europe against its responsibility in other cases. Enzo Traverso argues that the Holocaust now constitutes a "civil religion" whose memorializing edict was made part of Europe's self-image, but without thereby posing a challenge to its ongoing racial regimes. As he notes, "when detention centres for illegal immigrants proliferate and governments organize their massive expulsion (sometimes on an ethnic basis, as with the Roms in France), a civil religion of the Holocaust impervious to this reality risks appearing as a diversion. It gives the impression of an enormous mechanism designed to protect the memory of a minority no longer threatened, in a

context of collective indifference to those forms of oppression that really do exist in the present."[71] That the Holocaust was rendered the defining racial event in Europe's history served in part to erase and mask the ongoing forms of colonialism and racism which were made exterior to the European story.

This tells us that the Jew and the Jewish Question remain fundamental for analyzing contemporary political, philosophical, and historical problems. But also that its parameters have entirely shifted. We are no longer discussing Jews' exclusion from Europe and their construction as an other, but how their *inclusion* has continued to shape political developments and framed new boundaries of European identity.

Part of the trouble with holding on to the older paradigms of the Jew and modernity is that it can easily lead to an affective investment in the notion of Jewish alterity, which precludes a critical investigation into the consequences of Jewish inclusion into the West. For instance, Alana Lentin describes how the public performance of opposition to anti-Semitism often absolves one of other racist policies. By making opposition to anti-Semitism the marker of not being a racist, politicians and pundits render the discourse of anti-racism a moralizing and vague notion that obscures its structural and institutional features. "Expression of opposition to antisemitism," Lentin writes, "functions as a ballast against denouncements of racism. In the present moment, publicly performing opposition to antisemitism and support for Israel – the two having been made equivalent – has also become a proxy for politicians and public figures' commitment to antiracism. Leaning on antisemitism as the *sine qua non* of racism and associating it singularly with the Nazi Holocaust, reinterpreted as a unique and aberrant event rather than the manifestation of a 500-year

[71] Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, 126.

process, silences any questioning of this professed antiracism."[72] Holding on to the signification of Jew as other and making that one's primary engagement with anti-racism can entrench the discourses one purports to fight against.

The most prominent example of the trouble with holding on to an anachronistic idea of Jewish exclusion undoubtedly comes from Israel-Palestine and Zionism. The widespread and institutionalized conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism constitutes one of the primary abuses and obfuscations of anti-Semitism today. Zionism has continually exploited anti-Semitism for its national interests; legislation across the globe has criminalized non-violent boycotts of Israel over its occupation of Palestine using the logic that they are anti-Semitic; and the most prominent and widely institutionalized definition of anti-Semitism dangerously conflates it with criticism of Israel.[73] Given this, it is impossible to deny the persistent rhetorical force of the Jew as other. This dissertation, however, does not enter into these debates directly—although in Chapter 3, I think more extensively about the effects of Zionism within the local French postcolonial context and the ways it transformed Jewish thought. Instead, I want to suggest that only through reframing our conception of the postcolonial Jewish condition can we begin to address some of these problems. On a global scale, there is no doubt that Zionism transformed the perception of the Jew from victim to oppressor, and scholars across disciplines have developed rigorous accounts of how Zionism draws from, mimics, and reflects colonial and settler colonial mechanisms of power and control. Yet, I also proceed from the sense that Zionism and Israel/Palestine have overshadowed our

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[72] Alana Lentin, *Why Race Still Matters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 134.

[73] For anti-BDS legislation, see https://legislation.palestinelegal.org. For the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, see , "The Working Definition of Antisemitism," n.d., https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism. For critiques of the definition, see , "Palestinian Rights and the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism," *The Guardian*, November 29, 2020; Corey Balsam, "Who's Against Adopting the IHRA Antisemitism Definition?" *The Times of Israel*, December 09, 2020.

understanding of many of the contemporary valences of the Jewish Question, including the relationship between Jews and colonialism and between Jews and Muslims. Beyond Israel-Palestine, other histories need telling. The postcolonial Jewish Question takes account of the transformations rendered by Zionism, but it does not allow that to overshadow the narrative.

In 2016, Houria Bouteldja published *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love.* The book picks up on many of the themes of her work in the Parti des Indigènes de la République (whose appeal I mentioned earlier). It reflects on the racial hierarchies of postcolonial life, the ways a purportedly color-blind France still denies these, the failures of White leftists to account for the politics of race, and the ongoing legacies of colonialism for Indigenous and Muslim communities. As one might expect, the book generated a lot of controversy. Much of the text is written in the second person and addressed directly to different communities, including White people, the Indigenous of the Republic, and in what is perhaps the most surprising chapter, to Jews. Why dedicate an entire chapter to the Jew? Amidst a text centered on indigeneity, colonialism, race, and Whiteness, what role does the Jew play?

Boutledja, too, seems convinced of the rhetorical power of the Jew. She is acutely aware of the function that Jews play within the broader Western imaginary. She argues that the West chose Jews for three missions: "to solve the white world's moral legitimacy crisis, which resulted from the Nazi genocide, to outsource republican racism, and finally to be the weaponized wing of Western imperialism in the Arab world."[74] Understanding the centrality of pro-Israel policies, how Islamophobia and racism have been legitimized through their opposition to anti-Semitism, and how the institutionalization of Holocaust memory provides a salve to Europe's wounded sense of self—

[74] Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e) / Intervention Series, 2017), 68.

all of this requires thinking critically about the Jew. Far from being anachronistic, Bouteldja points us toward the ways that the postcolonial Jewish Question continues to be central, even if in new and different ways than before. Rather than an arbitrary or merely comparative inclusion of the Jew, the Jew is central to France's broader dynamics of postcolonial politics. Indeed, despite the facetious claims of anti-Semitism that immediately followed the text's publication, Bouteldja's perspective in that chapter is one of solidarity and openness. "To be honest," she writes, "between us [Jews and Indigenous], everything is still possible. I might be optimistic, but that's my own choice. We have a common destiny in the same way that we potentially have a common political future."[75] As she describes it, Jews are both familiar and strange to her, "familiar because of your insoluble non-whiteness within anti-Semitic whiteness, but strange because you are whitened, integrated into a superior echelon of the racial hierarchy."[76] This dissertation attempts to capture that sense of familiarity and strangeness, to elaborate on how Jews have been integrated into the Western imaginary, and to explicate how the ways they navigated that position have been integral to the evolution of postcolonial French politics.

The dissertation is structured to illuminate what I take to be the primary historical and theoretical contours of the postcolonial Jewish Question. I begin with Albert Memmi, whose historical and theoretical trajectory illustrates some of the central problematics of thinking across colonialism and anti-Semitism and how these have evolved in the postcolonial world; I highlight several significant events, such as the struggles for decolonization and the rise of support for Zionism, and analyze how they constituted central moments for Jewish intellectuals to grapple with their relation to other victims of Western modernity; I dial in on particular conversations and

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[75] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 67.

[76] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 67.

debates, such as the proliferation of North African Jewish writing in the 1980s and use that to show the ongoing legacies of colonial divisions between Jews and Muslims, as well as how some figures resisted those paradigms; and I take a broad view of the relationship between colonial racism and anti-Semitism and how these have been slowly disconnected from one another over the last 50 years. The chapters all proceed from the assumption that the ways in which the Jewish Question has evolved are not immediately evident, neither as a direct reaction to the Holocaust, colonialism, nor to rising Islamophobia. I follow Stoler's genealogical impulse that it is precisely through sites of excess and occlusion, where a given object exceeds the conceptual apparatus meant to contain it, that we can begin interrogating established categories and how they are constructed. I see each of the moments I explore here in a similar manner as "productive touchstones of political contest and subjects of analysis—as occasions rather than obstacles to ask how conceptual claims assert themselves."[77] If, as I am arguing, a shift was occurring in the nature of the Jewish Question as part of this postcolonial problem-space, the parameters and significations of this shift were rarely calculated or self-evident. In each moment, I illustrate the political and conceptual problematics to which my protagonists do not yet know precisely how to respond, which nevertheless shapes them in unforeseen and unexpected ways.

[77] Stoler, *Duress*, 2016, 21.

Chapter One

Albert Memmi and the Trajectories of a Postcolonial Jew

The condition of Jews, like the condition of the colonized, revealed to me what, more generally, is a permanent condition of oppression.[1]

The tragedy is that the two great revolutions of our time, the socialist revolution and decolonization, not only have still not freed the Jews from their specific oppression but have often aggravated it.[2]

Not the least of the misfortunes caused by oppression is that the oppressed come to hate each other: the rivalry between Jews and Arabs is one of the most regrettable illogicalities in the history of oppression.[3]

Albert Memmi is one of the few twentieth-century thinkers who devoted numerous texts to colonialism and anti-Semitism, each of which he saw as central facets of European power. Born in Tunisia to a traditional Jewish family on the outskirts of the Hara, the Jewish quarter of Tunis, Memmi is best known for *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur [The Colonizer and the Colonized]* (1957), his seminal contribution to the wave of anti-colonial writing that appeared in the 1950s and '60s. But this text constituted only the first in a series of portraits on oppression that was

[1] Memmi, *Testament insolent*, 2009, 88.

[2] Memmi, *Testament insolent*, 2009, 12.

[3] Albert Memmi, *Dominated Man: Notes Toward a Portrait* (New York: Orion Press, 1968), 11.

followed by subsequent studies addressing Jews, Black people, gender, race, and other vectors of domination and dependence. Although the colonized and the Jew constituted two fundamental reference points of European oppression in Memmi's work, the relationship between them is not always as clear. In this chapter, I explore how these two figures developed in relation to one another through a reading of the broad trajectory of Memmi's work. In what ways were the colonized and the Jew bound up in the same drama of European power, and how did that relationship evolve in the post-Holocaust, postcolonial world? Memmi's work, I argue, offers a particularly vivid window into these questions. As someone who experienced and wrote about colonialism and anti-Semitism firsthand, the trajectory of his work tells the story of their development, of the ways these discourses converged and diverged, were entangled and disjointed. In some moments, they constitute an almost interchangeable source of oppression, while in others, the Jew and the colonized seem to radically diverge.[4] Tracking these relationships across his corpus, I suggest, illuminates how they have evolved over the twentieth century.

Consider, for example, the first epigraph to this chapter. In it, we see how the Jew and the colonized each served as indices for Memmi, markers of what it meant to be excluded, minoritized, and permanently oppressed. So much so that he even once suggested that in *The Colonizer,* "Jew" can be used interchangeably with "colonized," both of whom are subject to similar regimes of oppression and alienation. The same is true in reverse, and Memmi noted that when he was writing

[4] Others have suggested different ways to periodize Memmi's work. Guy Dugas suggests four overlapping periods which include: 1) the age of revolt 2) the age of doubt and self-interrogation 3) an effort at reconciliation 4) and overcoming and detachment. Hervé Sanson's recently edited volume of Memmi's essays divides them into 1) colonization and decolonization 2) judaism and judéité 3) cultural identity and francophonie 4) dependence 5) from racism to heterophobia 6) secularism. See Guy Dugas, *Albert Memmi: Du Malheur d'être Juif Au Bonheur sépharade* (Paris: Éditions du Nadir, 2001), 13; and Albert Memmi, *Penser à vif: de la colonisation à la laïcité (1941-2002)*, ed. Hervé Sanson (Paris: Non Lieu, 2017).

his portraits of the Jew, he had in mind the oppressed in general.[5] Through a reading of his early work, I demonstrate the comparative matrix of oppression within which Memmi understood the colonized, the Jew, Black people, and other figures as intersecting reference points for what it means to be oppressed. These early texts demonstrate a critical and structural analysis of the forces of European domination and the myriad ways they capture and exclude specific figures from national life.

However, the second epigraph gestures toward a different frame. In this one, decolonization and Jewish liberation are not synonymous with one another but antithetical. Decolonization, Memmi seems to suggest, was not beneficial for the Jews. His work, I show, also traces this trajectory whereby colonialism and anti-Semitism fragment and separate from one another, each dissolving into its specific issue. In this instantiation of Memmi, the colonial and Jewish questions assume different coordinates and split into distinct trajectories and forms of liberation. Even as he continued to work out his general theory of oppression, the Jew and the colonized were detached from one another, and their paths diverged. Nevertheless, I argue that this, too, has something to teach us.

There are two dominant approaches to Memmi's work: the first sees Memmi as an iconoclastic and steadfast thinker who refuses to give in to the vagaries of the political moment and offers a dependable analysis despite the pressure and political ostracization. Daniel Gordon, for example, refers to Memmi as one of the few thinkers capable of "telling the whole truth;" Jonathan

[5] Albert Memmi, *Jews and Arabs* (Chicago: J. Philip O'Hara, Inc., 1975), 77.

Judaken refers to him as "one of the great modern thinkers;" and Susie Linfield as a "hero."[6] This strand celebrates Memmi as a maverick and sees his fall from favor as a reflection of the vagaries of the contemporary left and, occasionally, even their anti-Semitism. The other approach sees in Memmi's *early* work a subversive thinker whose anti-colonial writing continues to resonate in the present. However, it argues that he ultimately fails to fulfill those promises. This strand suggests that his later work constitutes an "about-face," a retreat from his earlier critical writing, especially with regard to Zionism.[7] If the early Memmi offered us resources for thinking about anti-colonial futures and entangled Arab-Jewish identities, the later Memmi, it is said, seems almost unrecognizable.

However, I am less interested in celebrating, critiquing, or even trying to recover a more critical Memmi. Instead, I argue that Memmi has a more interesting story to tell. Memmi is a central character in *The Postcolonial Jewish Question.* For one, he is the singular figure whose work touches on every element I consider throughout the dissertation. He participated in and wrote extensively about the struggles for decolonization; he published numerous texts on Zionism and its relation to other forms of national liberation; he was among the first to write about and bring awareness to the figure of the Arab-Jew in France; and his attention to and definition of racism, published long before others began to write about it, continues to be influential. Rather than integrate his work into other chapters, however, there is something valuable about considering the inner architecture and logic of

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[6] Daniel Gordon, "Telling the Whole Truth: Albert Memmi," Spring, 2018, https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/3044/telling-whole-truth-albert-memmi/; Susie Linfield, *The Lions' Den: Zionism, and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 9; Jonathan Judaken, "Introduction," in *The Albert Memmi Reader*, ed. Jonathan Judaken and Michael Lejman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), xvi

[7] The phrase "about-face" comes from Lisa Lieberman, "Albert Memmi's about-Face," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 46, no. 3 (2007): 505–11; see also, Joan Cocks, "Jewish Nationalism and the Question of Palestine," *Interventions* 8, no. 1 (2006): 24–39; Gil Z Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter one; Olivia C Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), Chapter four.

Memmi's corpus on its own terms. This gives us a sense of Memmi's idiosyncratic analysis and thinking. It also allows us to get a macro view of the trajectory of the postcolonial evolution of the Jewish Question. At the outset of Memmi's career, the Jew as other still reigned as a dominant paradigm. Memmi's two works on the Jew, as I will show, spell this out for us in all of its detail: how the Jew has been constructed, the systemic nature of anti-Semitism, and the possibilities for liberation. Memmi was indeed one of the few to understand that paradigm within a larger matrix of oppression—which I expound upon in detail. However, by the end of the century, the Jew had assumed a different position within the Western hierarchy of power and difference. Memmi's work, I suggest, reflects this change. Beyond his personal experience, identity, and work, I want to argue, in other words, that Memmi's trajectory is metonymic with the broader evolution of the postcolonial Jewish question. By reading Memmi's corpus with this in mind, we can see how the Jew is slowly disentangled from the position of the colonized and other oppressed figures. I argue that the evolution of Memmi's work, like few others, stages this process for us in compelling and tragic ways.

JEWISH AND ARAB ENTANGLEMENTS IN MEMMI'S EARLY WORK

The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957) appeared amidst a wave of anticolonial criticism, including, most famously, Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme [Discourse on Colonialism]* (1950) and Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs [Black Skin White Masks]* (1952) and *Les Damnés de la Terre [The Wretched of the Earth]* (1961). Unlike these, however, *The Colonizer* analyzes the colonial situation from the perspective of both colonizer and colonized, two interlocking and mutually destructive figures whose relation constitutes the basis of colonial rule's material and psychological consequences. This approach to the bipartite relation of oppression was a hallmark of Memmi's career. The idea of the *duo*—two subjects always in relation—reappeared throughout his corpus. "I have rather insisted on this notion [the duo]," Memmi writes, "on its fecundity and its methodological interest to return to it at length. Colonizer—colonized, man woman, white—black, master—domestic… provider—

dependent: it seems to me impossible today to conceive of anyone outside such relationships."[8] And as Guy Dugas, Memmi's biographer and commentator, underscores, "this notion of the duo is indeed one of the major singularities of his analyses, which distinguishes him from the radical opposition, Marxist or Hegelian, on which his predecessors based the colonial relationship."[9]

In this binary portrait, the Jew occupies an ambiguous role. In his 1965 preface to *The Colonizer*, Memmi clarifies that his position within the colonial pyramid made this doubled analysis possible: a Tunisian Jew, he was colonized just like his Muslim neighbors and could never fully assimilate into the colonizer. Yet Jews were also given certain privileges, made to stand one rung above Muslims, the promise of Frenchness dangled above them. Though undeniably colonized, many Jews still identified with the colonizer and were transformed into intermediaries, "half-breeds of colonization," Memmi calls them. Memmi's biography is instructive. After attending an *Alliance* school, he went to a French lycée where he completed his education. "I know the colonizer from the inside almost as well as I know the colonized," he writes, and "for better or for worse, the Jew found himself one small notch above the Moslem on the pyramid which is the basis of all colonial societies."[10] In *The Colonizer,* however, the binary colonizer-colonized relationship dominates Memmi's analysis. Whatever the gradations of privilege in the colony, the Jew is ultimately overshadowed by these two dominant figures. The colonial situation renders the Jew's halting relation to Europe immaterial, such that whether or divisions exist between Jews and Arabs, the Jew's position as colonized is the primary point of entry and analysis.

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[8] Albert Memmi, *La dépendance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 21.

[9] Guy Dugas, "Dis-nous d'où tu parles, Memmi, ou silences et embarras du postcolonial," in *Perspectives européennes des études littéraires francophones*, ed. Coste Coste and Daniel Lançon (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2014), 189.

[10] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon press, 1965) 9, 10. Unless otherwise marked, citations from Memmi's work are from the English editions when widely available

Because the Jew is not a primary figure in *The Colonized*, the relationship between the colonized and the Jew or between anti-Semitism and colonialism is never fully fleshed out. Should one understand these as separate discourses with only the occasional convergence? Or as more tightly interlocking forms of oppression?

These questions are more directly addressed in a much shorter and lesser-known portrait Memmi wrote about North African Jews. Published in 1957 for the Jewish monthly *L'Arche*, "Portrait du Juif colonisé" runs only two newspaper pages in length and, in many ways, continues where *The Colonizer* left off, still grounded in an analysis of colonialism. However, the essay foregrounds and thematizes the Jew in the colonial pyramid, giving voice to that half-breed of colonization that had been dissolved in the colonial binary of *The Colonizer*. Indeed, I suggest that this short text marks a pivotal juncture in Memmi's work wherein the colonial and Jewish Questions are most explicitly in dialogue.[11]

The text opens by addressing the position of Maghrebi Judaism and immediately foregrounds the colonial frame as a central entry point to the analysis. Most commentary at the time, Memmi suggests, his own included, had failed to insist on the "*colonized* aspect of the North African Jew."[12] Indeed, as we'll see more in the next chapter, most commentators at the time were stressing Jews' Westernization and, especially in Algeria, their cultural and legal status as French. However, to

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[11] In a very different way, Memmi's novel, *The Pillar of Salt,* also stages the interdependent relationship between Jews and Arabs in the colony, though often this is much less straightforward in nature. Olivia Harrison and Gil Hochberg each turn to the novel as a space for thinking about this interdependence. As Hochberg writes, the novel "leaves us with an unresolved problem and a productive, albeit frustrating, ambiguity that makes the codependency between 'Arab' and 'Jew' visible and emphasizes the inseparability of colonial and racial (anti-Semitism) oppressions." I would suggest, however, that the novel often displays a much more ambiguous relationship between the two, such that at times it arguably also does the reverse and foregrounds their separation. See Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition*, 2010 23; and Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, Chapter 4

[12] Albert Memmi, "Portrait du Juif colonisé," *L'Arche* No. 6-7 (June-July 1957): 23.

fully understand the North African Jew, Memmi argues, one must see them in relation to the colonial condition; for in the racial hierarchy of the colony, anyone who is not a colonizer is ultimately subject to the colonial apparatus. In fact, he suggests that for some sections of *The Colonizer,* one might substitute the word "Jew" for that of "colonized," and everything would be just as applicable. *"The North African Jewish condition is also a colonized condition,"* he writes.[13] This largely follows from his analysis in *The Colonizer* and how colonial privilege and oppression operate. But it doesn't stop there. Memmi argues that the colonial frame is not accidental or secondary but "indispensable to the comprehension of Maghrebi Judaism."[14] It would be impossible to understand North African Judaism without understanding it in relation to the colonial question. The two form an inextricable pair, such that not only are the Jew and the colonized figures of oppression in their own right, but it would be impossible to separate an analysis of the Jew from a study of colonialism. Coloniality must constitute the beginning and end points of the analysis of the Maghrebi Jew.

Jews and Arabs are not collapsed in this text, and Memmi devotes a section to exploring how the impacts of colonialism have led to different pathways for each of them. By 1957, when the text was published, Tunisia and Morocco had already gained independence, the Algerian War was raging, and Jews' political options were slowly shrinking. The essay does not deny the possibility that their path may separate from Arabs, but it does argue that we think critically about what conditions have led to this divergence. Consider, Memmi argues, the fact Jews were often more Westernized than their Arab neighbors. While not denying this, he suggests that the Westernization of North African Jews was a function, in part, of colonialism. He illustrates how the colonizer slowly and methodically dangled legal and cultural occidentalization to Jews without allowing them access to full

[13] Memmi, "Portrait du Juif colonisé," June-July 1957, 23.

[14] Memmi, "Portrait du Juif colonisé," June-July 1957, 23.

benefits or legal privileges. If Jews were given more educational, legal, political, and economic opportunities that led them closer to Europe, this constituted part of the mechanism of colonial rule. Here is how Memmi describes it: "*The colonizer wanted it this way*: without always saying it openly, he carefully balanced [soigneusement dosé] the legal and political westernization of the Jews."[15] In other words, Memmi suggests that the fact that Jews were occidentalized must itself be seen as a product of the colonial system, which relied on them as intermediaries and which, though it elevated them a rung above their Arab and Muslim neighbors, never allowed them to assimilate fully. Memmi even goes so far as to suggest that, despite Jews' different legal status in Algeria, where the Crémieux Decree legally transformed them into Europeans, the differences between Algeria and the rest of North Africa are merely formal. What he is suggesting is that although Jews had been transformed into French citizens and thereby belonged to a different legal category, it nevertheless remains the case that colonialism should be the primary and indispensable frame of analysis for understanding Algerian Judaism.

Memmi understands the Maghrebi Jew as part and parcel of the colonial condition, without which their situation cannot be understood. Their Westernization, legal or otherwise, and potential divergence from other colonized subjects are only symptoms and consequences of a broader structure of colonial rule. Memmi opens a space for thinking not only about colonialism and anti-Semitism but their convergence and interoperation within the figure of the Maghrebi Jew. As we'll see more in the next chapter, the future of North African Judaism was on the mind of many. Its difficult position between Europe and North Africa became a heated legal, cultural, and philosophical battle. Memmi had only recently immigrated to France, though many Jews remained in Tunisia and Morocco. This short portrait is an incisive intervention into these discussions and

[15] Memmi, "Portrait du Juif colonisé," June-July 1957, 23.

reframes our perspective on how to think about the intersection of colonialism and anti-Semitism. At this point in Memmi's work then, the Magrehbi Jew was entirely enmeshed within the broader colonial question, and the Jew and the colonized existed as parallel, interlocking figures.

COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF OPPRESSION

At the beginning of the 1960s, Memmi launched a systemic foray into analyzing the Jewish condition with the publication of *Portrait d'un Juif [The Portrait of a Jew]* (1962) and *La libération du juif [The Liberation of the Jew]* (1966). In its broadest sense, *Portrait* dismantles the economic and biological mythologies surrounding the Jew and reveals how they function as projections of the anti-Semite. At the same time, *Liberation* turns its attention to how the Jews can liberate themselves from their condition as oppressed. It unmasks the fallacies of assimilation, intermarriage, and even forms of Jewish exceptionalism that attempt to alleviate the Jewish condition.

Let us consider the function of colonialism in the texts. It is immediately remarkable that unlike "Portrait du Juif colonisé," colonialism disappears as a direct frame for his understanding of the Jewish condition. The Jewish condition, in these texts, is not a product of colonialism nor subject to the same structures and characteristics that featured so prominently in *The Colonizer* or even in his novels. In one sense, we might attribute this to how *Portrait* and *Liberation* broaden from Memmi's analysis of Maghrebi Judaism to consider the Jew in general. "The Jew" in this account may no longer be directly subject to colonial rule and is more determined by the economic or biological mythologies that Memmi dismantles. And yet, despite this larger horizon, the text was received in France precisely as a reflection of Memmi's experience under colonialism. Arnold Mandel, the Jewish literary critic, wrote a review in *L'Arche* that expressed some of his reservations about Memmi's characterizations and noted that "it is important to underline here that Albert

Memmi is Tunisian and that he lived, *besides the Jewish condition, the condition of the colonized*."[16] This explained, for Mandel, the "particular character" that the text assumed. Mandel and other French Jews could not—or would not—entirely recognize themselves in Memmi's portrait that was still too tainted by the impacts of colonialism and which, for them, had no relation to their Jewish condition. Though colonialism may have disappeared as a direct frame on the page, it was not always received that way.

On the other hand, we can understand *Portrait* to exist within a broader chapter of Memmi's work that analyzed various oppressive regimes and their corresponding figures. What he began in *The Colonizer* carries through to *Portrait* and *Liberation* and culminates, at least temporarily, in *Dominated Man* (1968), his initial sketch of a general theory of oppression. In this text, Memmi considers Black people, the proletariat, women, the colonized, and the Jew as part of a broader attempt at outlining the distinctive structures and characteristics of oppression in general. Together with these other texts, *Portrait* constitutes one node in what we might call a comparative matrix of oppression. Indeed, in the concluding pages of *Portrait,* Memmi writes: "Yes, as a Jew, I am above all an oppressed person and the Jewish fate is essentially a condition of oppression. I have by now verified this often enough: *in this perspective, my figure resembles astonishingly that of many others: to be precise, of other oppressed peoples*."[17] Despite the lack of an explicit colonial frame, this text, in other words, did not exist in isolation but instead elaborated on Memmi's more general project concerning the various distinctive yet interlocking qualities that all oppressed people experience. "Their own peculiar features and individual history aside," Memmi writes in *Dominated Man,* "colonized peoples, Jews, women, the poor show a kind of family likeness; all bear a burden which leaves the same

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[16] Arnold Mandel, "Les Livres," *L'Arche*, no. 64 (May 1962), my emphasis.

[17] Albert Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew* (New York: The Orion Press, 1962), 320.

bruises on their soul, and similarly distorts their behavior."[18] Memmi's texts during this period addressed the "family likeness" of oppression from different angles—or what amounts to a comparative matrix of oppression. Accordingly, during this period, we cannot isolate the Jew any more than the colonized, all of whom Memmi analyzed in relation to one another.

Across these texts, several features and schemas reappear. For one, Memmi thinks of oppression as a structural and totalizing condition. Whether it be colonialism, racism, gender, or class, Memmi analyzes oppression as a structural phenomenon and illustrates how it becomes a totalizing condition that impacts all aspects of the oppressed's life. For instance, in his analysis of colonialism, Memmi describes the colonizer who refuses, the one who recognizes the injustice of colonialism and decides, to greater or lesser success, to lend their support to the colonized. However, Memmi suggests that their position is unsustainable. Despite the individual intentions of the colonizer who refuses, the colonial situation and material conditions ensure they continue to benefit from their position and maintain their superiority over the colonized.[19] Colonialism is not a matter of any individual relationship—even if it is bolstered and preserved by it—but a structural relation between colonizer and colonized, which is why the text concludes by arguing for the necessary dissolution of the entire colonial situation rather than reform. As Sartre puts it in his preface, a situation, or a system, cannot be changed by reforming individual actors.

In his essays on the civil rights movement in the US and on the proletariat that were published in *Dominated Man,* Memmi more fully develops the notion of "total oppression." What he

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[18] Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 1968, 16.

[19] Nadine Gordimer argues that Memmi was in fact wrong about this, and that there were many more options available to leftist colonizers than Memmi admits. See her preface to *The Colonizer*. Memmi applied his analysis of the colonizer who refuses to Albert Camus in an article published in *La Nef* (n. 12, December. 1957). Camus had written a preface for *The Pillar of Salt,* and yet, despite the fact that in that article Memmi was defending Camus, it ultimately ruined their relationship.

means by this is that oppression is rarely about one specific element or another but affects all aspects of the oppressed's life. Oppression may appear primarily economic or racial, but it is just as much social, cultural, and psychological. In one essay, Memmi suggests that this idea applies even to the proletariat, whose problems are just as much social as they are economic.[20] "At all events," Memmi writes, "we must beware of making the mistake common to the bourgeois and Marxists alike of laying too much stress on the material aspect. Oppression is like an octopus: it is hard to tell which of its arms has the tightest strangle-hold."[21] As was the case for colonialism, once this is recognized, once the situation of total oppression is understood for what it is, the only possible solution is that of "total revolt." Minor changes to the system, be they better wages or more integration, will not ultimately solve the problem of total oppression; they just momentarily ameliorate it. In his essay on James Baldwin, he lauds him for clearly illustrating the situation of total oppression that Black people face in the US. Yet, he also worries that Baldwin is deluding himself by talking of the fire *next time*. "If Baldwin's description is true," Memmi writes, "and he is too convincing for it to be otherwise—catastrophe is now brewing in the very heart of the American nation."[22] Once total oppression is recognized as such, the only possible exit is to destroy the system that produces it.

Accordingly, even though colonialism no longer constitutes a primary analytical frame in his analysis of the Jewish condition, the colonized and colonialism often appear in *Portrait* as reference points, means of comparison that shed light on Memmi's analysis of anti-Semitism. Although the Jew is the primary focus, the text frequently references how anti-Semitism parallels colonialism and

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[20] See "Does the Worker Still Exist?" in Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 1968.

[21] Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 1968, 19.

[22] Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 1968, 26.

other forms of oppression. As Memmi thinks through the structural nature of anti-Semitism, the mythical accusations of the anti-Semite, and the various responses and counter-myths elicited in Jews, he often compares his portrait to that of the colonized and their responses to colonial rule. For example, in *Portrait,* Memmi reprises his structural analysis of the colonial situation for thinking about anti-Semitism. Hostility against Jews, he argues, is structural and systemic; it permeates all aspects of life, even when it is not necessarily overt or legal. In the same way as colonialism, racism, or sexism are systems that structure the forms of life within them, anti-Semitism is a structural feature of modern society. Focusing on the actions of specific individuals, however egregious they may be, risks losing sight of this. Moreover, the anti-Semite, for Memmi, is not aberrant and monstrous but a product and reflection of the society from which they come. "We run the risk," he writes,

> of not understanding the Jewish misfortune, of minimizing it, of denaturing it, if we forget that it is first and foremost a collective and world-wide phenomenon. And not only a collective phenomenon to non-Jews but (I shall return to this later) a fundamental relationship between the Jewish group and the non-Jewish group; in other words it affects and colors all relations between Jews as a whole and non-Jews as a whole everywhere… Non-Jews as a whole constitute that universe of hostility and exclusion. This I feel strongly. I believe that all non-Jews are part of a society that renders the life of the Jew unlivable as a Jew.[23]

Anti-Semitism is so pervasive a feature of society in Memmi's account that he argues that *all* non-Jews are responsible for it. Just as the colonizer who refuses inevitably perpetuates the colonial situation, the non-Jew must contend with their role in an anti-Semitic society. "For the present," he writes, "the Jew is the oppressed person of a society in which the non-Jew is the beneficiary; every non-Jew must put up with the relation that unites him with the Jew. He can approve of it, as the colonizer approves of colonization, or reject it as the good colonizer criticizes the policy of his own

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[23] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 48–49.

country, though he cannot avoid carrying it out, at least to some extent."[24] As the comparison with colonialism makes clear, anti-Semitism is not merely a projection of individual anti-Semites or a matter that can be addressed on a case-by-case basis. It is constitutive of society as we know it; no matter one's biases, one remains a beneficiary of a society that oppresses the Jew.[25]

While the Jewish condition has often been isolated from such comparisons, Memmi later wrote that he refused to participate in this segregation and insisted on seeing the Jew as part of a larger comparative matrix:

> Beyond our [Jewish] specificities, to understand ourselves, we must also understand others… I objected to any interpretation, sociological or theological, of the Jewish condition that would be closed in on itself, any strictly apologetic attitude. This is why I have constantly proceeded to a comparative back and forth between this condition, which I experienced, and similar conditions, that of the colonized, of the woman or the black; one illuminating the other and vice versa.[26]

However, unlike Hannah Arendt, Aimé Césaire, or Frantz Fanon, Memmi's comparative matrix does not, for the most part, make the final step and thematize the ways that colonialism, anti-Black racism, and anti-Semitism are not merely related by a family likeness, but more closely interlinked as co-constitutive forces of European domination. Césaire's argument about the "boomerang effect" of the Holocaust and colonialism is absent from Memmi's account, which focuses more on the structures of oppression and their consequences among the oppressed than on how various

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[24] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 176.

[25] This is, incidentally, one of the features that Memmi says differentiates him from Sartre. Whereas Sartre famously sees the Jew as a figure constituted by the anti-Semite, Memmi points out that they are treated that way as well. In other words, not only is this a matter of identity but of material, social, and psychological effects as well.

[26] Albert Memmi, *Le juif et l'autre*, ed. Maurice Chavardès and François Kasbi (France: Éditions Christian de Bartillat, 1995), 7–8.

oppressive regimes are linked.[27] What's lacking in that regard is supplemented by analyzing oppression's structural similarities and differences and how they constitute both particular instances and generally adhere to a universal form.

Moreover, it is not as if Memmi ignores Europe's foundational role. In *The Pillar of Salt,* the protagonist, Alexander Mordekhai Benillouche, comes to an ultimate and final recognition that Europe had utterly failed him and that his association with the West was nothing but a chimera. "With a crash, the reassuring idea that colonial Frenchmen and those from metropolitan France were not the same was now demolished. The whole of Europe had revealed its basic injustice. I was all the more hurt in my pride because I had been so uncautious in my complete surrender to my faith in Europe."[28] We find a similar gesture in *The Portrait of a Jew,* where Memmi suggests that the claim to the universal is Janus-faced, always belied by the position of the one who speaks it. Access to it is regulated, withheld, only available to some, only available to Europeans. "Paradoxically," he writes, "that universal light bore the clearly defined face of Europe—and more specifically, of France."[29] Like Benillouche in *The Pillar of Salt,* that promise and position he aspired to came crashing down around him during WWII. "I had learned the harsh lesson," Memmi concludes forcefully, "that my destiny did not necessarily coincide with the destiny of Europe."[30] Thus, while Europe's role as the purveyor of colonialism and anti-Semitism is clear, Memmi's comparative matrix does not explain their precise interaction and relation.

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[27] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* 36; see also Michael Rothberg's commentary on Césaire, Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory.* Chapter 3

[28] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 272.

[29] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 4–5.

[30] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 5.

A beguiling proposition concludes *Portrait*—one which gestures to a change in the form and conditions of anti-Semitism. Despite his emphasis on the structural nature of anti-Semitism in modern life, Memmi notes that he made a concerted effort to write the book in the past tense, suggesting that what he referred to as the "systemic, progressive negativity" of the Jew might be a thing of the past, or at the very least beginning to change. "The open expression of hatred of the Jew [has become] difficult, at least for the present time," he writes. And he continues: "It is even possible that we may have entered upon a *wholly new period of history,* one that would see at least the progressive liquidation of that oppression the Jews have suffered for so long."[31] It is a curious note with which to end a text that had spent hundreds of pages laying out in precise detail all the ways the Jew is an oppressed figure. On the one hand, we might read it as merely a gesture of hope, a sense that Jewish liberation has begun and their condition of oppression may be changing. *The Colonizer* ended with a similar move, a brief description of the ends of colonization which would entail the complete liberation and the becoming "whole and free" of the colonized.[32] On the other hand, more than a gesture of hope and different from *The Colonizer*, which was written amid colonial rule, the final comments in *Portrait* seem to mark the end of the negativity and unlivability of the Jew. They suggest that in the post-Holocaust world, we might be embarking on a new era where anti-Semitism is no longer a structuring feature of society and where Memmi's portrait might soon prove to be anachronistic. In this reading, how would one conceive of the position of Jew in society? Would they become a person like any other, as Memmi suggests at the end of *The Colonizer?* What of the Jewish question, would that too cease to be a question in its own right?

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[31] Memmi, *Portrait of a Jew*, 1962, 324, my emphasis.

[32] Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 1965, 197.

These early texts were published at the pinnacle of the anti-colonial movement, which Memmi was very much a part of. In 1949, he established a center for psychopedagogy in Tunisia that he ran for five years; in 1952, he built a house in Tunisia; and he was on the editorial committee of *L'action Tunisienne,* the first French-language paper with nationalist sympathies that was founded by Habib Bourguiba, the first prime minister and then president of independent Tunisia. These texts mark a crucial juncture in Memmi's thinking on the colonial and Jewish questions and offer us a framework to analyze their convergence. In *The Colonizer,* the Jew is effectively conflated with the colonized, an oppressed figure in the colonizer's Manichean worldview which can never achieve the status of European. When thematized, colonialism is revealed as an integral and necessary component for understanding North African Judaism. Even their relationship with Europe is shown as a farce, an impossible project of assimilation that will never bear its promises. Even as colonialism begins to disappear as Memmi's primary frame, it continues to function as a reference point, and anti-Semitism appears as one form in a large matrix of oppressive regimes. Ultimately, these texts bear witness to the close relationship between the structure of colonialism and anti-Semitism and how Jews and Arabs have been co-constituted by them—but as we'll see in the coming pages, this relationship was already beginning to fracture.

ZIONISM AT THE LIMITS

Memmi once remarked that it was by first overcoming the colonial condition that he began to think about the Jewish one. He wrote, "once I had obstinately *rid my life of its colonial aspect,* why would I not then, and with the same severity, examine its Jewish aspect? It was precisely because the colonial precondition had *disappeared* that I was now face to face with my Jewish problematics."[33] These words appeared amid an essay entitled "What is a Zionist?," first drafted in 1966 and then edited

[33] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 75, my emphasis.

and republished for *Jews and Arabs* in 1975. *Jews and Arabs* covers several themes, including the Jewish experience under Muslim rule (unequivocally and entirely negative, for Memmi), but it is primarily oriented around Zionism. In the final section of *The Liberation of the Jew,* "The Way Out," Memmi argued that Zionism was the only possible solution to Jewish liberation. However, his argument was still brief, gestural, and not fully fleshed out. In these essays, he clarifies his position and explains in detail his understanding of Zionism and its relation to other Third World liberations. Indeed, this final point, the connection between Zionism and other projects for national liberation, echoes throughout the text as Memmi reconciles the seeming tension between his support for the anti-colonial struggles and his support for Zionism. In the preface, he writes: "I approve and continue to approve of the liberation and the national development of the Arabs. Why should I not wish for the same things for my own people? If that is what being a Zionist means, then I am indeed a Zionist."[34] Zionism constitutes a central node within the evolution of Memmi's work. It raises several vital questions: What role does Zionism play in Memmi's conception of the Jewish and colonial questions? How did he understand Zionism's position within the comparative matrix of oppression and liberation? How did it bridge or detach anti-Semitism and colonialism? Rather than an outlier, the place of Zionism in Memmi's corpus, I suggest, should be seen within the broader trajectory we've been sketching here; and just like his portraits, it serves as another site in which the colonial and Jewish questions are worked out—even if in sometimes strange and idiosyncratic ways.

Recall our discussion earlier regarding the two strands of commentary that surround Memmi. The first sees him as an iconoclast, while the second bemoans the ways his later work seems to renege on his earlier anti-colonial analyses. However, what unites both of these approaches is the centrality they each place on the question of Zionism. In both accounts and despite their

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[34] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 13, Further citations in parentheses.

opposite approaches, Zionism functions as the ultimate coda, the site at which Memmi's analysis is put to its final test. If Memmi's reception has been split, it is arguably Zionism that has become the barometer of whether one celebrates or criticizes him, applauds or derides him. This is equally the case for someone like Susie Linfield and for Gil Hochberg, who in many ways take opposite approaches to Memmi, yet for all that, see his support for Zionism as the central hinge.[35]

My intervention in this debate is not to adjudicate Memmi's support for Zionism. I generally agree with the second camp and find his positions inadequate for understanding either the ideological assumptions undergirding the Zionist project or its concrete effects in Palestine. However, I want to analyze how Zionism functions in relation to the colonial and Jewish Questions. On the one hand, I follow Gil Hochberg and Olivia Harrison, who argue that Memmi's positions on Zionism naturalize and separate Jews and Arabs and that this operation has its roots in European colonial divisions in North Africa. "Memmi's shift from an unambiguously anticolonial to an increasingly intransigent pro-Zionist position," Harrison argues, "is the product of the colonial opposition between Jews and Arabs that Memmi staged in his first novel."[36] Following Mahmood Mamdani and Gil Anidjar, Harrison suggests that Memmi's Zionism is a symptom of how the division between Arabs and Jews, which arose with the French colonial project in the Maghreb, is mapped onto the Zionist project in Palestine. Although Memmi's earlier work staged the artificiality of the Arab-Jew separation and revealed its colonial underpinnings, his writings on Zionism reflect the solidification and naturalization of this division: two separate groups, two separate nationalisms, two naturalized identities.

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[35] Linfield, *The Lions' Den*. Chapter 5; Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition*, 2010. Chapter 1. For an early critique of Memmi's positions on Zionism, see Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme: essai* (Rabat: Al Kalam, 1990).

[36] Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, 92–93.

On the other hand, I argue that the question of Israel/Palestine is an essential but ultimately marginal piece of a broader question concerning the dynamics of anti-Semitism, colonialism, and how Memmi views the relation between them. As I've been illustrating, Memmi's work stages the convergence and the divergence of the Jewish and colonial questions on a much broader scale, and Zionism is an important though singular facet of that story. I see the question of Memmi's Zionism, which has so perturbed his reception, less as a barometer of a 'good' or 'bad' Memmi, someone who would fulfill or fail his anti-colonial promises, but as a symptom and result of the larger dynamic we've been sketching here. Moreover, I suggest that we miss something important if we make Zionism the singular lens through which to understand the nature of his project. Although it has undoubtedly played a fundamental role in shaping the relationship between Jews and Arabs and between anti-Semitism and colonialism, we cannot merely import that separation onto Jews and Arabs in the French context. The specific histories of colonization and decolonization, immigration, anti-Semitism, race, and secularism, have done much more to shape this dynamic than the question of Zionism. Thus, if we are to understand how these entanglements play out, Zionism must be seen as one part of a larger story rather than its apex.

Seen in this light, one immediately notices something strange. At least within the logic that Memmi spells out, Zionism divides *and* conjoins the Jewish and colonial questions; it serves as a site where these are separated and brought together. I suggest that this counterintuitive conjuncture makes it a generative moment in his corpus to try and understand the postcolonial evolution of the Jewish Question. It also brings out a methodological point: even when the Jewish and colonial questions are seemingly separated, this does not necessarily mean they do not continue to impact and influence the shape and course they each take. Separation, too, can be a form of relation, and Memmi's analysis of Zionism perfectly illustrates that principle.

Memmi's Zionism is at once more complicated and more straightforward than current debates allow for. Let us follow, for the moment, the logic of Memmi's corpus—and whatever else one might say, there is undoubtedly a logic to it. On the one hand, Zionism divides the Jewish and postcolonial questions. It constitutes a moment of rupture, where the paths of Jewish liberation diverges from others. Indeed, this is where Memmi's comparative matrix of oppression begins to break down, for he argues that despite the similar character of oppression, each iteration requires its specific forms of liberation and redress. In the case of Jews, in his mind, this meant the Zionist solution as he writes in "What is a Zionist:" "Until now, I have dwelt at length on the resemblances between the various oppressions, which have authorized me to speak of *dominated man*. But each embodiment of that man has his own original features… *One cannot propose any effective liberation if the specificity of each condition has not been grasped*."[37]

Even here, however, at this site of divergence where the colonial and Jewish questions seem to take opposite paths, their relation and impact on one another are still readily apparent. The book's most extended essay is "Israel, the Arabs, and the Third World." It arose from one of Memmi's trips to Israel, where the magazine *Unity and Dispersion,* published by the World Zionist Organization, wanted to know how Memmi could support Israel, the Arabs, and the Third World, which appeared to them as cognitive dissonance.[38] The seeming incongruity of this position constitutes the crux of the essay in which Memmi elaborates on his approach to Zionism and how other movements for national liberation inform it. His basic argument is that just as the Third World embarked on a series of national liberation movements in response to oppression—movements which Memmi supported and participated in—so too Zionism reflects the national liberation of the Jews from their own

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[37] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 91–92.

[38] The essay was initially titled "Zionism, Israel, and the Third World: Resemblances, Specificities, and Affirmations of Nationhood"

oppression. "Zionism," he writes, "was also the movement for the national liberation of the Jews, on a par with the other national liberation movements, in the Maghreb, in Africa, and elsewhere in the world."[39] In this way, Memmi upends the premise of the magazine's question; these movements are not in conflict with one another, and each represents the legitimate desire for liberation and freedom of different minority groups. Though they may be specific responses to the conditions of their respective groups, they nonetheless exist in perfect parallel.[40] Though he regretted this nationalist bent, in his mind, there was nothing to do about it: "I myself was not an enthusiast of nationalism," he wrote later in life, "but that was the way in which the history of peoples was presented."[41] Thus, in an oblique way, for Memmi, Zionism also conjoins the Jewish Question with the postcolonial one, rendering them two sides of the same coin, two means of responding to oppression and liberating oneself from it.[42]

Memmi's logic and his steadfast commitment to its broad application blind him to the ways Zionism reflects the very European colonial projects that he had analyzed so vividly.[43] In "Israel, the

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[39] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 149.

[40] Memmi even goes so far as to suggest that although Israelis might understand themselves as European, the national project resembles that of the Third World much more than it does Europe.

[41] Memmi, *Testament insolent*, 2009, 31.

[42] Unsurprisingly, it is this analysis that Memmi's supporters latch on to. It is worth noting as well that relative to the vast majority of Jewish intellectuals in France, Memmi's Zionism is rather idiosyncratic and not at all representative of the general trend. When placed in relation to figures like Bernard-Henri Levy, Alain Finkielkraut, André Neher, and Emmanuel Levinas, Memmi almost looks like a radical. One of the primary things that differentiates Memmi from these figures, especially the more religiously inclined, was his insistence on considering Zionism as a state like any other. It did not have any special purview, was not a bastion of justice or prophetic vision, and assumed all the characteristics of any other new nation. If one wanted a representative figure of French or North African Jewish Zionism, Memmi is decidedly not the right candidate. For more on how Zionism differentiated Memmi from a figure like Levinas see Mendel Kranz, "Postcolonial Zionism: Theological-Political Paradigms in Levinas and Memmi," *Hebrew Studies* 60 (2019): 293–321.

[43] This argument about Zionism has been made many times. For a classic, see Edward W Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 7–58.

Arabs, and the Third World," Memmi raises but quickly dismisses claims about Zionism's colonial purview, arguing that Israel has no features of classical colonialism such as economic exploitation, cheap labor, a home country, or cultural alienation.[44] Amongst some of his early commentators, this blindness did not go unnoticed. Abdelkébir Khatibi, the philosopher, essayist, novelist, and Memmi's former student, wrote in 1972 Zionism constituted Memmi's "theoretical impasse."[45] In *Vomito Blanco,* a short text that we will return to in detail in Chapter 3 when we consider Zionism more directly*,* Khatibi writes that "Memmi cannot carry out this radicalization, on the one hand, because his socialist Zionism was born ideologically and historically in the heart of the Western bourgeoisie, it is Western imperialism which made Zionism possible. And on the other hand, by defining oppression in a way that is too abstract and non-competitive, Memmi forgets the domination suffered by the Palestinian people."[46] In Chapter 3, we will discuss Zionism in more detail and explore how it transformed the parameters of the Jewish Question. However, let us reflect on how Memmi's arguments about Zionism reflect the broader evolution of the Jewish-colonial question in his work.

Despite his insistence on continuity and the extension of a supposedly ironclad logic, *Jews and Arabs* reflects a clear evolution in Memmi's thinking on the relationship between the Jew and the colonized and between anti-Semitism and colonialism that goes beyond the issue of Zionism. The

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[44] Memmi is responding here to Maxime Rodinson's famous essay on Israel and colonialism, which was a touchpoint at the time. We might also note that the idea of a settler colony never quite enters Memmi's lexicon here. See Maxime Rodinson, "Israel, fait colonial?" *Les temps modernes* 253 bis (1967): 17–88; on Israel-Palestine and settler colonialism, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006-12): 387–409.

[45] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990 96; Robert Bernasconi would later refer to Memmi's analysis as an "impossible logic." See Robert Bernasconi, "The Impossible Logic of Assimilation," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2011): 37–49.

[46] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 97.

short essay we looked at earlier, "Portrait du Juif colonisé," in which Memmi so incisively linked the Jewish and colonial questions, was republished almost twenty years later in *Jews and Arabs.* Upon republication, the text contained a small mistake about the original publication date—an error that has unfortunately been repeated in almost every subsequent citation of the essay.[47] In *Jews and Arabs,* an accompanying note erroneously states that the essay was initially published in 1967, whereas it appeared in 1957. This small, otherwise inconsequential detail needn't be of any concern except that it marks a fundamental evolution in Memmi's work. By 1967, Memmi had already published his two portraits of the Jew, and, as we noted, coloniality was no longer his primary framework for thinking about the Jew. This essay could not have been written then. 1957 is an important date that sets off a period of Memmi's writing where the colonial and Jewish questions were most closely linked.

Even more important, however, is what happens to the text when republished in 1975, where the opening paragraphs have been slightly but meaningfully modified. In the 1957 version published in *L'Arche,* the opening paragraphs reflect on the nature of North African Jews, and Memmi asks: "What was the condition and role of the Jews in the colonizing countries?" Then comes a note about how his novels had not adequately accounted for the colonial frame in which Maghrebi Jews must be understood, followed by the essay's main arguments. In the version published in *Jews and Arabs,* however, the opening paragraphs have been modified to address a different publication context—and these differences index a sharp change in Memmi's thinking. Amongst the questions Memmi poses in this version, we find the following: "Does anyone even know that we too were colonized for centuries, and not just by the French but by the Arabs as well?"[48] The differences between these two questions could not be starker. The notion of "Arab

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[47] See, for example, the critical edition of Memmi's portraits: Albert Memmi, *Portraits: Edition critique*, ed. Guy Dugas et al. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2015).

[48] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 38.

colonialism" added here almost entirely changes the thrust of Memmi's arguments: it separates Jews and Arabs, making Jews the victims of Arabs rather than their compatriots and fellow colonized subjects; it casts the reader's gaze away from the French colonial apparatus which was the dominant frame of the essay; and it almost entirely reduces the meaning and force of colonialism to a vague sense of living under someone's else's rule. However, this question's tenor aligns with the general thrust of *Jews and Arabs,* where Memmi argues that Jewish life in Muslim lands had been unequivocally negative and where the question of European colonialism all but disappeared.

Though seemingly slight, the difference between the two versions speaks volumes about how Memmi was thinking in 1957 versus 1975. In the first version, European colonialism is the overarching framework, and Maghrebi Judaism—including its so-called Westernization—is understood within that structure. In the second, while he doesn't abandon the idea that the Maghrebi Jew was colonized, the meaning of colonialism has been reduced to a sort of general victimization that the Jew has suffered by both the French and the Arabs. Beyond the immediate question of Zionism then, the essay's publication contexts and the changes it underwent give us a key indication of how Memmi's perspective evolved. Zionism is no doubt a part of this, but only a part. From thinking laterally about the colonial and Jewish Questions as two intersecting forces of oppression, he cleaves these apart and even re-narrates the position of Maghrebi Judaism. This is nowhere more evident than in his final portrait, *Decolonization and the Decolonized.*

FRAGMENTATION, SEPARATION, AND COLONIAL LEGACIES

To see the separation of the Jewish and colonial questions and to understand the consequences this has had, rather than Memmi's positions on Zionism—which are ultimately relatively liberal and not nearly as egregious as other Jewish thinkers at the time—one needs to turn to his final portrait published in 2004, *Decolonization and the Decolonized.* In this text, I suggest, Memmi's cross-over to Europe is on full display, as are the consequences of delinking the Jewish and colonial questions.

Earlier in his career, Memmi had refused to publish a portrait of decolonized man. He noted that although many people had asked him to, he resisted, for it had always felt like a trick aimed at catching him out for his earlier anti-colonial writing by pointing to the current conditions of postcolonial states. Implied in the request, he said, was the sentiment that: "Look how they have turned out, your former colonial subjects that you took such trouble to defend! Look how they are using the freedom they made such a fuss about: confusion and hatred, racism in reverse, a nice mess!" He says: *"I did not draw a separate portrait of decolonized man, because, after all, it seemed quite obvious to me that it was the same, with the exception of a few minor features, as that of colonized man."*[49] Memmi suggested, in other words, that the colonial situation and its effects had not merely dissipated after colonialism's formal end. To write another portrait would be in some ways unnecessary. However, by 2004, things were evidently not the same, and it became clear that another portrait was indeed necessary. What form would this take? How would Memmi reflect on the legacies of colonial rule and its impact on both the former colonizer and colonized? Memmi considered *Decolonization* a continuation of *The Colonizer,* suggesting that he completed what he set out to do almost 50 years earlier. Nevertheless, his analysis and his orientation seems to have completely shifted—and this is true for both the colonial question itself, as well as its relation to the Jew.

The text appeared immediately before a critical moment in French postcolonial history: in 2005, mass protests erupted in the banlieue after two teenagers were killed running from the police. The protests, which lasted for around three weeks and elicited the French government to declare a state of emergency, ignited heated debates about race, governance, housing, unemployment, and

[49] Memmi, *Dominated Man*, 1968, 7, 8, my emphasis.

colonial legacies.[50] In February of 2005, France passed a law that instructed educators to teach about the *positive* elements of colonialism, which, as Joan Scott writes, revealed how "the colonial past, with its legacy of discrimination against, and denigration of, North Africans, continued to trouble the nation in ways that seemed endless and insoluble."[51] As scholars have pointed out, in 2005, there was an eruption of colonial memory and postcolonial discourse in France in ways that it hadn't previously grappled with.[52] It was also the year in which Houria Bouteldja, Sadri Khiari, and their collaborators launched their famous appeal, "Nous sommes les indigenes de la republique," and its associated political party. The appeal argued that France continued to operate as a colonial state where North African immigrants and their children were discriminated against similarly to indigenous people in the colonies. The term "indigène" in their call was originally a colonial classification that maintained the natives unequal and subordinate legal status. By reprising it in their call, Khiari, Boutledja, and their colleagues called attention to the ongoing colonial frames that continue to structure France's relationship with North Africans. "The treatment of populations resulting from colonization extends, without being reduced to it, the colonial policy," they wrote.[53] Memmi's text is a part of this discourse and emerged from the same social and political conditions. It contends with the position of postcolonial subjects in France and its former colonies.

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[50] On the protests, see Achille Mbembe, "The Republic and Its Beast: On the Riots in the French Banlieues," *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, 2009, 47–54; and Didier Fassin and Éric Fassin, eds., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?: Représenter la société française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009).

[51] Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 87.

[52] On how 2005 marked a postcolonial awakening, see, among others, Bancel, Blanchard, and Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*; and Forsdick and Murphy, *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, 2009.

[53] Bouteldja and Khiari, *Nous sommes les indigènes de la République*, 20.

What is the relationship between the Jew and the decolonized in Memmi's text? Is the Jew a decolonized figure? Can we compare the purported end of colonialism with the retreat of anti-Semitism? More specifically, what about the hundreds of thousands of North African Jews who were very much a part of colonial history—are they not to be included under the heading of the decolonized? Belied by the English title, however, it is clear that Memmi is primarily concerned with the figure of the Arab/Muslim, which appears explicitly in the French: *Portrait du décolonisé: Arabo-musulman et de quelques autres*. Colonialism and decolonization, it would seem, pertains only to them.

The text is organized around three primary figures, the new citizen, the immigrant, and the child of the immigrant, or more broadly, those who stayed in the new nations and those who left. Throughout, Memmi's main concern is why postcolonial states and subjects have failed to construct new forms of democratic living in the wake of colonialism's end; why there are no new economic establishments; and why issues like poverty and corruption run rampant.[54] His answer, by and large, is that it is entirely their fault. Through an insidious mix of corruption, fundamentalism, and laziness, postcolonial states and decolonized people have failed to make anything of themselves, and it is no one's responsibility but their own. Memmi knows his arguments will not be very appealing and might "annoy just about everyone," but this does not prevent him from adopting a condescending tone and taking it upon himself to speak to the decolonized without shying away from the supposed truth about their situation.[55]

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[54] Postcolonial theory has no shortage of more sophisticated analyses on this issue. See for example Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019);

[55] Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) x.

A constant refrain of the text is that despite the wholesale oppression of colonial rule, it can no longer be blamed for the current conditions of postcolonial states and subjects. In a sense, this reflects the final disappearance of colonialism from Memmi's work. It is no longer essential for him to continue analyzing colonial structures and their persistence in the present. He denies the notion that colonialism's afterlives are still haunting the present. He argues that the tendency on the part of the decolonized to blame White people and colonialism is a form of "dolorism," a way to shift the blame for one's own issues onto someone else and relinquish responsibility for one's mistakes. Writing about Black people in America, for example, Memmi says:

> Black Americans are not a decolonized people, although they have certain traits in common with them, just as they have certain traits in common with the colonized. But their evasive responses are the same. It is the fault of history, it is always the fault of the whites. Dolorism is a natural tendency to exaggerate one's pains and attribute them to another. Like the decolonized, as long as blacks have not freed themselves of dolorism, they will be unable to correctly analyze their condition and act accordingly.[56]

This analysis strikes a very different key from his earlier work on Baldwin and the civil rights movement. A few other citations, among many that one may point to, illustrates the general tenor: "Colonization has committed enough crimes of its own; it would be pointless to attribute to it those it did not commit;" "War is endemic to Black Africa, and international or interethnic conflicts have created more victims than colonization."[57] As commentators have pointed out, his analysis entirely

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[56] Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 2006, 19.

[57] Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 2006, 22, 52.

fails to account for ongoing forms of power—economic, military, political, or otherwise—which render his analysis wanting.[58]

One of the most glaring omissions in the text is the absence of any relationship of power. As we saw earlier, one of the key elements that distinguished *The Colonizer* from other anticolonial texts was the importance Memmi placed on the colonial *relationship* and on analyzing the colonizer as a critical component of the colonial situation. Yet, in *Decolonized,* the decolonized subject is entirely alone, master and agent of their own destiny, and the idea of relation and interaction has disappeared. Even if one were to argue that the new citizen who remained in their country is no longer subject to the same forms of relationality, at the very least, the section on the immigrant should surely have provided an opportunity for Memmi to think about the relationship between decolonization and immigration, or even between the immigrant and the Frenchman, a relationship that affects *both* the former colonized and colonizer. However, apart from a handful of pages on how the immigrant serves as a living reminder of colonization for some in the metropole and a few more on resistance to immigration, the portrait of the former colonizer is absent. Moreover, the structural logic that had undergirded so many of Memmi's texts seems to have dissipated, and Memmi's account privileges and places the blame entirely on one side, internalizing what might have been a dynamic and relational analysis:

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[58] *Decolonization* has not been particularly well received, and critics have pointed out its various blind spots, generalizations, stereotypes, and deleterious analyses. For a selection of reviews, see Michael Neocosmos, "Decolonization and the Decolonized (Review)," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 189–90; Joseph Galbo, "Review Essay: Albert Memmi. Decolonization and the Decolonized," *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online*, March-April 2007, 1–7; Françoise Vergès, "Decolonization and the Decolonized," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 3 (2007); Lieberman, "Albert Memmi's about-Face"; Sina Salessi, "The Postcolonial World and the Recourse to Myth: A Critique of Albert Memmi's Decolonization and the Decolonized," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 929–41.

> The Arab world has still not found, or has not wanted to consider, the transformations that would enable it to adapt to the modern world, which it cannot help but absorb. Rather than examining itself and applying the proper remedies, it looks for the causes of its disability in others. It's the fault of the Americans, or the Jews, of unbelievers, infidels, or multinationals. Without underestimating the role of its relations with its global partners, or the rise to power of the American empire, which took over where the colonizers left off, *it would be more useful to inquire into the internal causes of this stagnation.*[59]

A generous reader might note a slight ambiguity in Memmi's portrait, a sense that the book doubles back on itself and reinscribes the very paradigms it seems at pain to eradicate. Although he insists on the internal analysis and dismisses any notion of neocolonialism with a quick turn of phrase—it is "sufficiently vague to serve as a screen and rationale," he argues—the very title and idea of *de-*colonized cannot help but gesture to a relation with the colonial. The text beckons, by its mere invocation of the decolonized rather than simply the Arab of Black people, to wonder about that relationship and how it operates. Thus the text continually puts forward the very question of relation—what has changed, what remains the same, what new forms have yet to be analyzed—even as in content, it continually denies it.

What might account for this change in perspective, and perhaps more importantly, how can we understand Memmi's position? There are a handful of moments in *Decolonization* when the royal "we" appears, a we who are called upon to respond to the decolonized. Memmi, it would seem, includes himself within that we, now, as someone responding to the condition of the decolonized rather than participating in it. Yet even this "we" is not the specific "we" of the former colonizer, a materially and politically grounded "we" whose response and engagement with the decolonized would call for a thorough analysis and reparation. Instead, when Memmi writes "we," he clarifies, "I mean all the inhabitants of the planet."[60] Any concrete and reciprocal relationship between the

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[59] Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 2006, 65, my emphasis.

[60] Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, 2006, 128.

formerly colonized-colonizer has been globalized and universalized such that the material and psychological questions such a relationship might elicit are conveniently omitted.

Lia Brozgal points out that although Memmi asserts himself as a subject in *The Colonizer,* he is entirely absent in *Decolonization*. There are almost no allusions to the author's lived experience, and what's more, there is no sense of being implicated in the analysis apart from belonging to that ambiguous "we." As another commentator notes, "whereas in the first work Memmi was writing from the point of view of one who had experienced the colonial situation from within, he now clearly writes from the perspective of a European commenting from afar."[61] Memmi, in other words, is not among the decolonized. Brozgal attributes this lack of presence to "the author's rise to complete authorial autonomy," a formerly colonized subject who no longer requires the first person account, nor the prefaces of a Sartre or Camus.[62] She goes on to say that given the frame of the text, which addresses the decolonized Arab/Muslim, "Memmi, as an Arab Jew, quite obviously does not fit."[63]

Is it indeed obvious, however, that Memmi does not fit in a portrait of the decolonized? Why should that be the case, given everything we know of his history, his struggle against colonialism, and his immigration to France? Would he not, at the very least, fit within the portrait of the immigrant in the second part of the text? If one were to ask the Memmi of *The Colonizer,* and certainly that of "Portrait du Juif colonisé," one might presume that Memmi obviously does belong. We might even extrapolate and say that parallel to the portrait of the decolonized Arab, we might

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[61] Neocosmos, "Decolonization and the Decolonized (Review)," 189.

[62] Lia Nicole Brozgal, *Against Autobiography: Albert Memmi and the Production of Theory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 147. Sartre famously wrote the preface for *The Colonizer,* and Camus wrote one for *The Pillar of Salt*.

[63] Brozgal, *Against Autobiography*, 150.

find a portrait of the decolonized Jew. Yet not only has Memmi, the author, been evacuated from the portrait of the decolonized, but, apart from a handful of comparisons to the minority condition in general, so too has almost any mention of the Jew. Even Israel-Palestine only receives a few pages, which primarily attempt to minimize its severity. It is almost as if Memmi now tells us a story of the Juif *non*-colonisé—rather than *de*-colonisé—whose relation to the colonial has been eradicated, perhaps never even to be acknowledged, and who maintains no connection to other decolonized figures.[64] Memmi and the Jew no longer stand in relationship to the decolonized, for they have been excised from any relation to colonialism at all.

Between "Portrait du Juif colonisé" to the Jew's complete absence among the decolonized, Memmi has written himself and the Jew out of any relation with the colonial and postcolonial question. He stands as if from above, looking down on the decolonized and only able to see blame, poverty, and corruption. But Memmi himself is not implicated. He abandons his analysis of colonialism at precisely the moment it would have been most pertinent when the question of colonialism's legacy, structure, and ongoing paradigms was especially relevant. If *Decolonization* constitutes a continuation of *The Colonizer,* it is in name only. The Jew in France today has been written out of any reference to Arabs, immigrants, and the history of colonialism. This excision constitutes the unspoken backdrop of Memmi's final portrait.

Moreover, *Decolonization* reflects a widely-held sentiment that when discussing postcolonialism in France, one is primarily or only talking about Arab-Muslims. This is true of both the left and the right. The critical work, for example, of the ACHAC research group for thinking about postcolonialism in France makes almost no mention of the Jewish Question, nor, in the anglophone world, does the foundational volume *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical*

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[64] My thanks to Gil Anidjar for that felicitous turn of phrase.

Introduction.[65] On the other side of the spectrum, conservative Jewish intellectuals like Alain Finkielkraut, Shmuel Trigano, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and others—whom we will meet again in Chapter 5—have become key figures of contemporary Islamophobic discourse in France for whom the notion that the colonial and Jewish Questions might be linked could only be anathema. Denying these entanglements has real consequences, and *Decolonization* gives us a taste of what that looks like. Its conservative-leaning tendencies, its hardline secularism, and its failure to analyze the postcolonial encounter are symptoms and consequences of Memmi's own erasure as a decolonized subject.

CONCLUSION

In Edward Said's introduction to *Culture and Imperialism,* he argues that despite the anti-imperialist bent of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo,* its beginning and end points are framed by a Western view of the world, and any opposition to it only reinscribes the centrality of the West. Said explains that this is not due to a lack of sympathy or comprehension of other cultures but rather a political and epistemic inability to take any alternatives to Western imperialism seriously. Many Western writers, he continues, have empathized with different cultures and "crossed to the other side," including Jean Genet, Basil Davidson, Juan Goytisolo, and Albert Memmi.[66] Memmi's inclusion in this list should be striking. For, as opposed to the others, Memmi was not European but Tunisian, and his empathy was less so with foreign cultures than his own. How could he be included in a list of Europeans sympathetic to non-Western cultures? In one of his later texts, Memmi responded directly to his inclusion in Said's list:

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[65] In english, see Pascal Blanchard et al., eds., *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Bancel, Blanchard, and Thomas, *The Colonial Legacy in France*; Forsdick and Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 2003.

[66] Edward W Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) xx.

> The excellent Palestinian-American essayist Edward Said, who has since died, assimilated me to congratulate me on being a Westerner who, out of generosity, like Jean Genet, would have joined the Oriental camp. I do not deserve this praise, if praise it is, which risks giving a false idea of my itinerary: born in Tunis, with a mother tongue and a Tunisian national for a long time, without ever denying my birthplace or my persistent attachments, *I instead made the opposite route*. Which I don't have to brag about or apologize for.[67]

With a touch of irony, Memmi corrects Said's designation of him as a European, clarifying his linguistic and national origins and his ongoing commitments to Tunisia. Nevertheless, he admits to having crossed over to the other side, except he says that Said mistook the direction: Memmi did not cross over from European to Tunisian but from Tunisian to European.

What are the conditions of possibility for Said's identification of Memmi as European? In what ways have Jewish intellectuals more broadly been identified in this manner? What made possible the transition from the Jew as other to the Jew as European? This back-and-forth between Said and Memmi is revealing. Although Memmi corrects Said's attribution of empathy to him, he, in fact, affirms his status as a European. He may not have always been one, but that is ultimately what he became. Memmi was not simply cast in that role or understood as such but affirmatively embodied and took it upon himself. His oeuvre, I have argued, stages this process for us. It moves in fits and starts and is in many regards idiosyncratic, but in this respect, it is perfectly exemplary. The postcolonial Jew has gradually detached itself from the history of colonialism and its relation to other postcolonial subjects. *Decolonization* is the ultimate coda, Memmi's final portrait.

The postcolonial Jewish Question is a story of the dis-integration of the colonial question from the Jewish one. It is reflected in Memmi's corpus, in the difference between how he treats these two issues throughout his career, and in the orientation he adopts toward the decolonized. The postcolonial Jewish Question is the story of Memmi becoming a European.

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[67] Memmi, *Testament insolent*, 2009, 11, my emphasis.

Chapter Two

Decolonization and the Transformation of Jewish Politics

We allow justly that the Holocaust has permanently altered the consciousness of our time: Why do we not accord the same epistemological mutation in what imperialism has done, and what Orientalism continues to do?[1]

From the mid-1950s through the early 1960s, the struggles for decolonization in North Africa engulfed political and intellectual life. In particular, the Algerian War of Independence (1954 to 1962), which ultimately abolished French colonial rule in the country, had a lasting impact on the French political landscape.[2] As James D. Le Sueur writes, many French intellectuals thought the war demanded nothing less than the wholesale reconstruction of French identity in a postcolonial world where its claims to universality had proved facile.[3] Even today, France continues to be plagued by questions of immigration, housing, identity, and memory that are all tied to the war and its impact.[4] In July 2020, President Emmanuel Macron commissioned Benjamin Stora, one of the most

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[1] Said, *Orientalism*, 1979 xxii.

[2] For studies of the war, see Natalya Vince, *The Algerian War, the Algerian Revolution* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Mohammed Harbi and Benjamin Stora, eds., *La guerre d'Algérie: 1954-2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). The war also served as a template for many other anti-colonial struggles in the Third World, see Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[3] James D Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

[4] For more on the effects of decolonization, see Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1996).

prominent historians of the Algerian War, to write a report on the history of the war and the memory of colonization. The report aimed to begin a reconciliatory process between France and Algeria and "to draw up a fair and precise inventory" of their shared history. Stora notes that the report addressed essential questions, including "the traces, legacies, and memorial effects of colonization and the Algerian war on French society."[5] Many of the central features of French political and even cultural life in the last fifty years have been shaped by the war and its effects.

The same can be said for the Jewish communities in France and North Africa. As I illustrate throughout this chapter, decolonization was a pivotal moment in their relationship to colonialism, to anti-colonial struggle, and to their position in France more broadly. It raised many critical issues that continued to unfold over the next half-decade. The war was, in many ways, a crossroads for Jews and their relationship to France, an end and a beginning, whose effects we will be following for the rest of the dissertation.

There are two lines of inquiry that scholars have generally followed with regard to the struggles for decolonization. The first concerns the vital question of Jewish involvement.[6] Did Jews

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[5] Benjamin Stora, "Les questions mémorielles portant sur la colonisation et la guerre d'Algérie," 2021; see also Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991).

[6] On Algeria, see especially Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale*; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015, Chapters 4 and 5; Ethan B Katz, "Muslims as Brothers or Strangers? French Jewish Thinkers Confront the Moral Dilemmas of the French-Algerian War," in *The Stranger in Early Modern and Modern Jewish Tradition*, ed. Catherine Bartlett and Joachim Schlör (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021), 202–39; Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*, Chapters 2 and 3; Stora, *Les trois exils*, 2006, Troisième exil; Benjamin Stora, "L'impossible neutralité des Juifs d'Algérie," in *La guerre d'Algérie: 1954-2004, la fin de l'amnésie*, ed. Mohammed Harbi and Benjamin Stora (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004), 287–315; Richard Ayoun, "Les Juifs d'Algérie pendant la guerre d'indépendance (1954–1962)," *Archives juives* 29, no. 1 (1996): 15–29; Philippe Boukara, "La gauche juive en France et la guerre d'Algérie," *Archives Juives* 29, no. 1 (1996): 72–81; Hammerman, "The Heart of the Diaspora"; Jessica Hammerman, "Des Juifs français contre la torture en Algérie," *Archives Juives* 48, no. 1 (2015): 109–27. For Moroccan independence, see Alma Rachel Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists: Moroccan Jews and the Politics of Belonging* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

participate in the war? To what degree? On what side? Scholars have offered nuanced and rich responses to these questions that explore Jewish engagement in all of its various modalities and forms. As Ethan Katz has argued, scholars and activists alike have presented the war as a binary choice between the French empire and the West on the one hand and an anti-colonial struggle for self-determination on the other. In reality, these positions were more fluid. As Katz writes, "the options articulated throughout the war were certainly potent and influential, yet transforming them into dichotomous historical frameworks implies a set of fixed entities, ideologies, and actions when in reality the period witnessed constant shifts."[7] For instance, the Union des étudiants juifs de France (UEJF), the French Jewish student's union, was an early and vocal supporter of Algerian independence. Writing in their journal *Kadimah,* they based their support for decolonization on their histories of racial violence as Jews:

> Who, better than us, who fought against British imperialism for the independence of the State of Israel, can understand the national aspirations of the peoples of North Africa? Who, better than us, who have paid our blood throughout history, intolerance, and racial prejudice, can feel more solidarity for the revolt against all oppression, wherever it may be?[8]

Their commitment to Israel, however, made such alliances challenging to sustain. Nevertheless, the notion of decolonization continued to preoccupy the student union, and in 1957 they held a seminar with the theme "Les étudiants juifs devant la décolonisation et la naissance d'un monde afro-asiatique."[9] That same year, they also devoted an issue to Jewish-Muslim dialogue and invited the

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[7] Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015 157. For a similar argument, albeit in a different context, about how colonial binaries can constrain both the range of identities and forms of power that exist, see Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516–45.

[8] "Editorial: Destin Nord-Africain," *Kadimah*, Juin 1955, 1.

[9] Boukara, "La gauche juive en France et la guerre d'Algérie," 75.

Algerian novelist and playwright Kateb Yacine to contribute. Yacine emphasized the shared Judeo-Arab heritage of Algeria, the ways Algerian Jews had been targets of racist and colonial violence, and their longstanding commitments to their land and people. "For my part," he wrote, "my conviction is reinforced every day by that of all Algerian Jews who proclaim their unconditional attachment to the land in which they were born and to which they belong."[10] However, this fluidity became much harder to sustain as the war progressed, and relational forms of identity between Jews and Arabs in North Africa were indelibly altered as more binary paradigms of identity, politics, and belonging took hold.

The second line of inquiry relates to what Michael Rothberg calls "multidirectional memory."[11] Here, the emphasis is on showing how memories of the Holocaust were activated during decolonization and helped shed light on the ongoing conditions of violence and repression.[12] Rather than a zero-sum game, the Holocaust and decolonization proved mutually illuminating events—and in fact, offered a broader opportunity for reflecting on the relationship between fascism in Europe and colonialism abroad, as attested to by figures like Aimé Césaire, Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, and others. To take but one example of this: in an issue of *France-Observateur* from November 09, 1961, Marguerite Duras published an article entitled "The Two Ghettos," which juxtaposed an Algerian man and a Jewish woman wearing a yellow star. In presenting the article, the editors wrote: "The time of the ghettos, which we thought had disappeared, has it

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[10] Kateb Yacine, "Les rapports judeo-arabes," *Kadimah*, juin-juillet 1957.

[11] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

[12] Ethan Katz suggests that appeals to the Holocaust and the Jew were in fact even more widespread than Rothberg accounts for. See Ethan B Katz, "Sartre's Algerian Jewish Question," in *Sartre, Jews, and the Other: Rethinking Antisemitism, Race, and Gender*, ed. Manuela Consonni and Vivian Liska (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 62–74.

returned?"[13] This account foregrounds such mutually illuminating practices of memory and politics and considers the different spaces where generative dialogue between these events occurred.

In this chapter, however, I want to propose a different direction, one which is neither concerned with precisely how and when Jews were involved in the war nor with how the Holocaust and decolonization might be productively compared. Instead, I want to ask how Jewish intellectuals responded to and engaged with the project of decolonization and anti-colonial struggle. In what ways did they see themselves reflected in or separated from these movements? How did it change their understanding of their position as minorities, their experience under fascism, and their relation to the broader structures of Europe? In the 1950s, Jews were still very recent victims of European oppression. As I show here, many intellectuals, such as the prominent Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, were invested in reclaiming a sense of Jewish identity and practice, which they conceived of as a challenge to the structures of European modernity. They were thinking critically about concepts such as difference, alterity, and universalism and exploring how the Jew was an exemplary figure through which to interrogate them. Yet this development occurred directly in relation to the struggles for decolonization. What relationship existed between these two movements and discourses? How did the challenge to European hegemony that arose with decolonization intersect with Jewish intellectuals' own reconstruction of the subversive potential of the Jew as other? This line of inquiry moves past the important question of who, when, and how Jews were involved in the struggles for decolonization. Instead, it asks how it impacted the project that Jews were engaged in in the postwar period.

This shift in approach is central to understanding the postcolonial development of the Jewish Question. For I suggest that while the notion of multidirectional memory offers us a

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[13] Cited in Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 237.

powerful analytic for understanding the shared histories of the Holocaust and decolonization, it does not entirely capture the problems posed by decolonization for Jewish writers and thinkers. In addition to practices of mutual illumination, decolonization ushered in an intellectual and political shift in the position of Jews and their relation to other oppressed minorities. In many ways, I argue, decolonization altered the paradigm of thinking about the Jew as a figure and site of alterity. Even if memories of the Holocaust illuminated France's repressive colonial regime, the primary figure during the war was not the Jew but the colonized. In fact, one result of the war was the greater *inclusion* of Jews within Europe. While we might point to how memories of the Holocaust illuminated ongoing sites of racial and colonial violence, they remained precisely that, memories. However, for Jews in the 1950s and 60s, that experience of violence had faded. And it is precisely that disjuncture that I want to explore here.

Consider, in this regard, a critical question that emerged regarding Algerian Jews' legal status. In 1961, as France and Algeria were conducting negotiations, Charles de Gaulle allegedly described Algerian Jews as a distinct legal category separate from other Europeans.[14] The Crémieux Decree had granted most Algerian Jews French citizens, and many Algerian and French Jews felt that de Gaulle's comments veered into dangerous territory.[15] In response, French and Algerian Jews lobbied aggressively to ensure that "Israélites" disappeared from the French proposals as a legal category and

[14] This account comes from Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 170.

[15] For more on Crémieux during the war, see Jessica Hammerman, "By Sentiment and by Status: Remembering and Forgetting Crémieux During the Franco-Algerian War," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 36, no. 1 (2018): 76–102.

that Algerian Jews would be treated just like other Europeans.[16] By the last years of the war, they had succeeded, and any difference between Algerian Jews and Europeans had vanished from the official language. At the immigration arrival forms in Marseille, there were only two categories one could fill in, European or Muslim.[17] Accordingly, one primary effect of the war was the crystallization of these state-defined categories and the integration of Jews within Europe. We might say, then, that decolonization shifted the locus away from the Jew as the primary site for thinking about identity and difference, as Jews became more easily subsumed into the category of European. While this was not immediately self-evident, the tides had begun to turn. Moreover, as Shepard and others have argued, the solidification of Algerian Jews as European had the effect—conscientiously or not—of excluding Muslims from the proposals. As he writes, "efforts to solidify the definition of a 'European minority' in order to eliminate any reference to Jews as a group worked to exclude 'Muslims' altogether." According to French politicians, Muslims could never be included in the same way, for they were "'barely compatible' with the 'European character' of the proposed minority."[18] The inclusion of Jews coincided with the exclusion of Muslims. Accordingly, although I have no wish to deny the mutually illuminating practices of memory, I suggest that we also need to account for and try to understand the challenges, structures, and decisions that shifted how the Jew was

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[16] The figure of the Algerian Jew developed an almost paradoxical character during the war. On the one hand, numerous articles and appeals were written to and on behalf of Algerian Jews, which effectively re-produced them as a separate category distinct from Europeans and Muslims. On the other hand, much of this writing was intended to deny that Algerian Jews existed as a separate class from French citizens and ensure they were repatriated with other pieds-noirs. Maud Mandel writes that "Jewish citizenship was, then, a touchstone issue around which debates over loyalties played out. Paradoxically, however, as Jews insisted that they were French like all others and the FLN insisted that Jews were Algerian like all others, both ended up underscoring Jewish distinctiveness." Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France* 51

[17] Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015, 225.

[18] Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 173.

thought of in relation to both Europe and other minorities, particularly Muslims and the colonized. As I detail here, this was not straightforward nor entirely inaugurated with decolonization. However, it was amplified and solidified in ways that had lasting consequences.

This chapter considers these questions and negotiations as they played out amongst several French Jewish intellectuals. In the first section, I illustrate how decolonization constituted a crossroads for Jewish political action through a reading of the important, though not very well-known figure Wladimir Rabinovitch and the *Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française,* a central forum for Jewish intellectual life after WWII. I show how one of the significant challenges of this period was to decide how Jews would respond to liberation struggles that did not immediately concern them. Would they align themselves with leftwing political movements and challenge France's colonial rule, or would they refuse to engage, implicitly endorsing its logic? This choice was particularly acute, for it arose at a moment when anti-Semitism had generally faded from Jews' immediate and everyday experience. It was a choice, in other words, in which the historical association between Jews and the left was put into question. In the second part, I develop a more philosophical account of this question through a reading of Emmanuel Levinas and how his postwar project for Jewish thought was imbricated with questions of colonialism. I show how he was developing the figure of the Jew as an alternative to and critique of Western hegemony, but also how that intersected with the movements for decolonization. Levinas, I show, attempted to elaborate his critique of the West while also ensuring that Jews would be included within it—to the specific exclusion of others. I suggest, ultimately, that Levinas's conundrum indexes the broader challenges of Jewish thought at this moment.

For each of these figures and organizations, the war proved a pivotal moment to re-examine the position of the Jew in postwar France, its relation to the history of French colonialism, and how it related to other oppressed groups. Perhaps for the first time since the Holocaust, decolonization

upset the dynamics of Jewish difference and raised an important question: what relationship would the histories of fascism, anti-Semitism, and Jewish alterity have with those of colonialism and racism more broadly? I argue that decolonization was a pivotal moment in the discursive and material conditions of Jews, their belonging to France, the relationship between Jews and Muslims, and between colonialism and anti-Semitism. The decolonization movements elaborated a critique of colonialism that profoundly changed the material and political relationship between colonizer and colonized and how people engaged with and thought about the structures of Western civilization and power. The way Jews perceived themselves to be or not to be part of that process has had lasting impacts on how we think about the evolution of the Jew in the postcolonial world.

DECOLONIZATION AND JEWISH POLITICS: THE CASE OF RABI

Wladimir Rabinovitch, known simply as Rabi, provides a particularly instructive lens to explore how decolonization constituted a crossroads for Jewish intellectuals. Born in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he went to a Russian-language school and spoke Yiddish at home, Rabi's family settled in the Left Bank in Paris in 1910 with other political refugees from the Czarist regime.[19] Rabi was a vocal part of the French Jewish intellectual milieu. He was an active participant in the *Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française* and often published articles in Jewish newspapers and journals such as *L'Arche, Evidences, Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle,* and others. He was known as an incisive provocateur who did not hesitate to speak his mind and often sharply disagreed with prominent figures. Ultimately, his book *Un peuple de trop sur la terre ?* (1979) criticized the Jewish establishment's unrelenting support for Zionism and largely ostracized him from the community.

[19] These details of Rabi's biography are taken from Judith Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France Since 1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 56-57

During the period of North African decolonization, Rabi wrote extensively about the position of Jews and their relation to the independence movements. He published multiple articles in *Esprit* about the Jews' situation in Algeria and Morocco.[20] And he wrote extensively for the Jewish press, including the French monthly paper *L'Arche,* the journal *Evidences, Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle,* and newspapers in North Africa, including *Information Juive* in Algeria and *La Voix des Communautés* in Morocco.[21] Contrary to many who felt that Jews should not be vocal about the war, Rabi strongly advocated that Jews speak out openly qua Jews. He later described the need to fight a "double front," working within and without the community.[22] On the one hand, he strove to bring greater awareness to North African Jews and their position in the newly established states; on the other, he pushed the Jewish communities—both in France and North Africa—to actively involve themselves in shaping what that future would look like.

These questions, Rabi thought, were part of a broader shift in the nature of Jewish politics. In an article published in 1959 in *Esprit,* "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," he described the Jewish community as caught on a political precipice between the right and the left. On the one hand, he notes, Judaism had long associated itself with the left due to the preponderance of anti-Semitism in right-wing regimes. The political left—while by no means immune from anti-Semitism—had been a haven for Jews for centuries. Rabi goes so far as to describe Marx's theory of alienation as a "heterodox development of the messianic idea in the modern world."[23] Other events

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[20] Rabi, "Destin des Juifs en Afrique du Nord," *Esprit* 240/241, no. 7/8 (juillet-aout 1956): 152–61; Rabi, "Conversations en Algérie," *Esprit* 275, no. 7/8 (juillet-aout 1959): 5–16; Rabi, "Conversations au Maroc," *Esprit* 250, no. 5 (mai 1957): 833–49; Rabi, "Nouvelles conversations en Algérie," *Esprit* 293, no. 3 (March 1961): 481–93.

[21] See especially Rabi, "Destins au Maroc," *Evidences* N. 64 (Avril-Mai 1957): 15–22; Rabi, "Au cœur du drame algérien," *L'Arche*, 1959; and his "Carnet de route" in *Information Juive*

[22] Wladimir Rabi, *Un peuple de trop sur la terre ?* (Paris: Les Presses d'aujourd'hui, 1979), 33.

[23] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," *Esprit* 278, no. 11 (Novembre 1959): 491.

also bear this out, including the Dreyfus Affair, where anti-Semitism was a fundamental dividing line between the right and the left. On the other hand, after the Holocaust, Rabi suggests that Jews had begun a rightward drift and were becoming more conservative. He offers several reasons for this. First, the Jewish community's upward economic mobility had led to a general "ideological embourgeoisement" that came with more secure material conditions. As Jews began to procure better jobs, their political leanings also shifted away from the more radical revolutionary parties. Second, the postwar period had seen a dramatic reduction in anti-Semitism, and Jews no longer had to contend with daily fear and precarity because of their identity as Jews in society. Because they were no longer at odds with the state, leftwing ideologies became less appealing. Third, the Soviet Union's anti-Semitism had turned many Jews away from communist parties. Finally, he says, the effects of Israeli policy and Jew's alignment with Israel put them at odds with some of the more left-leaning parties who were critical of the state.

Whatever the combination of reasons, Rabi draws a more significant point from this: Jews today, he argues, are losing their more radical political sensibilities and reneging on the values of justice and centuries of political advocacy. Although historically aligned with the left, Jews were increasingly more conservative. With anti-Semitism in retreat, Jews had to develop new criteria for which political ideologies they would align with. "The choice is necessary and inevitable," Rabi wrote.

> We will no longer be able to get away with the usual homiletic sermons on peace in the city and on peace in the world. The Jew lives within the city. He participates in the work and activities of the nation. He is at the heart of the world's wounds and hopes. For a long time, Jews constituted a "marginal" or "interstitial" group, according to Talmon's formula. One hundred and fifty years of emancipation is more than enough time to reach the majority. Despite the reluctance brought by the Jewish world, it does

> not seem, however, that it has reached this majority. Of course, there are reasons for this neutralist behavior. And these reasons are mainly historical.[24]

It was easy for Jews to fight against anti-Semitism, to join the leftist political parties when their lives and well-being were at stake. But now that that's not the case, how would Jews react?

To illustrate this political precipice, Rabi described two examples: Apartheid in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the US. These case studies provided two templates through which to interrogate Jewish politics in the aftermath of the Holocaust. South Africa, Rabbi suggests, illustrates the profound failure of Jews to stand up for justice when it didn't immediately concern them. In contrast, the civil rights movement demonstrated the opposite, the possibility of Jewish solidarity with other oppressed groups. Notably, both involve the question of racial politics. In South Africa, Rabi writes, the Jewish community almost entirely assimilated to Whiteness and tacitly agreed to support the apartheid regime.[25] "Faced with the problem of apartheid," he said, "they [the Jewish community] are paralyzed between the White people who grant them favors but who ask them for wages, and the Black people to whom they are linked by their moral values and their former situation as a persecuted group."[26] Although many individuals continued to promote tolerance, Rabi says that they refused to take a political stance as a community. He quotes Rabbi Moses Weiler, the Chief Minister of the Johannesburg United Jewish Progressive Congregation, who

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[24] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," Novembre 1959, 496.

[25] The story of South African Jewish relation to Whiteness is of course much more complicated than Rabi lets on. Moreover, there were many Jews who did participate in the struggle against apartheid, especially within the the South African Communist Party. However, his point about the mainstream Jewish community's response is for the most part accurate. For more, see Steven Robins, *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (Cape Town: Penguin Books, 2016); Milton Shain, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930-1948* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015); and Claudia Bathsheba Braude, ed., *Contemporary Jewish Writing in South Africa: An Anthology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

[26] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," Novembre 1959, 500.

wrote, "the Jewish community decided that it would not intervene as a community in this serious and complex question, and would remain neutral… It is not possible to get involved in serious political issues on the one hand, and on the other hand to ask the South African government for many concessions for Israel." This was echoed by the Board of Deputies who in 1958 declared that "there is not and there can be no Jewish position about South African racial policy."[27] The decision to maintain neutrality in the face of racial segregation was unconscionable for Rabi and indicated tacit acceptance of apartheid. Moreover, it spoke to how, faced with a change in their material and political conditions, Jews had accepted a Faustian bargain. They submitted themselves to a White racial regime that only a few years earlier would have been unimaginable.

On the flip side, however, he suggests that the civil rights movement in the US constituted an alternate paradigm.[28] In this case, he lauds the community's participation in the struggles for civil rights and their commitment to racial integration. He cites a Rabbi in Nashville who wrote after his synagogue was attacked, "The fight against Black people is the inevitable precursor of the fight against the Jews, and later against the Catholic Church, civil liberties, democracy, and Christianity itself… I am for integration, not only because I am a Jew, not only because my religious faith teaches me that God is our universal Father and that all men are brothers, but also because I am American and morally mandated to support the decision of the Supreme Court."[29] In a reversal of the South African context, with civil rights, Jews chose to align themselves with oppressed Black

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[27] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," Novembre 1959, 500.

[28] This story too is more nuanced and less straightforward than the way Rabi tells it. For more see Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2018).

[29] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," Novembre 1959, 501. This was six years before the famous photo of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King marching in Selma.

people despite not being the primary targets. Their support for racial integration indicated to Rabi the true upholding of Jewish values and their commitment to equality.

In Rabi's analysis, the two cases, apartheid South Africa and civil rights, constituted two pathways for contemporary Jewish politics. He thought that Jews at that moment were presented with a distinctive choice to make: either they would close in on themselves and worry about their own lives and communities to the exclusion of others, or they would be open to the world, participate in its struggles, and fight for its liberation. This was a choice between the right and the left, between supporting apartheid South Africa or joining in the struggle for civil rights:

> Right or left? In fact, the question is, to what extent can Judaism embody its values within the modern world? To what extent can the Jewish world get involved, and in what way? We have the choice between a closed Judaism feeding on its immediate interests and an open Judaism painfully inserted into the modern world, participating in its sufferings, perplexities, and hopes, working deliberately for the extraordinary task of liberating men outside of fear and war. For a long time, the daily threat of anti-Semitism forced us to focus exclusively and voluntarily on our own problems. But profound political, historical, and social transformations have modified our structures over the past twenty years. The younger generation cannot wait indefinitely for this eternal postponement until tomorrow. Otherwise, it will reject this Judaism, which is useless to it.[30]

Rabi is contending with the global transformation of the Jewish Question and its consequences for Jewish political thought and action. Jews were no longer modernity's primary other, and their response to that changed condition would shape their political and intellectual futures.

Yet, if apartheid and civil rights established the two poles of Jewish political action, they were still distant, disconnected from the immediate French-Jewish context. Decolonization then, and especially the Algerian War, proved for Rabi the central testing ground for the Francophone Jewish communities. How would they respond to the war? What choices would they make? And

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[30] Rabi, "Le monde juif entre la droite et la gauche," Novembre 1959, 505–6.

what would that say about their broader place in the struggles for liberation? Rabi's critique of the Jewish community's political neutrality in South Africa only thinly veiled the more immediate context of decolonization. In one essay, "Les chemins de fuite (Engagement et non-engagement)," he reprised his political analysis of the rightward drift of the Jewish community and repeated his critique of South African Jews and their inability to critique apartheid. This time, however, he explicitly tied this to the struggles for decolonization in North Africa. He notes, "it is time, I think, for all of us to do our soul-searching and let go of that air of utter innocence that we so love to don."[31] Rabi recognized this was a complicated subject for many in the Jewish community, especially as the question of Algerian Jews remained uncertain. Yet, he denounced their decision to avoid getting involved and hide behind a mask of innocence.

Apart from a handful of vocal proponents, the Jewish community had refused to take a political stance on the war. This was most evident with the Comité Juif Algérien d'Etudes Sociales (CJAES), a prominent Algerian Jewish organization founded during WWI and run by Jacques Lazarus, which attempted to maintain neutrality throughout the war. During the war, the FLN and later the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) published numerous appeals to the Algerian Jewish community to join in their struggle. Both appeals highlighted the fact that Jews had been part of Algeria for a millennium and that they would remain an integral part of the Algerian nation. The appeals describe the Crémieux Decree as a colonial legislation that served the interests of France and facilitated colonial expansion and control: "The implantation of colonialism in Algeria," one FLN letter stated, "resulted in the depersonalization and the 'denationalization' of the Jews and again in a tendency to separate them and dissociate them from their Algerian compatriots, a tendency which—

[31] Éliane Amado Lévi-Valensi and Jean Halpérin, eds., *La conscience juive: données et débats* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 296.

we must recognize—was successful."[32] Moreover, both the FLN and the PCA insisted on the intimate connection between fascism and colonialism. The FLN referred to the French as "colonial-fascists"—a move which, not only appealed to Algerian Jews' memory of their experience under Vichy but insisted on seeing colonialism and fascism as part of the same political movement.[33] The appeals were widely read. Even Henri Chemouilli, an Algerian Jewish intellectual who supported the right-wing terror group the *Organisation Armée Secrète* later in the war, wrote that he understood the appeal as a "serious message" that required a measured response and went on to say that "by whom, if not by the Jews… were the Muslims ever better understood?"[34]

In response to the FLN's appeals, the CJAES responded with their own declaration, published in their newspaper *Information Juive*.[35] They argued that the Jewish community was not a homogenous group and certainly not a political group, and they asserted that no one person or organization could speak for it as a whole. They noted that they were committed both to France and the Muslim community. In line with almost everything they published around that time, they did not mention colonialism and spoke only vaguely about peace and non-violence. Most pointedly, they made no political commitments and refused to take any side in the conflict. Benjamin Stora referred to this as the impossible neutrality of Algerian Jews.[36] As Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani underscores, while the CJAES maintained that the Jewish community was diverse, they consistently distanced themselves from the actions of more radical Jews in the FLN and PCA.[37] They worked hard to

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[32] Federation de France du Front de Libération Nationale, ed., *Les Juifs d'Algerie dans le combat pour l'indépendance nationale* (Paris, December 1959), 15.

[33] Nationale, *Les Juifs d'Algerie dans le combat pour l'indépendance nationale*, 6.

[34] Henri Chemouilli, *Journal d'un faux exode* (Alger, 1957), 37.

[35] "Une declaration du Comité Juifs Algérien d'Etudes Sociales," *Information Juive*, November 1956.

[36] Stora, "L'impossible neutralité des Juifs d'Algérie," 2004.

[37] Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale*.

implicitly ensure that they were the only ones who spoke on the community's behalf. Moreover, in contrast to some of the work being done by more liberal groups to highlight the long and peaceful history of Jews in Algeria, the CJAES developed a different story that insisted on the linear and teleological march of Algerian Jews toward France.

Lazarus and Rabi were close friends and often corresponded during the war.[38] Lazarus advocated that French Jews not take a public stance, especially if it was anti-colonial, and Rabi's more active involvement often put them at odds. In one letter that Lazarus sent to Rabi in 1957, he described these differences in the following way:

> I believe there is a profound disagreement between us who live here and some of our friends in the metropole. It would be dire (and yet I have sometimes discerned this attitude in some people) to push the Jews of Algeria to adopt an attitude that would in no way correspond to the deep feelings of the immense majority of the Jewish population. This feeling is well known. The Jews of Algeria want to be French above all else. Moreover, why ask them to adopt an attitude en bloc, to "choose" collectively? We do not ask that of other communities in Algeria. As for the parallel between the position of the Jewish community of Algeria and that of the Jewish communities in the South of the USA or the South African Union concerning segregation, it is in no way justified.

Rabi disagreed. And while he trod lightly, he also did not mince words: "I merely want to show," he wrote in one essay, "how, in the face of this problem which engages our generation, the Jewish world in its entirety refused to engage, and revealed itself by a terrifying spirit of flight."[39] Moreover, he continues:

> Why this silence in the face of war and I measure my terms, and I would not want to hurt anyone — which despite itself, inexorably secretes terrorism and torture because of the conditions in which it is engaged? Why this silence in the face of a war that has

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[38] This correspondence can be found in the archives of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in the Fonds Jacques Lazarus

[39] Lévi-Valensi and Halpérin, *La conscience juive*, 297.

> lasted six years? (We are about to enter the seventh year) a war that, year after year, causes at least 40,000 deaths per year.[40]

The Jewish community's response to decolonization, Rabi argued, more closely mimicked the situation in South Africa than that of civil rights.

Rabi's advocacy for Jewish involvement was underwritten by more extensive reflections on how decolonization changed the nature of Jewish intellectual and political life. Rabi considered decolonization a pivotal moment in the evolution of post-Holocaust Judaism—a time when Jews had to determine their place amidst the broader struggles against oppression. Jews, he recognized, were no longer subject to anti-Semitism or excluded from national life in the same ways they had been. Instead, other marginalized and oppressed communities were fighting for their rights on an international scale. At stake in Jews' silence during the war, for him, was not merely a question of political activism or their material comfort but of the very nature of Jewish politics and its relation to other oppressed groups and struggles for liberation. Jews' relation to these broader struggles, he thought, would shape their moral and political standing and their position within the hierarchies of exclusion and difference that characterized postcolonial French society. Rabi's framed his reflections on decolonization, in other words, through a broader analysis of the contemporary landscape of Jewish politics.

DECOLONIZATION AT THE COLLOQUE DES INTELLECTUELS JUIFS DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

In addition to his extensive articles on the subject, one of the important places where Rabi argued his cause was the *Colloque des intellectuels juifs de langue française.* The *Colloque* was a bi-annual meeting of French Jews created in 1957 and was a central forum for the reconstitution of Jewish intellectual life

[40] Lévi-Valensi and Halpérin, *La conscience juive*, 298.

in the postwar period.[41] One scholar described their activity in these terms: "Much more than a simple annual meeting or even a proper tradition, the CIJLF [*Colloque*] illustrates a way of living Judaism, a manner of being Jewish in France after the war."[42] Part of their project was to shift the register of Jewish life away from the Franco-Jewish model, which emphasized the consonance between France and Judaism and the commitments of Jews to the ideals of the Revolution. The *Colloque*, by contrast, was interested in the particular values and place of Judaism in the contemporary world and in refusing to subsume those values within the register of the universal. As Hammerschlag explains, "for a number of French Jewish thinkers, this meant questioning the assimilationist and apologetic postures that had characterized Judaism's self-definition in France before the war. Instead of attempting to show the myriad of ways in which Judaism was consonant with French values, Jewish thinkers began looking to Judaism for an alternative to the wisdom of the Christian West."[43] André Neher, one of the organizers and primary contributors, described the *Colloque's* mission as enabling Jewish intellectuals to "become aware of the fact that Judaism has value, that it is even the fundamental and central value."[44] Neher often gave the first "lesson" during each meeting, a reading of a Biblical passage, while Emmanuel Levinas closed the meeting with his famous Talmudic lectures.[45]

There are a few reasons why the *Colloque* is essential for thinking about decolonization, as well as the shifts in the nature of the Jewish Question more broadly. First, the *Colloque's* project to

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[41] For more on the Colloque, see Szwarc, *Les intellectuels juifs de 1945 à nos jours*.

[42] Simon-Nahum, "«Penser le judaïsme». Retour sur les Colloques des intellectuels juifs de langue française (1957-2000)," 80.

[43] Hammerschlag, *Modern French Jewish Thought*, 2018 xvii.

[44] André Neher, "Des Monologues au Dialogue," in *La Conscience Juive Face à l'Histoire: Le Pardon*, ed. Jean Halpérin and Eliane Amado Lévy-Valentine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 153.

[45] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

transform the nature of Jewish intellectual and political life emerged precisely during and in relation to the struggles for decolonization. This was no accident, and there are numerous places where one can see them work out the question of Judaism in conjunction with a reflection on decolonization and other marginalized groups. Moreover, the *Colloque's* meetings are a helpful place to track how Jewish thinkers responded to the various developments of postcolonial life in France, from their relationship with Israel to Jewish-Muslim relations to the question of the state. The meetings never precisely match ongoing events, but they generally respond to them implicitly and explicitly. Most importantly, however, the *Colloque's* project indexes one of the central tensions of postcolonial Jewish thought. On the one hand, the *Colloque* sought to move away from the Franco-Jewish model that had prevailed in French Judaism and to develop the specificity of Judaism. Many members saw this as a fundamental challenge to Western hegemony and its insistence on universalism, assimilation, and sameness. This was especially true for Emmanuel Levinas, whom we will encounter shortly. On the other hand, even as they saw themselves as a critical and subversive force, they made those claims from a place that was increasingly more integrated within the boundaries of Europe. To put it differently, the *Colloque* was deeply invested in the model of the Jew as other and its subversive potentiality even as that model of Jewish alterity was beginning to fade. They continued to see themselves in terms of difference and alterity even as this was less and less the case. This becomes particularly evident when the relationship between Jews or anti-Semitism is set in relation to other figures and discourses. Decolonization was one of the first test sites for this conundrum—but it would be repeated over the coming decades in varying degrees (see especially Chapters 3 and 4). How would they reconcile their own sense of critiquing the paradigms of Western modernity while doing so based on, or in conjunction with, the dismissal, rejection, and diminishing of other minorities, primarily Arab postcolonial subjects?

In February 1963, a special meeting of the *Colloque* took place. Organized outside the regular bi-annual schedule, the meeting was entitled "From Monologue to Dialogue" and was designed to stage a conversation between French and Algerian Jews. After some scheduling trouble, the meeting was held the year after the signing of the Evian Accords and the end of the Algerian War.[46] In particular, the *Colloque* wanted to figure out how Algerian Jewish intellectuals would participate and join in their project—which was broadly shaped by the particularities of French Judaism. Neher sent letters to leaders in the French Jewish community inviting them to participate, and he wrote that French Jews "risk missing out on the new arrivals, in ignorance of what they represent."[47] In the meeting, Neher explained to the participants that the *Colloque's* project was to re-invigorate the specificities of Jewish life and thought and to challenge the "tragic ways it had moved toward assimilation and ignorance of Jewish values."[48] Part of what was at stake, then, was to negotiate how Algerian Jews fit into those parameters: What relationship did the *Colloque's* intellectual project—one that was broadly Ashkenazi and French—have to that of Algerian and North African Jews? The goal, as Neher wrote, was "to allow you, Jewish intellectuals who arrived recently, or some time ago, especially from Algeria, but also from other regions of North Africa, Morocco, and Tunisia, to participate in the work and problems of Jewish intellectuals of France."[49]

The often-binary terms—East/West, Sephardi/Ashkenazi, North African/French—dominated the meeting and indexed just some of the difficulties faced by the *Colloque* as they contended with the changing face of French Judaism. Indeed, not everyone was willing to accept

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[46] The meeting had been planned for some time but was delayed after being moved from Algeria to France. See AIU AM O 012 D Letter from Edmond Fleg to Eugène Weill

[47] AIU AM O 012 D Letter from André Neher to Eugène Weill

[48] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 153.

[49] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 151.

these differential terms, and the Algerian attendees often contested the sense that they differed from their French counterparts. As Naomi Davidson has argued, while Algerian Jews saw themselves as French, once in the metropole, they were still considered by many to be too Arab.[50] Additionally, however, simmering under the surface was a broader, even more, pointed issue: How did the members of the *Colloque* articulate their relationship to the struggles for decolonization? How did this nascent Jewish intellectual project, which was re-casting itself against the rhetoric of French universalism, align itself with the struggles against French and European colonialism?

Despite its calls for dialogue, the speakers at this meeting were mostly the typical members of the *Colloque*: Neher, Levinas, Éliane Amado Lévy-Valensi, Rabi, and Léon Askenazi (Askenazi was originally from Algerian but had been active in the French community for some time). Many spoke in general terms of the different roles that Ashkenazi and Sephardi Judaism played or of the necessity of balancing the particular and the universal. Only Rabi and Levinas directly addressed the Algerian war and decolonization. For Rabi, the Algerian war left an indelible mark on French and Algerian Jews. Moreover, in line with his calls for more direct Jewish involvement during the war, he suggested that neither the French nor Algerian Jewish community was "entirely innocent" in the matter. As for Jews in the metropole, Rabi sharply criticized them for refraining from speaking out against torture and colonialism more broadly, opting instead to remain silent: "For too long," he wrote, "we have remained silent in the face of one of the last great problems posed by colonialism."[51] Even more broadly, colonialism, Rabi suggested, was an absent category for the French Jewish intellectual, and the community writ large had not been nearly active enough in thinking, protesting, and condemning it.

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[50] Davidson, "'Brothers from South of the Mediterranean'."

[51] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 200.

Concerning Algerian Jews, Rabi thought the problem was slightly different. On the one hand, indigenous to Algeria, they had also gradually deepened their commitments to France, such that by the time of the war, the meaning of decolonization was lost on them. So much so that he writes:

> You [Algerian Jews] could not understand the meaning of the term 'decolonization' because, according to you, you were already decolonized; you had already acquired the status of free men… only a conscious Judaism, a Judaism master of itself, overcoming itself, was able to understand Islam; however, in your country, Westernization was too advanced for you to be able to take this position of mediators that we wanted.[52]

Rabi's analysis was grounded in a French sensibility and understanding of North African Judaism. For example, he wished that North African Jews function as mediators and serve a conciliatory role between North Africa and France. This desire had been shared and articulated by many French Jews before him, and the figure of the North African Jewish intermediary features prominently within the annals of Orientalism. Rather than the classic East-West divide, orientalist scholars saw Jews as an in-between figure. On the one hand, they were exotic and oriental, but on the other, they were considered more capable of becoming French and more attuned to a Western way of life. As one historian of Tunisian Judaism put it, "of all the indigenous subjects, [the Jews] are the element that finds it easiest to assimilate; they possess the capital and the commerce of the Regency; they are the most intelligent and most active element of the population, and it is on them that France can count to introduce its language, its spirit, and its civilization to the Tunisian population."[53] Rabi, in effect, repeats a similar desire here. According to him, the very meaning of decolonization had been lost on Algerian Jews, for they had never felt themselves in need of it. They were already "free."

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[52] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 201.

[53] Cited in Colette Zytnicki, "The 'Oriental Jews' of the Maghreb: Reinventing the North African Jewish Past in the Colonial Era," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S Mandel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 46–47.

For Rabi, the political silence of both communities and their inability to engage with decolonization spoke to a broader dynamic that required contending with. Given that anti-Semitism was no longer the force it once was, Jewish intellectuals needed to make a new set of political choices that weren't based on their values and lives but on those of others. Jews were no longer the primary victims of state violence, and the struggles for liberation had long ago exceeded the fight against fascism and anti-Semitism. In this new political landscape, "the real question," Rabi wrote, "is which side are we on?"[54]

EMMANUEL LEVINAS: JUDAISM, COLONIALISM, AND THE WEST

It is worth looking more closely at one of the most prominent Jewish intellectuals of the time, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas developed a rigorous account of alterity, transcendence, and the other, which for him, constituted the basis of ethics and philosophy. In the wake of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and the ravages of WWII, Levinas understands the other as an external figure that confronts the subject and shapes it fundamentally. One's very constitution as a subject occurs in and through the ethical relation to the other and one's responsibility toward them. Beyond all concrete duties and demands, the other holds the subject hostage to their existence and inaugurates the ethical relationship as the basis of subjectivity and philosophy. The notions of deracination, exile, nausea, and other terms all became means for Levinas to describe this sense of uprootedness and being torn from oneself. Crucially, he linked this to the figure of the Jew. As Sarah Hammerschlag explains, "in a radical move that has left its mark on a generation of thinkers and writers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, Levinas gave deracination an ethical content and assigned to Judaism the privilege of bearing the message of deracination as its most fundamental teaching."[55] If Sartre, in his famous treatise on

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[54] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 202.

[55] Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew*, 2010, 120.

anti-Semitism, described the Jew as wholly constituted from without, Levinas refigures that sense of alienation as the basis of an ethical mode of non-belonging. The Jew as other was not merely a historical or political fact for him but the reflection and embodiment of the very nature of ethical subjectivity writ large.[56]

Levinas's ethical recasting of the Jew as other has been a critical intervention in Jewish philosophy. However, what interests me is how that was articulated in relation to other discourses seeking to upend the structures of Western modernity, especially anti-colonial and anti-racist thought coming from the so-called Third World. Scholars have recently begun to push Levinas's thinking in new directions and situate him within a broader, transnational context. As the edited volume *Radicalizing Levinas* makes clear, scholars are expanding Levinas's ideas and applying them to a wide range of topics, including the Israel-Palestine conflict, postcolonialism, animal studies, ecology, and technology.[57] One feature of this has been the attempt to recreate a postcolonial Levinas, or at the very least place him in dialogue with postcolonial theory. For example, John E. Drabinski's work points out that postcolonial thinkers have ignored Levinas and refused to give his thought serious engagement. He argues that putting the two in conversation will not simply make Levinas a "postcolonial thinker." Still, it may spark a fruitful dialogue that illuminates tensions and points of overlap to benefit both. "The aim," he says, "is neither to reinvent Levinas as a postcolonial thinker nor simply to critique his work as Eurocentric. Rather Levinas's work needs to be creatively reread across geographies—literal and figurative—in order to think more rigorously

[56] Emmanuel Levinas, "Being Jewish," *Continental Philosophy Review* 40, no. 3 (2007): 205–10.

[57] Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, eds., *Radicalizing Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010).

about the question of the Other as an *ethical, cultural,* and *political* question."[58] Many decolonial theorists, such as Enrique Dussel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, have also engaged with Levinas's work to help articulate their theories.[59]

It is instructive that Levinas's Jewish writings are often cited as a critical feature of his subversive philosophy and the attempt to destabilize Western hegemony. For example, Maldonado-Torres writes, "in Lévinas I found a more radical subversion of Western philosophy… His work also makes explicit reference to Jewish ideas and illustrates the difference of thinking with sources that have been to some extent marginalized by the West."[60] P. D. Anderson, who attempts to think with Levinas about the colonial relationship and anticolonial politics, ultimately concludes that while Levinas's ethical and philosophical writings may not be instructive in this regard, "his program for Jewish education, which was born directly from his experience in the camps" can be particularly illuminating.[61] At the same time as the emphasis is placed on the Jewish nature of his project, this is paired with a recurring concern about the question of Levinas's Eurocentrism.[62] The issue threatens to disrupt a transnational and decolonial Levinas—and not without good reason. Levinas has made

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[58] John E Drabinski, *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 10; see also Robert Eaglestone, "Postcolonial Thought and Levinas's Double Vision," in *Radicalizing Levinas*, ed. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010); Simone Drichel, "Face to Face with the Other Other: Levinas Versus the Postcolonial," *Levinas Studies* 7 (2012): 21–42.

[59] See especially Dussel, "'Sensibility' and 'Otherness' in Emmanuel Levinas"; Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*. For more in the relationship between Levinas and the decolonial school, see Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism*, Chapter 4

[60] Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "ON THE COLONIALITY OF BEING," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007-3): 240–41.

[61] Patrick D Anderson, "Levinas and the Anticolonial," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2017): 172.

[62] For critical engagements with this issue, see Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine*, vol. 3 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), Chapter 1; Andrew McGettigan, "The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity: Levinas, Europe and Humanities 'Without Sacred History'," *Radical Philosophy* 140 (2006): 15–25.

some highly questionable and overtly xenophobic comments about non-Western cultures that indicate, at the very least, a sense of European elitism. For instance, Levinas writes, "I often say, although it is a dangerous thing to say publicly, that humanity consists of the Bible and Greeks. All the rest can be translated: all the rest—all the exotic—is dance."[63] I want to suggest that precisely this dissonance illustrates a more extensive dynamic that concerns the figure of the Jew—and I think this factor is entirely missed in these conversations.

Levinas's relationship with the Greeks or Europe is more complicated than straightforward Eurocentrism. On the one hand, generated out of his Jewish and philosophical thought is a profound critique of the structures of Western philosophy, against which he positions Judaism as an alternative. As Sarah Hammerschlag writes concerning Levinas and Heidegger, Levinas's philosophical and Jewish writing "ought to be read as one part of a larger strategy to construct and present a vision of Judaism formed in opposition to what Levinas conceives of as Heideggerian paganism."[64] It would, accordingly, be simplistic to naïvely categorize Levinas as Eurocentric without attending to this dynamic. On the other hand, Judaism sometimes plays a more pernicious role in Levinas's thought. While Judaism comes to function for him as the site of an alternative, counter-hegemonic tradition in relation to the Christian West, it simultaneously functions to shore up those boundaries, to sustain and perpetuate the very Western biases that he sought to undermine. Judaism comes to align itself with the West over and against a host of others—described, amongst other choice nomenclatures, as "Pagan," "hordes," and the "underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses." Accordingly, to interrogate the specific role accorded to Judaism, we cannot consider it simply as a question of Europe and the Jew. But instead, a tripartite relation between Europe, the Jew, and the

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[63] Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 149.

[64] Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew*, 2010, 134.

"other others" whom Levinas is simultaneously excited by and highly weary of. If, as Hammerschlag and others have demonstrated, Levinas positions "Judaism against Paganism and the thinking of the West" through an ethical recasting of Jewish deracination, he just as often upholds the structures of Western dominance and includes Judaism within its bounds. This becomes particularly evident with regard to the colonial question and decolonization.

Much of the philosophical discourse around Levinas's work misses the direct and material entanglements he had with France's colonial apparatus and the Jewish communities of North Africa, specifically via his work as director of the *École Normale Israelite Orientale* (ENIO).[65] The ENIO operated under the auspices of the *Alliance israélite universelle.* Its primary mission until the late 1950s and early 1960s was to recruit students from North Africa and the Mediterranean Basin and train them as instructors who then returned to teach at *Alliance* schools. Students stayed at the school for several years studying for their baccalauréat and often an extra year for specific teacher training. Levinas's involvement with the ENIO began in the early 1930s and solidified after the war in 1946 when the school reopened with him as its director. In 1947, Levinas described the ENIO's mission in terms that he echoed at various points throughout his tenure:

> The Ecole Normale has an obligation to remain the center of the universalist spirit, to increase its influence, and to put students in contact with all the intellectual and artistic resources of Paris…. Around the school's table, at its meetings, will be invited all those—Jewish and non-Jewish—who would like to bring us the spirit of the West, the spirit of France: vast, free, universal.[66]

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[65] Some of the following material is drawn from my article Kranz, "Postcolonial Zionism."

[66] Emmanuel Levinas, "La réouverture de l'Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale," *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle (Paix et Droit)* 11 (December 1946 - January 1947): 3.

Explicitly stated and manifested throughout the many operations of the school and traversing almost all of Levinas's reports, essays, and articles concerning it, this refrain is endlessly repeated.[67] The students, primarily North African in origin, will be "injected" with a new "spiritual energy" that they will bring back to their communities, which, in Levinas's words and the *Alliance's* imagination, "have been abandoned for centuries on their own." Note how Levinas links France with a universalist tradition meant to enlighten and rejuvenate North African Jewish communities. France and Judaism become a symbiotic pair that express the highest ideals of the universal. In many ways, and despite its profound differences, this rhetoric rekindled that Franco-Jewish model of old. Notwithstanding his work to challenge the structures of Western modernity, when it came to situating Jews in relation to others or even North African Jews, Levinas did not give up on those values of French universalism.

The school and Levinas's educational mission were situated in a colonial context that made possible such outward-reaching projects as the *Alliance* and the ENIO. The *Alliance's* goals perfectly aligned with that of the French colonial apparatus and its civilizing mission. The *Alliance's* founding documents include phrases such as "to cast a ray of the civilization of the Occident into the communities degenerated by centuries of oppression and ignorance…by opening their spirits to western ideas, to destroy certain outdated prejudices and superstitions."[68] The *Alliance* made clear its desire to uphold the heritage of the French Revolution, and through its expansive network of

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[67] For more of Levinas's writing on the ENIO, see Emmanuel Levinas, "Le rôle de l'Ecole Normal israélite orientale," *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Paix et Droit* 91 (June-July 1955): 32–37; Emmanuel Levinas, "La crise de l'enseignement en France," *L'Arche* n. 1 (January 1957): 19–20; Emmanuel Levinas, "L'Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale," *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Paix et Droit* 110 (July-August 1957): 15–17; Emmanuel Levinas, "L'École Normal Israélite Orientale," *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle* 24 (September-October 1961): 9–10; Emmanuel Levinas, "La nouvelle Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale," *Les Cahiers de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle Paix et Droit* 138 (October 1962): 19–20.

[68] Cited in Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 83, and more generally 77–90.

educational schools, effectively perpetuated France's mission civilisatrice. Just as they sought to link Judaism to France and its purported ideals of universalism, liberty, and equality, they equally adopted the imperialist sensibility that underwrote its activities and its approach to the Jews of North Africa. One former student at the ENIO, reflecting on Levinas's role, highlights the degree to which the school functioned in many ways to initiate Sephardi Jews into Western culture: "He [Levinas] was very attentive to the formation of our character, with the initiation into the Parisian world, into Western culture, that awaited us, we who came from Morocco."[69] Other students put it more sharply:

> In the field of Jewish education, you have ruined the entire youth of Morocco. We thought we would find the man who represents Judaism and Universal Culture in you. So is this Judaism and European Culture, your coarse language, your furious apostrophes, in the classroom, the corridors, and even the kitchens and dormitories?[70]

Although Levinas did not often comment explicitly on decolonization—much to the dismay of some of his commentators—this backdrop is essential for understanding what he thought of the anti-colonial struggles and how he sought to position Judaism in relation to them. Consider a short essay published toward the end of the Algerian War in 1961, "Jewish Thought Today." Levinas reflects on the current conditions of Judaism and the directions it might take moving forward. He is broadly optimistic and sees in Judaism new beginnings and possibilities; he writes of "the dawning of a new world" where Judaism has achieved a permanence and pride of place in the "economy of Being." He says, "Judaism has traversed history without taking up history's causes. It has the power to judge, alone against all, the victory of visible and organized forces if need be in order to reject

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[69] Cited in Salomon Malka, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006), 88.

[70] Archives of the *Alliance israélite universelle* AM FRANCE E 001 G. See also my introduction to an essay by Levinas, Emmanuel Levinas, "We Lack a Culture: Reflections on Hebrew Education," *Levinas Studies* 14 (2020): 1–18.

them."[71] What are the causes of history referenced here, which Judaism has the power to stand over and reject? Three events, Levinas suggests, are central to understanding the current moment of Jewish thought:

> i) The unique experience of the revival of anti-Semitism, which culminated in the scientific extermination of a third of all Jews by National Socialism.
>
> ii) The Zionist aspirations which culminated in the creation of the State of Israel.
>
> iii) The arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the sacred history that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world.[72]

The quote is illustrative for several reasons: The first two events mark central, if generally understood, moments in the history and thought of Judaism. With the third, however, Levinas gestures to, without explicitly naming it, how he responded to the movements for decolonization. His use of highly racialized imagery immediately sets the tone of his remarks. It delineates the borders of an inside and outside of history, those included within it and those not. Although Jews may still be reeling from the experiences of the Holocaust, they are now made to be part of a Judeo-Christian world, included on the inside of a sacred history from which others are to be excluded. If Jews were once outsiders, a question to be solved, decolonization allows Levinas to rewrite the borders, to move Judaism within a Judeo-Christian, colonial, imaginary. The effects of decolonization are present in almost every word here. Still, rather than an opportunity to link his critique of the West together with it, to elaborate on the ways, say, that anti-Semitism and colonialism have functioned together within the Western world, decolonization poses a threat to

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[71] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 166.

[72] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 1990, 159–60.

Levinas's project for Judaism. For him, it proved a moment to enshrine Judaism within the Western world.

In the special 1963 *Colloque* between French and Algerian Jewish intellectuals, Levinas offered the closing remarks, summarizing what he took as the conference's main points. In some of his more explicit commentary on the subject, he also expressed his deep reservations about decolonization. In his comments, he says that one distinguishing feature between French and North African Judaism is that "there exists a modern Judaism in France" and that "our [i.e., French] Judaism knows how to speak the language of its time."[73] Levinas opposes this high-brow, modernized, and still-relevant French Judaism to the "religious warmth and density" of North African Judaism. Carrying this caricatured and hierarchical relation to its conclusion, he says that Algerian Jews came to France "because they were searching in French humanism for all that is best in the Greco-Roman expansion [prolongement] of our world."[74] Levinas establishes a typological model that depicts French Jews as modern, Western, and Greek in opposition to North African Jews. Recall that Levinas taught North African students daily, and his comments here, rather than flippant remarks, were built on a deep structure of Orientalism.

He concludes with these final remarks, which speak to decolonization and Jews' role within it. "We are all for decolonization," he says blithely, and yet with it,

> we risk placing on the same plane the civilizations of all those people who must live freely and desire a world that is both de-Westernized and de-orientalized—or, more precisely, a disoriented world. Regarding France, Algerian Judaism protested against this disorientation of the world, in both senses of the term; it wanted, at the price of

[73] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 238.

[74] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 239.

> many sacrifices, to maintain its attachment to a particular hierarchy of values that gives meaning to the world.[75]

Rather than seeing in decolonization a critique of all that had been carried out in the name of French and Western civilization and using it as an opening to create a dialogue between Jews and others around exclusion, assimilation, and universalism, Levinas reinstates a French and Jewish commitment to universalist humanism over and against what he sees as its undoing by the forces of decolonization. Moreover, the decision of Algerian Jews to migrate to France is here recast by Levinas as a commitment to those Western values and their hierarchical arrangement vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Fortunately, Algerian Jews, he thinks, have recognized this. Seeing decolonization as a threat to Western civilization allowed Levinas to position Judaism within a newly established racial and religious hierarchy.

Levinas's postwar project for Judaism was a central touchpoint for multiple intellectual projects rethinking the terms of difference, alterity, and universalism. Levinas positioned Judaism as an alternative to the Western hegemony of Being and rootedness and developed a critical philosophical apparatus in which he developed that. The Jew as other, for him, did not merely constitute an anti-Semitic or exclusionary discourse but was refigured as the very basis of the ethical relationship. The Jew was the exemplary and prime figure charged with bringing that message to the world. Yet, as I've shown, this was not entirely straightforward. When placed in relation to colonialism or decolonization, Levinas evinces a much different relationship to Europe and its values of universalism and Sacred History. In many cases, he specifically sets Judaism apart from the movements for decolonization and includes the Jew within Europe as a means of excluding others. Unwilling to align the Jew with them, Levinas reinstated the very borders and boundaries that his

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[75] Amado Lévy-Valensi and Halpérin, *La Conscience juive face à l'histoire*, 240.

project is celebrated for undoing. It is this dynamic that I suggest most immediately indexes the conundrum of postcolonial Jewish thought.

EPILOGUE

Let us return, in conclusion, to the report commissioned by President Emmanuel Macron that I mentioned at the outset of the chapter. Leaving aside the politics of the report and its proposals, one notes the absence of information regarding Algerian Jews and the ways that French colonization had uprooted their lives and histories. Indeed, in her open letter to Stora, "Algerian Jews Have Not Forgotten France's Colonial Crimes," Ariella Aïsha Azoulay describes this absence as "the fourth exile of Algerian Jews."[76] Her words are a subtle critique of Stora, whose book *Les trois exils: Juifs d'Algérie* was an essential text for reconceptualizing Jewish identity in Algeria. Azoulay suggests that Stora's report—and the fact that he alone was chosen to write it—says something important about Jews in relation to French colonialism. "You have," she writes, "supplied the state of France with scholarly 'proof' that its colonization targeted exclusively Muslims and Berbers (the latter assumed to exclude Jews). These omissions have serious consequences." Stora is a prominent historian of the Algerian war, but Azoulay argues that broader dynamics are at play here beyond historical accuracy. She notes how in 1865, most Jews had refused to apply for French citizenship and that the multiple technologies of control which have assimilated Jews into the canon of Western civilization have had disastrous consequences. Stora's report emerges within this still-ongoing imperial frame. "For the government to select a Jew to write this report," she argues, "is not a coincidence, but a trap. In this still imperial world, Jews are expected to act as blank citizens—to prove, as Houria Bouteldja writes,

[76] Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, "Algerian Jews Have Not Forgotten France's Colonial Crimes," *Boston Review*, February 10, 2021, https://bostonreview.net/articles/ariella-aisha-azoulay-benjamin-stora-letter/.

their 'willingness to meld into whiteness… to embody the canons of modernity.'" Stora, as a Jew, is called on to accept the colonial bargain of inclusion.

As the context and content of the report make clear, the Algerian War and decolonization are still very much live issues in France. From debates on memory, responsibility, and reparations to geopolitics and international relations, decolonization and the Algerian War continue to provoke debate. And so, too, does the relationship of the Jew to this history. Azoulay's argument that Stora legitimates an imperial erasure of Algerian Jews and perpetuates their inclusion within the West in some senses carries forward some of the questions we saw in this chapter. To what degree do Jews accept the colonial bargain of citizenship, and what consequences does that have? As we saw with Levinas and the *Colloque,* their response to decolonization was muted at best and destructive despite their purported counter-hegemonic project. Faced with a choice about where the Jew belonged, they aligned themselves with the structures of Western colonial modernity that decolonization had laid bare. If Stora's report indexes a contemporary iteration of this dynamic, it was first inaugurated with decolonization and has continued to unfold over the last sixty years.

Chapter Three

A Turning Point:
Zionism and the Anachronism of the Jew as Other

After all, I told myself that anti-Semitism and Zionism were born in the West.[1]

In 1969, Emmanuel Lévyne, a French rabbi and prolific writer, published *Judaïsme contre sionisme [Judaism against Zionism]*.[2] As the title shows, Lévyne was a sharply anti-Zionist thinker whose work was rooted in a religious vocabulary that veered away from the nationalist rhetoric of the Zionist project. Lévyne understood Zionism within the paradigm of European colonialism. Writing in 1957, he decried the ways Zionism had fixed Judaism within the ethos of 19th-century Europe. He noted that "political Zionism has primarily strong affinities with one of the most abhorrent institutions of the past century: colonialism."[3] More pointedly, however, Lévyne's understanding of Zionism was infused by the local context in which he was writing, and he specifically turned to the French colonization of Algeria to make sense of it. He surmised that Zionism could not last in Israel-Palestine because Israelis were "too Westernized [and] Americanized." Rather than revolutionaries fighting for their land, he characterized Zionists as *"belated colonialists"* whose political and military force would inevitably turn against them. Their ultimate destiny, he wrote, "can only be

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[1] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 29.

[2] Lévyne's work has received little critical attention; some of his other texts include: Emmanuel Lévyne, *Le royaume de Dieu et le royaume de César* (Beyrouth: Éditions le Réveil, 1973); Emmanuel Lévyne, *Le Judaïsme contestataire et révolutionnaire* (Issy-les-Moulineaux: Tsedek, 1974); Emmanuel Lévyne, "Petite anthologie de la mystique juive: introduction à la Kabbale," 1975.

[3] Emmanuel Lévyne, "Ils ont permis au profane de conquérir le sacré," *Tsedek* n. 5 (1957); for an online version, see https://ujfp.org/ils-ont-permis-au-profane-de-conquerir-le-sacre/

that of the French of Algeria."[4] He wrote essays such as "Décoloniser la terre sainte," infused with an anti-colonial ethos gleaned from North African decolonization, and he argued for a reevaluation of Jews' relation to land. Significantly for Lévyne, Zionism had changed the relationship between Jews and power. Though once in the position of the marginalized and oppressed, Zionist Jews had now taken on the role of aggressors:

> This is not a conflict of races, peoples, or nations but of worlds: that of the haves [gavés] against the wretched of the earth [damnés de la terre], that of the rich against the poor. The Jews have become rich (the main Jewish community, over six million, is that of the United States, on which the State of Israel depends), but the Arabs are still poor… It is not a question of taking sides for the Jews against the Arabs or the Arabs against the Jews but to defend the poor against the rich.[5]

His emphasis on the becoming rich of Jews marks their disassociation from the wretched of the earth—a term with clear Fanonian echoes—and frames the conflict within an anti-colonial critique drawn from the language of decolonization.

Lévyne was, in many ways, an outlier. In response to the 1967 war in Israel-Palestine, Jewish political mobilization and support for Zionism increased in ways that dramatically reshaped the politics of French Judaism. Before 1967, French Judaism, especially its communal organizations such as the *Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France* (CRIF), mostly refused to take political stances, especially qua Jews.[6] Recall the hesitation and silence that dominated the Jewish reaction to the Algerian War that we saw in the previous chapter. However, in the lead-up to and following the

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[4] Emmanuel Lévyne, *Judaïsme Contre Sionisme* (Paris: Éditions Cujas, 1969).

[5] Lévyne, *Judaïsme Contre Sionisme*, 28.

[6] The CRIF is an umbrella organization that brings together many Jewish establishments in France. It is related, on the international level, to the World Jewish Congress. For early debates about Zionism during its founding, see Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, "From an Unsolvable Dispute to a Unifying Compromise: Zionism at the Heart of the Debates Underlying the Creation of the French Jewish Umbrella Organization," *Bulletin Du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* 20 (2009).

1967 war, a distinctly Jewish political activism emerged that was unabashed in its self-presentation and began organizing itself *qua Jews (juifs)* rather than with the supposedly religious and private marker of *israélite*.[7] Esther Benbassa refers to this as "the new face of French Jewry," and Paula Hyman, even more pointedly, as the "Zionization of French Jewry."[8] As Maud Mandel suggests, however, Zionism alone cannot explain this turn. It also must be understood against the backdrop of local developments such as France's shift in policy from an unambiguously pro-Israel stance to being more sympathetic toward Palestinians, the lingering effects of decolonization, the influx of North African Jews who were purportedly less hesitant about publicly expressing Jewish interests and concerns, and the perceived threat that French Jews felt in the wake of the war.

In the previous chapter, we saw how decolonization served as a stage for considering the relationship between the Jew and the colonized and between anti-Semitism and colonialism. I suggested that for an important part of the Jewish intellectual community in France, there was a concerted effort to maximize those differences and to deny any congruity between the two figures and regimes. Decolonization was, in many ways, the first moment in the aftermath of the Holocaust, where the position of the Jew in relation to both the West and other oppressed minorities was being called into question. The separation of the Jew and the colonized, of anti-Semitism and colonialism,

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[7] There is room to question the general periodization here. As we saw with the *Colloque* in the previous chapter, they had already begun an intellectual shift away from the Franco-Jewish model and toward a uniquely and specifically Jewish intellectual tradition in the immediate postwar period.

[8] Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 189; Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* 203. For more on this claim, see Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France* chapter 4; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015, Chapter 6; Ethan B Katz and Maud S Mandel, "'The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice': Dissent and the Shaping of French Jewish Politics Since World War II," in *The Jews of Modern France: Images and Identities*, ed. Ziv Jonathan Kaplan and Nadia Malinovich (Boston: Brill, 2016); Joan Beth Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), Chapters 2 and 3

began a more extensive process whereby the Jew was no longer understood as the absolute other of Western modernity and began to be included within its loci of power.

In this chapter, I suggest that Zionism, and the onset of widespread support that accompanied it after the 1967 war, marked a fundamental turning point in this process.[9] Scholars such as Edward Said, Ella Shohat, Daniel Boyarin, and others have explored how Zionism adopted Europe's national, colonial, and Orientalist frameworks by seeking, in Herzl's unforgettable words, to be a "wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism."[10] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, for example, argues that Zionism activated a set of theological myths predicated on an Orientalist and colonial division between East/West, Jew/Arab, and secular/religious. Zionism's national-theological-colonial mythos, in his account, claimed to represent a response to and criticism of the West's anti-Semitic and racist regime. However, it only served to recapitulate that very same structure. As he puts it, "paradoxically, the exodus of the Jews from Europe enabled their assimilation into Europe, without the need for conversion."[11] However, the particularities of the French contours of this question have been less understood. If there is an abundant literature around Zionism and the ways it adopts colonial, settler-colonial, and European models of domination and control, how did it change the ways the Jew was figured and understood?

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[9] Although many lament the 1967 moment and the ensuing occupation as a turning point in Israel's relationship with the Palestinians, this largely obscures the ways that the Nakba and Israel's founding was arguably even more detrimental to Palestinian life. However, it is the case that 1967 was a turning point for many outside of Israel-Palestine.

[10] Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (Dover Publications, 1988) 15; See also Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," 1979; Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," Autumn 1988.

[11] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "A National Colonial Theology—Religion, Orientalism, and the Construction of the Secular in Zionist Discourse," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch Fur Deutsche Geschichte* 30 (2002): 317.

In this chapter, I show the particular ways that Jews began to be included within the French imaginary in relation to Zionism. Within the French context, this is a counterintuitive claim. Ethan Katz and Mandel describe how "1967 marked the moment when the Jewish communal establishment was willing to adopt an ethnically-infused oppositional politics even when it conflicted with France's international agenda."[12] This was undoubtedly a landmark change in Jewish ethnic and political identification in France. Indeed, even speaking of ethnically infused politics within the parameters of Republican universalism seems to suggest a departure from Franco-Judaism and a *mis*-alignment between Jews and France. And indeed, in response to the waves of Jewish political activism, many Jews faced claims of double allegiance, and people began openly wondering whether Jews' support for Israel trumped their belonging to France. This seems to suggest that, far from being included within the French imaginary, the 1967 war marked a break between Jews and their relationship with Europe. And yet, I argue that Zionism and the aftermath of the war led to increased *inclusion* of Jews within French national identity. Moreover, not only did Zionism change the nature of "Jewish-Muslim relations," as scholars such as Katz and Mandel have already explored. More crucially, it altered how the Jew was understood as a minority figure in relation to the broader structures of Western modernity. In two parts, this chapter sketches out the particular contours of how this played out in France.

THE JEW AND THE ANACHRONISM OF THE SARTREAN PARADIGM

Abdelkébir Khatibi, the Moroccan poet, sociologist, and philosopher, may not be the first place one would look to understand how Zionism changed the position of the Jew in France. Yet I want to suggest that he is one of the most incisive commentators on this question. Khatibi was renowned for his novels and poetry, as well as his contribution to postcolonial theory—especially with his

[12] Katz and Mandel, "'The French Jewish Community Speaks to You with One Voice'," 211.

notions of "other-thought [*pensée-autre*]" and "double critique."[13] It is less appreciated, however, as Olivia Harrison has shown, that one of the major sites at which he worked out these issues was the enigmatic notion of the Abrahamic and Jewish-Muslim relations. These ideas lie, she writes, "at the heart of, rather than peripheral to, his thinking on plurality. What is at stake in the Abrahamic is the possibility of *pensée-autre* itself: thinking outside the categories of self and other, across religious, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries, but also toward internal plurality, deploying 'Palestine as other-thinking and becoming.'"[14] What I want to show here is that not only was Khatibi an ardent critic of Zionism, but his analysis was tied to a perspicacious examination of the ways Jewishness and the Jewish Question had shifted since the Holocaust.

In 1974, Khatibi published a short, almost blasphemous text, *Vomito blanco: Le sionisme et la conscience malheureuse [Vomito blanco: Zionism and unhappy consciousness],* which offered an unqualified critique of Zionism. The text was infused with a brand of Marxist-Leninist analysis that was also popular in the avant-garde literary magazine *Souffles-Anfas,* to which Khatibi was an active

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[13] Despite his prolific and wide-ranging works (which include poetry, novels, sociology, philosophy, and essays), his texts have not been widely read in the US even in postcolonial studies; indeed, only in 2019 was Khatibi's seminal collection of essays essays published in English as Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Plural Maghreb: Writings on Postcolonialism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). For an interesting discussion of why Khatibi's work in in general has received far less attention in the English speaking world than Edward Said's, despite their often similar modes of engagement, concerns, and disciplinary contexts, see Françoise Lionnet, "Counterpoint and Double Critique in Edward Said and Abdelkebir Khatibi: A Transcolonial Comparison," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 388–407. For a rich overview of Khatibi's work and reception that also addresses many of these problems, see the "Introduction" in Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamlahy, eds., *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020). Consider too that when an interviewer asked Edward Said about the parallels between his critique of Albert Camus and Khatibi's critique of Sartre, Said all but brushes him aside: "Khatibi is a nice guy but peripheral. He is perceived as a kind of Moroccan equivalent of Derrida." Cited in Lionnet, "Counterpoint and Double Critique in Edward Said and Abdelkebir Khatibi" 399

[14] Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, 105; see also Olivia C Harrison, "Khatibi and the Transcolonial Turn," in *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism, and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond*, ed. Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamlahy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

contributor.[15] *Vomito blanco* is marked from the outset by what Khatibi describes as a sense of nausea at two instances of political violence: the killing of Palestinian fedayeen, or guerrilla fighters, by Jordanian forces in September 1970 and the waves of anti-Arab racism after the attacks on the Israeli Olympic team in Munich in 1972. The text reflects this affective charge in its unrelenting and sharp criticisms of Zionism and the Western left. Khatibi refers to it as a "pamphlet"—though some have even called it a "violent polemic."[16] Despite this reductive language which suggests a brash and reactive response, the text makes a series of complex diagnoses of Jewish difference that reflects on the ways the figure of the Jew had changed in relation to colonial and Western perceptions and how this change had for the most part gone untheorized.

Vomito blanco engages with and sharply critiques prominent figures among the French left, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Zionist writers such as Robert Misrahi and Albert Memmi.[17] For example, he criticizes Memmi's version of socialist Zionism and argues that he effectively annihilates all Palestinian existence. Within Memmi's corpus, Khatibi suggests, Zionism constitutes a

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[15] Harrison's descriptions highlight this element of the text Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb* 102-103. Lyamlahy and Hiddleston note in their introduction that though Khatibi signed the 'Appeal to Maghrebian Writers' that appeared in the 'Special Issue for the Palestinian Revolution' in *Souffles-Anfas,* he ultimately distanced himself from the overtly political tone of the journal after 1969. Hiddleston and Lyamlahy, *Abdelkébir Khatibi* 11-12. For more on the journal, which also included contributions by Albert Memmi and Abraham Serfaty, see the English translation of some of the key texts in Olivia C Harrison and Teresa Villa-Ignacio, eds., *Souffles-Anfas: A Critical Anthology from the Moroccan Journal of Culture and Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[16] Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, 101.

[17] There's no indication Khatibi knew of it, but the relationship between Sartre and some of the other Zionist writers Khatibi engages with was even stronger than he knew. In 1948, Sartre unequivocally supported militant Zionist nationalism and testified at the trial of Robert Misrahi—who features heavily in *Vomito blanco.* Misrahi was a former student of Sartre and was accused of concealing explosives for the Stern Gang. As Judaken recounts, Sartre testified that Misrahi was a "'veritable defender of liberty' whose sources came from 'the same pure convictions that we ourselves, Free French, prevailed upon in combating the Nazi occupier.' He proclaimed afterward that he considered it the duty of non-Jews 'to help the Jews and the Palestinian [i.e., Zionist] cause.'" Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006 188

"theoretical impasse," for his "socialist Zionism was born ideologically and historically in the heart of the Western bourgeoisie, it was Western imperialism that made Zionism possible… By defining oppression in a way that is too abstract and non-competitive, Memmi forgets the domination suffered by the Palestinian people."[18] This critique is carried through in Khatibi's analysis of Robert Misrahi's reading of Marx, which Khatibi shows is premised on an ideological understanding that renders any opposition to Zionism always already anti-Semitic. "And me," Khatibi asks blithely, "what am I to do with that? Where does one classify anti-Zionist progressives from around the world?"[19] Throughout the text, Khatibi pays close attention to the dynamics of blindness, projection, guilt, violence, and the ways that Zionism expropriates and annihilates Palestinian existence in the name of Jewish suffering. Zionism functions, Khatibi says, as a "highly effective ignorance machine," which tragically replaces the suffering of the Jews with that of the Palestinians. As he writes: for Zionism,

> the end of the exile of the Jewish people requires the exile of the other, the appropriation of the Promised Land supposes the dispossession of the other, the foundation of a State, the destruction of a people; the Nazi genocide is followed by the ethnocide of the Palestinians, dispersed paranoia is succeeded by the institutionalized paranoia of a State and codified according to the Zionist creed; finally, to the vehement affirmation of historicity corresponds the systematic repression of the concrete history of the other.[20]

Despite Khatibi's sustained engagement with Jewish and leftist thinkers, *Vomito blanco* received almost no critical attention, which he was very aware of. In a letter to Jacques Hassoun, Khatibi describes a journalist who read the text but whose response only reinforced the lack of recognition and willingness to engage with it: "It is brilliant," the journalist wrote to him, "it is very Jewish (sic

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[18] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 96.

[19] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 80.

[20] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 40.

and resic). Didn't he deserve a slap! On the one hand, he avoided reading what he read, what he saw written in black and white about Zionism and the unhappy conscience, and on the other hand, he eliminated me as a person, as someone different. I would be a Jew who ignores himself. Because, for God's sake, he would be very, very intelligent to assess my degree of intelligence. A stupid denial, but it's common."[21] After its publication, it quickly went out of print and was only later republished as part of *Paradoxes du sionisme: essai* in 1989. Khatibi wrote of his disappointment at the lack of response, though he noted with some joy that he had met with members of the Israeli Black Panther movement in Paris in 1975 and that they had been distributing bootleg copies of the text.[22] "Still," he wrote, "this text which challenged the European left (particularly French) remained without a direct response. This is symptomatic and highly revealing because, in addition to [their] ignorance is [their] silence on the concrete suffering of both Jews and Palestinians. But as the dominant ideological field in Europe is locked in the famous alternative (between anti-Semitism and Zionism), there could be no other word."[23] Even today, few scholars have engaged critically with the text. In the three-volume edited collection of Khatibi's work, no part of *Vomito blanco* is reproduced.[24] As we'll see in Chapter 4, Jacques Hassoun, Khatibi's friend and interlocutor was one of the few people to recognize the *lasting* relevance of the text, noting in 1984 that "it remains that your criticism of the

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[21] Abdelkebir Khatibi and Jacques Hassoun, *Le même livre* (Editions de l'Eclat, 1985), 122.

[22] See Abdelkebir Khatibi, "A Colonial Labyrinth," *Yale French Studies* No. 83 (1993): 8.

[23] Abdelkebir Khatibi, "Au-delà de l'antisémitisme et du sionisme," *Revue d'Études Palestiniennes* 1 (1981): 26.

[24] Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Oeuvres de Abdelkébir Khatibi*, vol. 1–3 (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 2007-2008), the volume does not reproduce Khatibi's entire oeuvre, but the total elision of this text is noteworthy. Interestingly, an arabic translation of the text appeared alongside his essay "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée" in Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Nahwa Fikr Moughayir [Toward a Different Thought]* (Doha: Ministry of Culture, Arts,; Heritage, 2013).

sophisms that were widespread in the European left of the 1960s is, in its joyful irreverence, even more relevant [des plus pertinentes]."[25]

In 1967, shortly before the war broke out, Sartre published a long-awaited dossier on the Israel-Palestine conflict in *Les temps modernes,* "Le conflit israélo-arabe." The special issue ran 991 pages and was purportedly devoted to "clarifying the problem." Commenting on the issue, Sartre noted that "our journal is striving to maintain absolute neutrality on this question. We want to leave it to the parties concerned to present their views so that the public will be able to grasp the problem. I want to continue to cling to this attitude of absolute neutrality."[26] Jonathan Judaken refers to this as Sartre's "ambivalent commitments."[27] He suggests that Sartre aimed to outline each side's conditions and allow them to develop their own perspectives without imposing his own views. The volume was thus organized in two separate parts, on one side writers representing the "Israeli" perspective and on the other the "Arab," so both sides could present their analyses in the spirit of dialogue.[28] However, one reviewer noted that the essays only contributed to the sense that this was more of a "dual monologue" than a productive dialogue, with each side effectively speaking past the other.[29]

Sartre is one of Khatibi's primary targets in *Vomito blanco.* Despite Sartre's attempt to maintain neutrality over the conflict, he often spoke out in support of Israel, angering many on the

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[25] Khatibi and Hassoun, *Le même livre*, 160.

[26] Cited in Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006 191, and see Chapter 6 generally for his extended discussion of Sartre's views on the conflict

[27] Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006 Chapter 6.

[28] For more on Palestinian activism at the time, see Abdellali Hajjat, "Des comités Palestine au mouvement des travailleurs arabes (1970-1976)," in *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales: France, 1920-2008*, ed. Ahmed Boubeker and Abdellali Hajjat (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2008), 145–56; Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France.* Chapter 5

[29] I. F. Stone, "Holy War," *The New York Review of Books* IX, no. 2 (August 3, 1967).

far left.[30] For example, immediately before the 1967 war, he signed an open letter that began, "We [who] are friends of the Arab peoples and opponents of American imperialism, and not supporting every stand that the Israeli leaders take, nevertheless take note of the State of Israel's present manifestation of evident restraint and desire for peace…"[31] The letter received significant backlash, and led Josie Fanon, Frantz Fanon's wife, to ask that Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* be retracted in all future editions. For his part, Khatibi wonders how Sartre could be so incisive in his analysis of Algerian independence and his critiques of French colonial power yet so dramatically fail to engage similarly with the Zionist project and its relation to those very structures of European colonialism.[32] In contrast to Judaken, who foregrounds Sartre's neutrality, Khatibi demonstrates that Sartre's very vacillation and obfuscation on Zionism served as a shield to absolve him of the need ever to criticize the State of Israel.

More than that, however, Khatibi argues that Sartre's failure to think the conflict is not a mere political misstep but arises due to the lack of an adequate analysis of the position of the Jew.

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[30] With regard to the far left, Jonathan Judaken notes that "in its aftermath [of the war] the plight of the Palestinians replaced the Algerian cause. Israel was represented as one wing of the American eagle's new world-wide imperialism, whose most nefarious consequences were being wrought in Vietnam. L'Humanité Nouvelle, for example, asserted quite clearly that 'Zionism [is] the spearhead of imperialism in the Middle East' (May 25, 1967). The Maoists of La Cause du Peuple denounced 'the imperialist and Zionist plot' (February 1969). L'Humanité Rouge contended that 'Zionism is fascism' (January 4, 1973), and for the Trotskyist Rouge 'the fundamental nature of the Zionist project' was 'expansionist, racist, colonialist' (August 24, 1973)." Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006 198

[31] Cited in Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006, 196.

[32] Sartre did occasionally attempt to think about the history of Jewish difference in its relation to the fight against colonialism, as in this comment he once made: "The situation of my Jewish friends during the Occupation revealed the problem of the Jews in Europe to me at the same time that our common resistance to Nazism created deep-seated bonds between us…. But in a similar fashion the struggle against colonialism led us during the Algerian War to take our stand with the FLN and to cement many friendships in the Arab nations." Cited in Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006, 192

Sartre's celebrated study of anti-Semitism, *Réflexions sur la question juive [Anti-Semite and Jew],* developed central ideas about anti-Semitism and the phantasmic projections of the anti-Semite. Even among those whom he referred to as "democrats," Sartre showed how their belief in universalism and Enlightenment reason led them to deny Jewish existence. His analysis, though famously controversial for ignoring the lived reality of Jews, proved highly influential for theorizing anti-Semitism and race and racism more broadly.[33] However, when thought about in relation to Israel, the text quickly gets complicated. Sartre's distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic Jew leads him toward the end of the text to suggest that one possible option for the authentic Jew was to turn to Zionism. The Jew, Sartre writes, "may also be led by his choice of authenticity to seek the creation of a Jewish nation possessing its own soil and autonomy; he may persuade himself that Jewish authenticity demands that the Jew be sustained by a Jewish national community."[34] Even if Sartre ultimately thinks this will only further exacerbate their condition, Judaken nevertheless explains that "Sartre's *Antisemite and Jew* provided the philosophical grounding for his interventions on behalf of Israel."[35] If this text was published in 1946, how accurate was Sartre's analysis of anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Jew post-1967? In what ways was this analysis still operative, and in what ways did it continue to buttress his support for Zionism?

In his reading of Sartre, Khatibi argues that the Jewish condition in the latter half of the 20th century had substantively changed—and that this change went unrecognized or at least un-theorized

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[33] Sartre's analysis was famously influential for Fanon, who used it to think about anti-Blackness. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove press, 2008). Two more recent volumes reflect on Sartre's legacy for thinking about racism and anti-Semitism: Jonathan Judaken, ed., *Race After Sartre: Antiracism, Africana Existentialism, Postcolonialism* (Albany: Suny Press, 2008); Manuela Consonni and Vivian Liska, eds., *Sartre, Jews, and the Other: Rethinking Antisemitism, Race, and Gender*, vol. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

[34] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 101.

[35] Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 2006, 185.

in Sartre's account. Khatibi writes, "*Réflexions sur la question juive* was a necessary and relevant analysis against the Nazi disorder. Now that one people oppresses another, that a Zionist state exists with all the chauvinist and imperial ideology that we know of, *this analysis is outdated.*"[36] In other words, Khatibi suggests that Sartre was still beholden to an anachronistic paradigm for thinking about the Jew in society, what I've referred to as the Jew as other, an analysis that governed his relationship to the question of Zionism. Khatibi illustrates a dissonance in Sartre's understanding of the Jewish Question that precludes him from engaging critically with the conflict. *Réflexions,* in Khatibi's reading, places Sartre and the Western left in the position of excessive guilt regarding Jews. The text's univocal focus on the anti-Semite as the purveyor of hate led to an unacknowledged and processed cycle of culpability, which in turn came to underwrite Sartre's support for Zionism. Consider the way, Khatibi says, Sartre writes about the world's responsibility for the murder of Jews: "There is not one of us who is not, in this circumstance, totally guilty of the same criminal [criminel]; the Jewish blood that the Nazis shed falls on all our heads."[37] Placed in this position, one made interminable by its declarative excessiveness, Sartre and the West have no way to critically analyze what is now a radically different geopolitical situation where the Israeli state is oppressing another people. "And like all Western opinion of that time," Khatibi writes, "Sartre was struck with blindness and despair: the West wanted to bury its corpses, forget the orgiastic terror of Nazism; the Palestinian people had to pay the price for this odious determination."[38] In contrast to this, Khatibi points to the changing conditions of Jewish difference and the need to think critically about its consequences and effects: Tables have turned, new political formations have arisen, and yet having

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[36] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 63–63. My emphasis.

[37] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 60.

[38] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 64.

taken on this guilt, eager almost to assume moral responsibility, the West's relationship to the Jew is marked by an almost anachronistic sense of moral indebtedness.[39]

Khatibi's most important insight then is that Sartre's and the French left's almost blind support for Israel can be traced back to its inability to offer an adequate analysis of the history *and evolution* of the Jew in Western society. "This new situation," Khatibi writes, "requires an adequate analysis."[40] He argues that because the left failed to understand its relation to the Jew, it could not even consider the Israel-Palestine conflict. "It seems evident to me," he writes, "that Zionism is nourished by what the racist West could not absorb for its part and that this moral nausea now reflects back onto the Palestinian people."[41] The frame in which the conflict was understood and the conditions under which the left could relate to Israelis and Palestinians precluded any critical interrogation of power and politics. In "Au-delà de l'antisémitisme et du sionisme," an essay published a few years after *Vomito blanco*, he wrote, "at times speechless, at times in downright bad faith, this left was, it is incapable of thinking about this conflict and of clarifying even a little its own relationship with the Jews."[42] In other words, what the West has not even begun to embark on, he argues, is an adequate critical, theoretical, and political framework for understanding how to make sense of its long history of anti-Semitic discrimination and oppression of Jews together with the current military and political power of the State of Israel. This confusion around Jewish difference disables a critical interrogation of the conflict and blinds the West to its own complicity therein.

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[39] Elsewhere Khatibi points out that it is a curious irony that this cycle of guilt only pertains to the genocide of Jews and not the millions of other victims of colonization: "A curious paradox for the colonial West: Did the millions of Asians and Africans weigh, do they weigh less than the survival of the enormous Nazi massacre?" Khatibi, "Au-delà de l'antisémitisme et du sionisme," 1981 24

[40] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 61.

[41] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 30.

[42] Khatibi, "Au-delà de l'antisémitisme et du sionisme," 1981, 24.

The status and position of the Jew in France had already begun to shift by 1967. The Jew was no longer an uncomplicated and immediate site of alterity and difference. In the last chapter, we saw this worked out in relation to decolonization. Khatibi shows that Zionism created a decisive chasm in that association and reconfigured the relationship between the Jew and power. Yet not everyone was attuned to this. Sartre and the left remained beholden to an anachronistic sense of Jewish alterity that obscured their ability to engage critically with the conflict. It is as if the Jew as other maintained a spectral hold on the French intellectual and political landscape, which in this case, as Khatibi points out, was projected back on the Palestinian people.

ZIONISM AND REVOLUTION: REVISITING THE COLLOQUE

At the outset of this chapter, I noted that 1967 marked a turning point in the self-presentation of the Jewish community, which began fashioning itself in more ethnic and politically vocal terms. And yet, one immediately notes a paradox: Even as the Jewish community was reorganizing its sense of collective identity, politics, and relationship to France in ways that broke with the dominant assimilatory model, the position of the Jew was becoming more aligned with and included within the French national imaginary. Far from leading to an exodus of Jews or an antagonistic relationship between Jews and France, the "Zionization of French Judaism" facilitated Jewish *inclusion* within France and the idea of the West more broadly. Consider how the historian Esther Benbassa describes this moment. In addition to noting the wave of Jewish support for Israel, she writes that "the [Israel-Palestine] conflict also created a favorable tide of opinion in non-Jewish circles—whether out of admiration for the achievements of the young Jewish state or out of anti-Arab feeling, a legacy of the Algerian War—*which had the ancillary effect of making French Jews feel they were now a legitimate and accepted part of French society.*"[43] The historian Yvan Gastaut goes so far as to suggest that

[43] Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 189. My emphasis.

this pro-Israel attitude was "accompanied by a movement of sympathy in favor of the Jews and hostility towards the Arabs in France. For some, the thought of seeing the Arabs defeated was a satisfaction that could barely be concealed."[44] He goes on to say that "the Six Day War brought about a change in the racist tendencies of French opinion. Until then, antisemitism, an old form, coexisted with anti-immigrant hostility, a new form of racism. If, in the early 1960s, to speak of racism was at least as much to evoke antisemitism as the rejection of migrant workers, in 1967 anti-Arab racism far exceeded antisemitism."[45] Thus, although Jewish support for Zionism led to a more ethnically inflected Jewish identity, it did not, paradoxically, lead to Jewish *exclusion* from the boundaries of Europe but, in fact, facilitated its inclusion.

In Khatibi, we saw how the Western perception of and relation to Jews was muddled and out of joint. How, then, did Zionism change the ways Jewish writers and intellectuals understood and articulated their own position within France's postcolonial hierarchy? Did it change how they saw themselves and the space of Judaism more broadly? As both Gastaut and Benbassa point out, a crucial part of the backdrop of this moment was an increase in anti-Arab racism and a decrease in anti-Semitic sentiment. Yet, Jewish intellectual and political engagement in response to Zionism did not reflect this increased accommodation and conscription into France. The very opposite occurred. One of the primary expressions of Jewish engagement during this time was a sense of victimhood. Despite Israel's victory and its subsequent occupation, many Jews continued to see themselves in

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[44] Yvan Gastaut, *L'immigration et l'opinion en France sous la Ve République* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 2000), 206.

[45] Gastaut, *L'immigration et l'opinion en France sous la Ve République*, 278.

victimized terms.[46] The war was perceived as a genocidal threat to Jews in France. Even Rabi, whom we met in the last chapter and who was generally more measured, wrote that Jews were overcome by "the fear of the end or the anguish of survival" and that "every living Jew always asks the same question: will we be the last generation of history?"[47] This perception was reinforced by a now infamous speech given by President Charles de Gaulle.

In November of 1967, shortly after the war, amid a speech concerning Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula, De Gaulle included this comment:

> Some even feared that the Jews, scattered hitherto but who had remained what they had always been, that is an *elite people, self-assured and domineering [peuple d'élite, sûr de lui-même et dominateur],* might, once they were reunited, turn the very moving hopes they had formed over nineteen centuries: 'Next year in Jerusalem,' into a burning ambition of conquest.[48]

The speech, and especially the line I've italicized that refers to the Jews as elite and domineering, provoked a stream of commentary and fear among Jews on all sides of the political spectrum.

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[46] Kimberly Arkin describes a similar finding in her fieldwork. She writes: "If Jewish exclusion from the mainstream consensus on Israel and Palestine is proof of relative Jewish marginality, Jews often understood it as a sign of their absolute domination. During my fieldwork, a number of French Jews did not (perhaps could not) understand or experience themselves as part of the dominant class. Some, particularly Sephardim, imagined themselves as the only truly dominated population in France. Faced with a rise in anti-Semitism often attributed to 'Arabs,' many Jews argued that a complacent (post-)Catholic French majority was in league with a bloodthirsty Arab minority to persecute Jews. At a Jewish community center conference on the French media, anti-Semitism, and Israel, one evidently panicked Sephardi audience member screamed: 'They are all out to get us!' This sense of powerlessness and victimization made the question of Jewish representation crucial." Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*, 11

[47] Alex Derczansky et al., "Les Juifs de France ont-ils changé?" *Esprit* 370, no. 4 (April 1968): 583.

[48] Cited in Raymond Aron, *De Gaulle, Israel, and the Jews* (London: André Deutsch, 1969), 9. My emphasis. First published in French as Raymond Aron, *De Gaulle, Israël et les juifs* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1968). The full conference is available to watch here: https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire-actu/video/caf94059599/conference-de-presse-du-general-de-gaulle

Richard Marienstras, who developed a diasporic political orientation, noted that the phrase recalled a thinly veiled anti-Semitism wherein Jews were not considered "truly French."[49] Many French writers began outwardly voicing concerns over Jews' "double allegiance" and questioning whether Jewish support for Israel trumped their belonging to France. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a colleague of Marienstras's who, during the Algerian War, protested vigorously against the use of torture, wrote that "when I heard [de Gaulle's phrase], my reflex was immediate, and I recalled — I was not the only one — the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.*"[50]

The most famous response came from the philosopher Raymond Aron, who published an article in *Le Figaro,* "Le temps du soupçon," which was quickly reprinted as part of a larger book, *De Gaulle, Israël et les Juifs* (1968). Aron, who was not religious or affiliated with the Jewish community, argued that "General de Gaulle has knowingly and deliberately initiated a new phase of Jewish history and perhaps of anti-semitism. Everything has once again become possible; everything is beginning over again. Agreed, there is no threat of persecution, only of 'ill-will.' It is not the age of contempt, but the age of suspicion."[51] Nevertheless, despite this claim of a new era where everything is possible, even Aron conceded that all claims of double allegiance aside, Jews, in fact, found themselves aligned with the majority of public opinion: "The major fact is forgotten which alone can explain the almost complete unanimity among Jews in France: because the sympathies of the majority of Frenchmen were with Israel the Jews felt an amazed joy, in the reconciliation of the

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[49] Derczansky et al., "Les Juifs de France ont-ils changé?" 582; for more on his diasporic politics, see Richard Marienstras, *Être un peuple en diaspora* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975).

[50] Derczansky et al., "Les Juifs de France ont-ils changé?" 583.

[51] Aron, *De Gaulle, Israel, and the Jews*, 25.

French citizenship with their 'Jewishness.' By demonstrating their attachment to Israel they were not cutting themselves off from the French, but merging with them."[52]

What emerged at this time then was a complex interplay between affect and material position, between victim and revolutionary, and between subversive critique and conservative action. While Jews perceived themselves as victims and objects of suspicion and fear, they were concomitantly receiving increased protection, inclusion, and reconciliation. But this, too, was not so clear cut. In revisiting the *Colloque,* we see most clearly how they sought to negotiate the boundaries of victimization, revolutionary rhetoric, and increased state power.

In many ways, the *Colloque* exemplifies the contradictory positions of victim and revolutionary that emerged after the 1967 war and support for Zionism. As we saw in the last chapter, many Jewish intellectuals faced a conundrum in the wake of decolonization. On the one hand, they had developed a critical orientation toward Christian Western modernity. They had departed from the Franco-Jewish model that emphasized continuity and concordance between French and Jewish values. They had begun thinking about the specific place of Judaism over and against the Western world. On the other hand, they were also unwilling to give up on a certain proximity to power. When it came to thinking about the position of the Jew in relation to other postcolonial figures and outsider positions, members of the *Colloque* sharply differentiated Judaism from these "other others." Zionism affected this dynamic in oblique but essential ways.

Two meetings of the *Colloque* were held in the aftermath of the 1967 war, in 1969 and 1970, which betrayed two fundamental concerns.[53] First, continuing what we saw in the previous chapter,

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[52] Aron, *De Gaulle, Israel, and the Jews*, 38.

[53] These two meetings were later collected in one print edition. See Jean Halpérin and Georges Lévitte, eds., *Jeunesse et Révolution dans la Conscience Juive: Données et Débats* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972).

their relationship with the Third World provoked angst and a desire to distinguish Jews and Judaism from the broader Third World movements. This fear of the Third World was evident during one heated discussion. M. S. Moatti, a filmmaker involved with the student protests of May '68, spoke up to say that he had dedicated himself entirely to the cause of the Third World—precisely because he was Jewish. He wrote, "we espouse the socialist cause, and we espouse the cause of the Third World, and we espouse it because we are Jews." Like other Jewish writers and activists who supported Palestine and fought for Algerian independence, Moatti's response indexed a sense of solidarity and entanglement between the Jewish, Palestinian, and Third World conditions. Indeed, despite the heavy-handed emphasis that often depicts this period in terms of general and widespread Jewish support for Israel, many Jews came out vocally to support Palestinians and against the Israeli occupation. If Maxime Rodinson's article, "Israel, fait colonial?" is by now well known, less appreciated is the organization he helped found in 1967, the Groupe de recherche et d'action pour le règlement du problème palestinien, which declared itself a "defender of Judaism" and simultaneously "hostile to Zionism."[54] Others at the *Colloque*, however, were less certain. One Mme Daniel's response is a striking encapsulation of the many anxieties, fears, and desires that manifested around parsing the relationship between Jews and others. Responding to Moatti, she says, "And in

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[54] Cited in Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*, 217 n. 58. The group put out a book in 1974: Maxime Rodinson et al., *Les palestiniens et la crise israélo-arabe: Textes et documents du Groupe de recherches et d'action pour le réglement du problèmes palestinien (GRAPP), 1967-1973* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1974). There are numerous other examples one could give. Founding members of the Gauche Prolétarienne, which advocated strongly for Palestinian rights were Jewish, and of the 12 founders of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, the revolutionary communist party founded in 1974, 11 were Jewish. Ania Francos, a journalist and activist, published *Les Palestiniens* in 1968, a text detailing the struggle for Palestinian liberation, which, she says, was only possible due to her own experience as a child witnessing the concentration camps and the history of Jewish oppression. The dedication reads: "To my Palestinian comrades, dying in order to liberate their homeland. To my grandfathers Shlomo and Jacob, murdered in Hitler's camps." Ania Francos, *Les palestiniens* (Paris: Julliard, 1968). For more, see Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France* 107-111; and Benbassa, *The Jews of France* 189

fact, Mr. Filmmaker, when you say that you are interested in the Third World, I believe that in this dossier, *it must be recalled that we are from the Third World.* And so, why put our own existence [besoin d'être], which is something fundamental, at odds with the existence of others?"[55] The momentary identification here, the equivalence created between Jews and the Third World, is quickly retracted, almost as if to say: if you're interested in helping the oppressed, then there's no need to go far, "we" are right here, leave "them" alone. It is a strange and yet highly revealing moment, where the borders that would distinguish between Jews and others are at once collapsed yet sharply demarcated.

Another essential backdrop to this moment was the mass student protests of May '68, which unleashed a revolutionary fervor and open displays of solidarity between students and workers and between anti-colonial struggles across Algeria, Vietnam, and Palestine.[56] This was particularly troubling for the *Colloque.* Participants, for instance, pointed out that there were many signs stating "Vietnam-Palestine: it is all one fight"—a prospect they found eminently worrisome. However, the revolutionary rhetoric of the student protests also infused much of the *Colloque's* language and formed a crucial part of their narrative. They modulated and refracted the language of revolution and adapted it to their own idioms to articulate their revolutionary leanings. Very explicitly, this was linked for them to Zionism. In expressing their relationship to the idea of revolution, they connected it to the State of Israel and depicted the State as the revolutionary model par excellence. For example, the volume's editors were unequivocal in framing the essays: "Is Judaism revolutionary by vocation or not?" they ask, and further, "Isn't the creation of the State of Israel in itself a

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[55] Halpérin and Lévitte, *Jeunesse et Révolution dans la Conscience Juive*, 127, 129. My emphasis.

[56] For more on the student protests and the ways it changed France, see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and It's Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); for more on how immigrants were centrally involved in the protests, see Daniel A Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May 68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool, Wales: Merlin Press, 2012).

revolutionary event?" Thus, in addition to the general desire to separate Jews from the Third World, the *Colloque* was also invested in thinking through the notion of revolution, its relation to Judaism, and the State of Israel.

The *Colloque's* rhetoric underwent a critical shift between their response to decolonization and Zionism. In 1962, amidst growing fear of the Third World, the *Colloque* reinserted itself into the boundaries of Europe as part of a Judeo-Christian civilization. Recall, for instance, Levinas's statement regarding the "arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the sacred history that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world."[57] Jewish intellectuals had no interest in aligning themselves with the movements for decolonization and went to great lengths to ensure that Jews were not associated them, whether legally, politically, or philosophically. In 1967, however, their rhetoric was different. Instead of distinguishing themselves from the Third World, they began to identify with it—if only partially. They wrote themselves into the language of critique and victimhood but refrained from associating themselves too closely with the Third World. Instead, they absorbed the revolutionary rhetoric that came from the Algerian War and student protests and mapped that onto Zionism. Put differently, if, in response to decolonization, they asserted their belonging *within* Europe, now there was a significant effort to reclaim the position of difference, to speak in the name of the victim. There was revolutionary fervor in the air, and Jewish intellectuals saw themselves in those terms. However, their only available avenue for that was Zionism.

To grasp this complex convergence of victimization, revolution, and Zionism, let us consider an essay at the *Colloque* by Léon Askenazi. Askenazi was an Algerian-born, highly influential rabbi who led the Jewish scout movement and was notably pro-France during the Algerian War.

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[57] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 1990, 159–60.

Manitou, as he was colloquially known by his scout name, ultimately moved to Israel after a meeting with Rav Kook and became a key proponent of French-Jewish Zionism. Askenazi's essay melds a reading of the Zohar with a critique of universalism and the French Revolution. He argues that although the revolution may have overturned the world, thinking with Judaism serves to illustrate its moral and political failings. In particular, Askenazi suggests that though "humanist" or "universalist" revolutions aim for a radical reorganization of the world according to a new system of values, they do so through reclaiming the sovereign identity of the individual based on false claims to universality. This type of revolution—embodied in the essay by the figure of Nimrod, the Biblical king identified with ordering the construction of the Tower of Babel—conceals within it an exclusionary force and imperialist violence: "These same demands have led all human societies… to found an imperialism, even as they wanted to create a revolution, even as they wanted to create a humanism."[58] One might almost align Askenazi here with an attempt to challenge this imperialist paradigm from its margins. For there is, Askenazi suggests, a different sort of revolution, a Hebraic one, embodied by Abraham, Moses, and later by the Jewish people. This revolution radicalizes even the humanist and universal one of Nimrod before it. This latter, Hebraic revolution is not based on individual sovereignty but consists of a collective reorganization of what it means to be human. Askenazi's gambit is that though Judaism participates in revolutionary movements and though the two may occasionally converge, in the last analysis, it remains above them.

What is at stake for Askenazi, as for the *Colloque* in general, is defining a place for Judaism within the schema of the revolutionary moment marked by Zionism, the student movement, decolonization, and other critiques of the European colonial project. What's fascinating about

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[58] Léon Askenazi, "Exposé," in *Jeunesse Et révolution Dans La Conscience Juive*, ed. Jean Halpérin and Georges Lévitte (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 93.

Askenazi's essay is the way he aligns Judaism with that line of critique insofar as it, too, functions in such a way as to shed light on the imperialist violence intrinsically embedded within imperial modernity. Yet at the same time, however, it is the *State* of Israel that somehow comes to embody that spirit. Zionism furnished the avenue by which Askenazi could articulate and manifest his ideal of the Jewish revolution.

The widespread and unquestioning commitment to Israel's revolutionary potential and Judaism's unique place therein did not go without comment. Ever the pariah figure, Rabi led a roundtable at the end of the conference with André Neher and Robert Misrahi, two hardline Zionist thinkers. In his response, Rabi pointed out that despite their conjectures about Zionism and all talk of revolution aside, Judaism had become extremely conservative. Let us not hide the fact, he says, that

> if there are Jews in many revolutionary parties, the Jewish people, in their quasi-unanimity, have become the most conservative people in the world, the most reactionary in the world, and they do not participate in protest anywhere because, everywhere, for all kinds of particular reasons, we are on the defensive. *We are on the defensive insofar as we participate in the world of White people [au monde des Blancs]*.[59]

For Rabi, all the talk of revolution served as a screen to mask an evident proximity to Whiteness and power. Despite whatever critical posture the *Colloque* may have taken to Franco-Republican-Judaism, they remained unwilling to distance themselves from it as the lines between France and its others were drawn more sharply. We saw him begin to develop this argument with regard to decolonization in Chapter 2, but with Zionism, its full contours become apparent. The both-sided-ness of the *Colloque* was ultimately an impossible situation, and Rabi suggested that to think critically about revolution was to acknowledge that "the Revolution obliges every young Jew to make a choice; at

[59] Halpérin and Lévitte, *Jeunesse et Révolution dans la Conscience Juive*, 152. My emphasis.

some point, you have to be either on one side or the other."[60] Other readers felt similarly. Roger Benhaïm, an Algerian Jew, responded to the *Colloque* volume directly in his short pamphlet, *Jérusalem, Jérusalem! Israël ou l'assimilation: La foi juive en question* and criticized their hypocritical attempts to present Israel as a model for revolutionary struggle. "Your Judaism," he wrote, "is only the Judaism of salons because you yourselves are nothing but intellectuals of the salon, brilliant without a doubt, but taking care not to attack the privileged."[61] Both of these responses illustrate the tenuousness of the *Colloque's* position, and they critique the ways it sought to thread the needle between revolutionary rhetoric and conservative action.

Despite his critical tone, however, Rabi remained caught in a Zionist bind, as is evident in his correspondence with Emmanuel Lévyne, the figure with whom I began this chapter. After reading some of Lévyne's articles, Rabi wrote to him in December of 1967, impressed by his commitment to defending the poor and admiring his vision of Judaism committed to the oppressed. Such a vision, Rabi said, was lacking amongst Judaism's proponents who were in dire need of Lévyne's voice. "You spoke of poverty as we no longer know how to talk about it because, finally, you said: 'I am a Jew because I am a Palestinian and [because I am] North Vietnamese.' We no longer know how to speak like that in the spiritual desert of our Judaism today. Your voice is, therefore, irreplaceable." Despite his initial positive evaluation, however, he suggested that if Lévyne wanted to be heard, he must work from the inside rather than the outside and that his critiques of Zionism as fascist were beyond the pale of acceptable criticism. "They are our brothers, our relatives, our flesh," Rabi wrote, and rather than excise himself from them, Rabi urged him to "reintegrate [with] your people." There is no indication he knew of it, but one cannot but wonder at

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[60] Halpérin and Lévitte, *Jeunesse et Révolution dans la Conscience Juive*, 155.

[61] Roger Benhaïm, *Jérusalem, Jérusalem! Israël ou l'assimilation: la foi juive en question* (Paris: CEDAG Le Perreux, 1975).

the similarities between Rabi's appeal to rejoin the Jewish people and Gershom Scholem's famous letter to Hannah Arendt only a few years earlier after the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem.* There too, Scholem accused Arendt of her "heartless.. [and] downright malicious tone" and charged her with lacking "ahavath Israel."[62] In a marvelous piece of irony, Rabi does, at the end of his letter, urge Lévyne not to join the ranks of Maxime Rodinson, Simone Weil, and Hannah Arendt, whom he suggests are outside the bounds of the Jewish people. However, like Arendt, who responded by readily acknowledging her lack of love for a "nation or collective," Lévyne criticized Rabi for succumbing to the need to protect one's own above all else. "I regret that I do not share your racial—not to say racist—conception of Judaism and Israel," Levyne told him. "For you, only one thing matters: preserve the survival of Jewish society at all costs. And for you, Israel, the Jewish people, they are the state."[63]

In his essay on Freud and Herzl, Daniel Boyarin draws on Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry to describe Zionism. Bhabha, for his part, emphasizes how the performative element of mimicry can displace colonial discourse through its very repetition. Rather than mere introjection or self-hatred, mimicry also can disarticulate the discourses of colonialism.[64] However, Boyarin argues that the inverse can be equally valid. The very articulation of resistance to colonial discourse can also perpetuate and reinforce it. This is the case for Zionism, which, Boyarin argues, constitutes "the ultimate version of that practice dubbed *colonial mimicry* by Homi Bhabha."[65] Akin to

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[62] Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Marie Luise Knott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 202.

[63] Lévyne, *Judaïsme Contre Sionisme*, 177, 178, 179.

[64] Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge Classics, 2012) "Of Mimicry and Man."

[65] Daniel Boyarin, "The Colonial Drag: Zionism, Gender, and Mimicry," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks and Fawzia Afzal-Khan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 254.

what Raz-Krakotzkin argued, Boyarin sees in the very articulation of Zionism as a national liberation project the perpetuation of the colonial discourse it presumed to escape. Colonial mimicry, for him, doesn't describe the *dis*-articulation of colonial discourse as much as its *re*-articulation at the very moment one attempts to depart from it.

We might see the *Colloque* in a similar vein. Boyarin's reframing of colonial mimicry helps make sense of the paradoxical situation the *Colloque* attempted to negotiate: creating a victim community that organized itself around a revolutionary ethos but nevertheless landed on an ideological reading of Israeli State power. Askenazi's essay indexes this odd constellation and the various political and intellectual touch points within which he was writing: Israel, colonialism, revolution, the Third World, and the Jew. By constructing themselves as victims, the *Colloque* could simultaneously claim the space of difference and critique while continuing to differentiate themselves from Muslims, postcolonial immigrants, and other phantasmatic projections. The tides of Jew as other were changing. As the historian Yvan Gastaut suggests, France's pro-Israel attitude was "accompanied by a movement of sympathy in favor of the Jews and hostility towards the Arabs in France. For some, the thought of seeing the Arabs defeated was a satisfaction that could barely be concealed."[66] It was Arabs, postcolonial immigrants, and the student movements who were now claiming that subversive space of difference and pushing against the strictures of French republicanism. Yet for Askenazi and the *Colloque*, it was key that they hold on to the Jew as other, as revolutionary. Paradoxically, Zionism gave them the perfect tool to do just that.

This maneuver by the *Colloque* picks up on the broader conundrum of Jewish thought we first encountered during decolonization. On the one hand, Jewish thinkers attempt to reclaim the particularities of Judaism over and against the assimilatory nature of French universalism. They

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[66] Gastaut, *L'immigration et l'opinion en France sous la Ve République*, 206.

position Judaism as a generative site of critique of Western modernity. In Askenazi's essay, even the universalist revolution that seeks to revaluate values is constrained by imperialist violence at the heart of its project. Judaism, for him, offers the tools to diagnose this and propose an alternative itinerary. Yet, by and large, this position is articulated by distinguishing it from other critiques of Western power, especially anti-colonial ones. It is as if the attempt to position the Jew as a critical voice occurs in and through the denigration and dismissal of other others. This is not merely a competitive logic of victimization which might be rethought via a more multidirectional account. The very articulation of difference reinforces the Jew's position *within* the West—what Boyarin describes as colonial mimicry. We saw this play out in relation to decolonization, as figures like Levinas distanced Judaism from Third World critiques; we see it here, if in slightly modified form, regarding Zionism; it will reappear again when we look at how the relationship between North African Jews and Muslims continued to be inflected by colonial legacies; and it continues to be a fundamental feature of the current uses and abuses of anti-Semitism, as we will see in the final chapter.

CONCLUSION

Zionism and the aftermath of the 1967 war constituted a turning point in the evolution of the postcolonial Jewish Question. The issues first posed during decolonization—concerning the relationship between anti-Semitism and colonialism, between Jews and the colonized, and between Jews and the West—reached new heights post-1967, as the very parameters and meaning of Jewish difference fundamentally shifted. Post-1967, the Jew could no longer seamlessly occupy the position of difference and alterity it once had—and that shift required rethinking how to analyze and talk about the contemporary place of the Jew within Western modernity. In other words, it necessitated new vocabularies for thinking about the postcolonial Jewish Question.

Toward the end of *Vomito blanco,* Khatibi engages with the *Colloque* volume we have been looking at. He points out how the terms by which the *Colloque* articulated their project necessarily blinded them to the consequences of their thought and how framing the State of Israel as a radical revolutionary project at the same time as it displaced Palestinian lives and occupied their land can only be considered disingenuous. With a biting sense of irony, he describes the various contradictory positions that the *Colloque* attempted to navigate:

> Sometimes, we are told that Judaism and Zionism (which would be its perfect realization) are in themselves revolutionary because, in the case of Israel, as Amar said, essence precedes existence; this hilarious dogma obviously cannot delight the mind. Sometimes it is simply stated that the State of Israel is the archetypal revolution, both in its ideology and its socio-military structure, and this is correct to the extent that such a revolution is nationalist, radical, colonial, and imperial: we must therefore encourage all the diasporas of the world to follow this example: sometimes finally, we are told that Judaism and Zionism are beyond all revolutions, it would be a messianic breath that exceeds any nationalism and any historical change. Therefore, the State of Israel would be the realization of Yahweh's infinite goodness. Blessed then is he who believes in this misguided violence! Cursed he, like me, who is not among the Lovers of Zion? The Zionist speech, with its lyrical outbursts, ends up being laughable.[67]

Khatibi reads the volume, ultimately, as a "theater of bad faith"—though, as I've suggested, beyond just being in bad faith, Zionism also gave the *Colloque* a specific set of language and frames within which to articulate their project.[68] What, ultimately, was Khatibi's stake in this? To what degree did he engage with the figure of the Jew and the question of Jewish difference? In part, for Khatibi, these questions were also a provocation for considering how to contend with the realities of Israeli state violence in many forms while still thinking critically about what the Jewish Question has meant and continues to mean. In addition to his critiques of Zionism, Khatibi offers us glimpses of this by

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[67] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 103.

[68] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 102.

analyzing how Zionism had co-opted the history of Jewish suffering and refusing to give in to its narrative and historiography.

In *Vomito blanco*, in addition to his critiques of Zionism, Khatibi insists on continuing to think with and alongside the figure of the Jew as a site of alterity. His critique of Zionism thus focuses on how it co-opts Jewish suffering in the Holocaust and uses it as the motor force of its national project.[69] He argues that Zionism traffics in an a-historical account of Jewish suffering which renders the Jew an eternal victim and thereby blinds it to the Palestinians. The logic is a tragic one, he explains, for "the end of the exile of the Jewish people necessitates the exile of the other, the appropriation of the Promised Land implies the dispossession of the other, the founding of a state, the destruction of a people; the Nazi genocide is followed by the ethnocide of the Palestinians."[70] This transmutation, also theorized by Edward Said and others, calls into question the very logic of victimhood and its abuses by the Zionist project.

At the same time, however, Khatibi reinscribes the history of Jewish difference into his analysis and differentiates it from this Zionist appropriation. Khatibi was a close colleague of Jacques Derrida and often used the language of deconstruction to critique Western imperialism and Orientalism. He was also an attentive reader of Derrida's reflection on Judaism and the Jew. In *Vomito blanco,* Khatibi invokes Derrida's essays on Edmond Jabès and Emmanuel Levinas in *Writing and Difference,* where Derrida reflects on Jabès's polyphonic text, *The Book of Questions.* That text comprises various phantasmatic rabbis whom Jabès places in dialogue with each other. Derrida's commentary takes up the complex relationship between the Jew and writing, between rabbis and

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[69] For more on Israel and it's relation to the Holocaust, see Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[70] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 40.

poets, and between the particular and the universal.[71] Khatibi cites the line where Derrida writes: "But the Jew's identification with himself perhaps does not exist. Jew would be the other name for this impossibility of self."[72] Khatibi then goes on to reinforce the notion that though Zionism has sought to co-opt the history of Jewish difference, Jewishness would decenter all claims to political belonging and signal an ethical opening onto the other:

> Essential theoretical displacement: Jewishness [judéité] would be this irreducible violence that no political power could extinguish, it would be this decentering of being by which the search for identity is not blind to otherness and never gets lost in its own mirror; in short, it establishes an opening to the other, the other as unlimited possibility [possible illimité].[73]

This sounds like Levinas or Derrida could have written it. Still, in Khatibi's rendering, Jewishness is not a transhistorical or apolitical category and requires a precise analysis of its political articulation. Khatibi goes to great lengths to insist on the necessary separation between Zionism and what he refers to as Jewish consciousness. He suggests that "we must each time separate Zionism and Jewish consciousness, abandon showing their interweaving [quitte à montrer leur imbrications]: what Jewish consciousness has inscribed in the suffering of the Jews must take hold of us [nous prendre] and be of utmost interest to us, whereas Zionism is only the movement corrupted in colonization [le mouvement perverti dans la colonisation.]"[74]

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[71] For more on Derrida's reading of Jabès and the Jew see Sarah Hammerschlag, "Poetics of the Broken Tablet," in *The Trace of God: Derrida and Religion*, ed. Edward Baring and Peter E Gordon (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 59–71.

[72] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990 47. This line appears in the French edition of the text, though the second sentence seems to have been removed from the English version. See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001) 92

[73] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 105.

[74] Khatibi, *Paradoxes du sionisme*, 1990, 53.

Khatibi's differentiation from the paradigm of Jew as other goes even one step further. In one of his letters to Jacques Hassoun, which we will consider more in the next chapter, Khatibi offers a final coda to this discussion of Jewishness and alterity. If, for the *Colloque*, Jewishness was the sole and primary locus of alterity, Khatibi was deeply attentive to the problematic notion of election and exemplarity inherent therein.[75] In his letter, he cites figures like Maurice Blanchot, Levinas, and Jabès and notes how for them, the Jew marks the end of the book, where the experience of dissolution, exile, rupture, and an ethical opening to the other takes the place of mastery and unity. Khatibi wrote in a similar vein as we just saw. Yet at the same time, by way of a kind of proximity, he suggests that Jabès, Blanchot, Levinas, and others remain trapped in an exclusive definition of Jewishness, caught up in the game of election, of, somewhat paradoxically, enclosing the end of the book, and being unwilling to extend the ramifications of that position beyond the limited horizon of Jewishness. "What does it mean to be a Jew now," he writes,

> if not the end of a horizon of the book, of a certain horizon, itself often unrecognizable? To be a Jew yet in the text beyond the book. This is why there are as many Jews as there are exact, performative readings outside the Book itself. Jabès, Lévinas, and Blanchot still seem to me locked in an exclusive representation of the Book and the People. Globalization [mondialisation] demands new languages. Can we contribute a minimum to the irreducible fraternity of the living?

Khatibi's reading offers an important insight into the discourse around the Jew and alterity that, while attuned to the critical potentialities it provides for thinking about national identity, alterity, and writing, also pushes against an exclusive invocation of Jewish difference—such as we saw in the *Colloque*—especially when this comes at the price of demonizing others. He pushes us to reimagine

[75] For a somewhat similar critique of exemplarity and the Jew, see Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew*, 2010.

what Jewish difference looks like in another idiom and a new language attuned to the various political contexts and risks that such a discourse inevitably entails.

In the coming chapters, these questions will take on even more urgency as the rise of the far right, xenophobic debates about immigration, and racism against North African immigrants reconfigured what it meant to think about universalism, difference, and alterity in France. The figure of the Jew continued to be an inflection point and a site at which many of these questions get worked out.

Chapter Four

The Politics of the Arab-Jew: Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Futures in North African Jewish Writing of the 1980s

Arab-Jew: a disturbing identity because it expresses a concept, an unsettling reality, which dramatically challenges all of the myths built by the forces of oppression and exploitation regarding the "Jewish question" and the Palestinian problem.[1]

What heritage allows me today to consider that without 'my Jewishness,' I would not know how to understand 'my Arabness' and that without the latter, the former would be null and void. It is neither the mass of images from the depths of History nor the spell of politics. I suspect that this or that journey has allowed me to constitute what I consider to be a legacy and an inaugural at the same time… But perhaps its flattening would be illusory, risky, and useless at the same time. In these letters, we open the door to our stories.[2]

The first of the epigraphs for this chapter comes from a letter written by the group Union des Juifs Arabes that was published in a special issue of the journal *Combat pour la diaspora* in 1980. *Combat,* as we will see more in-depth, was a leftwing journal associated with several North African and Middle Eastern Jewish writers and intellectuals that appeared in the 1980s in France and which published issues on a variety of topics, including Jews and leftwing political parties, the Bund, immigration, and Israel. This letter by the Union des Juifs Arabes was part of a special issue devoted to "Oriental and Mediterranean Jews" [Juifs d'Orient et de Méditerranée]. It described how Arab-Jews had lived a "deeply rooted" life in the Arab world, participated in its history and future,

[1] Union des Juifs Arabes, "Renouveau culturel," *Combat pour la diaspora* 3 (1980): 72.

[2] Khatibi and Hassoun, *Le même livre*, 76.

developed a rich Judeo-Arab culture, and lived in "symbiosis with the Islamic-Berber and Islamic-Arab communities under the sign of friendship and fraternity." However, they went on, in recent years, these cultural and political bonds had been denied by a colonialist apparatus intent on separating Jews and Arabs and recasting their historical relationship as one of division and strife. The letter served as a call to action, an appeal to Arab-Jews to resist this pernicious narrative, reclaim their history and future, and reinvest in the intimate entanglements of Arabs and Jews in the contemporary world. Arab-Jews, the group wrote, need to "come together to decolonize our history and rid it of colonialist, imperialist, and Zionist lies."[3] Against the various colonial apparatuses in France and Israel, which were predicated on the absolute separation of Jews and Arabs, the group suggested that the singular figure of the Arab-Jew held out the possibility of subverting these divisions and rewriting the historical and political narrative.

The letter is a fascinating document for many reasons. Most importantly, however, it is a testament to the struggle over Arab-Jewish identity in France in the 1980s, when its social and political contours were still being elaborated in the postcolonial world. Only a few years earlier, for example, Albert Memmi published his collection of essays, *Jews and Arabs,* which in many ways ignited a debate about the Arab-Jew, its history, and its future. Memmi also referred to himself as an Arab-Jew, yet for him, this was a nostalgic term that described what *might* have been had Jewish life been viable in the Arab world. But in Memmi's view, that wasn't the case. "Never," he writes in an essay entitled "What is an Arab-Jew?" "I repeat, never—except perhaps for two or three eras with very clear boundaries in time, such as the Andalusian period, and even then—have the Jews lived in the Arab countries otherwise than as diminished people in an exposed position, periodically

[3] Arabes, "Renouveau culturel," 73.

overcome and massacred so that they would be acutely conscious of their position."[4] Memmi was not able to become the Arab-Jew he so wished; however he claims that this was no fault of his own. Rather it was because "for centuries the Moslem Arabs have scornfully, cruelly, and systematically prevented us from carrying it out. And now it is far too late to become Jewish Arabs again."[5] The tone and orientation of Memmi's essay could not be more different than the one put forward by the Union des Juifs Arabes. Rather than a subversive, anti-colonial figure who testified not only to the rich history between Jews and Arabs but to their shared futures, in Memmi's essay, the Arab-Jew is rendered a nostalgic figure of the past, an impossible chimera.

This chapter explores several conversations and debates about the Arab-Jew and Arab-Jewish identity during the 1980s in order to think more precisely about the relationship between Jews, Arabs, and France. For this tripartie relationship, I argue, constitutes one of the central features of the postcolonial Jewish Question. Though at first glance, Memmi and the Union des Juifs Arabes might seem to be debating a historical question—what was the status of Jewish life in the Arab world?—the battle over Arab-Jewish identity and the figure of the Arab-Jew had much more to do with their current political moment than with questions of history. As Lital Levy and Emily Benichou Gottreich have noted, adopting or repudiating the Arab-Jew is more often than not a matter of taking a political stance and defining one's orientation rather than engaging in historical debates. In the last twenty years, the figure of the Arab-Jew has gained exponential visibility and prominence. In academic and popular debates, the term has taken on a distinct political valence associated with a critique of national-colonial projects, particularly with Zionism's divisions between

[4] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 21–22.

[5] Memmi, *Jews and Arabs*, 1975, 20.

Jews and Arabs.[6] Foregrounding the Arabness of Jews from the Muslim world, as Ella Shohat has argued, disrupts colonialist attempts to divide between Jews and Arabs and can function as a "critical prism" through which to critique national-colonial narratives and to open new "imaginative potentialities."[7] Those opposed to the term, from Memmi to the contemporary right-wing group JIMENA (Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa), resist the very imbrication of Arabness and Jewishness as well as its political possibilities. JIMENA instead compares the status of Jews from the Muslim world to Palestinian refugees, suggesting that both have been exiled from their homelands and that Palestinians are not the sole or even primary victims of the conflict. A similar thing can be said for the debates about the history and future of the Arab-Jew in France that I address here. Though they may be framed as a question of historical knowledge, it was more often than not also a contemporary political question regarding the politics and position of Arab-Jews in a postcolonial situation where the lines connecting and dividing Jews, Arabs, and French were being worked out.

Notably, these debates in France did not take place primarily in relation to the question of Zionism. Though the Israel-Palestine conflict was undoubtedly present, as was the stark mistreatment of Arab-Jews in Israel, the political frame they were writing in was dominated by

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[6] Almost since its inception, the Arab-Jew has been the subject of scholarly and public debate, encompassing a range of historical, methodological, and political questions. For an elegant overview of some of these conversations that also attends to the media sphere in which they are disseminated see Lital Levy, "The Arab Jew Debates: Media, Culture, Politics, History," *Journal of Levantine Studies* 7, no. 1 (2017): 79–103. For more historical renderings of these questions, see Emily Benichou Gottreich, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (2008): 433–51; Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the 'Mashriq'," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 4 (2008): 452–69. See also Nadia Malinovich, "Peut-on être un Juif arabe ? Débats historiques et actuels autour d'une identité polémique," in *Imaginaire racial et oppositions identitaires*, ed. Michel Prum (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016), 275–97; Moshe Behar, "What's in a Name? Socio-Terminological Formations and the Case for 'Arabized-Jews'," *Social Identities* 15, no. 6 (2009): 747–71.

[7] Shohat, *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements*, 2017, 4.

altogether different issues and concerns more local to the French context. This is important because almost all current academic conversations around the Arab-Jew center around Zionism. When Shohat, Yehouda Shenhav, and others reclaimed the term, they intervened in Zionism's national-colonial separation of Jews and Arabs and the situation of Arab-Jews in Israel.[8] Zionism was the target, frame, and historical matrix for their discussion.[9] The letter with which I began is thus doubly noteworthy, for it constitutes an early foreshadowing of later debates, and its primary frame is not Israel-Palestine but France. The Arab-Jew signals a subversive anti-colonial ethos for the Union des Juifs Arabes and Shohat. Yet, if for Shohat, the primary goal is to destabilize the Zionist narrative, what is the politics of position that the letter gestures toward? What work—political, cultural, or otherwise—does the Arab-Jew do in postcolonial France?

The Arab-Jew, I suggest in this chapter, is a central figure for understanding the postcolonial Jewish Question and the evolution of Jewish intellectual and political life in France. It offers a penetrating view into the legacies and ongoing frames of French colonial rule and points us toward how the relationships between Jews and Arabs have been reconfigured. In the first part of this chapter, I consider different perspectives on the Arab-Jew and illustrate the political dynamics embedded within these discussions. I show how groups like the Union des Juifs Arabes and the journal *Combat* intervened in their political moment by insisting on more entangled Arab-Jewish histories and futures. But I also show how others, like the Algerian writer and intellectual Shmuel Trigano, took a different tract. For him, North African Jews embodied a particular form of alterity that he sought to mobilize as a subversive force against Western and Jewish modernity. But I also

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[8] Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," Autumn 1988; Yehouda A Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition*, 2010.

[9] For an important exception to this in France, see Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic* who discusses the Arab-Jew and their liminal position in France, especially in relation to education.

illustrate how the very signification of the Arab-Jew and the possibility that Arabs and Jews might share a historical or political frame was a complete insult to him. These debates and the different orientations that emerge from them speak to the broader politics of Jewish difference in the postcolonial world, especially concerning Arabs and France's colonial legacies. Like Shohat, I suggest the Arab-Jew constitutes a particularly generative critical prism for thinking about historical relations and future entanglements. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to a set of letters between Jacques Hassoun and Abdelkébir Khatibi that illustrate some of these possibilities. The letters, I suggest, open new ways for imagining the history and future of what they call the Judeo-Arab question.

COLONIAL HISTORY

In the racial and religious politics of postcolonial France, Jews from North Africa and the wider Muslim world occupy a particularly liminal position. The anthropologist Kimberly Arkin, who studied North African Jewish students in the early 2000s, writes that "in France's postcolonial triptych of identity categories, [they were] threatened with exile from Frenchness both as Arabs and as Jews."[10] Not quite French, not seen as entirely Arab, nor wholly aligned with the institutional, religious, and political mores of the French Jewish community, North African Jews sit uncomfortably within a set of increasingly ossified categories and identities.

To fully understand the postcolonial dynamics in which questions of the Arab-Jew played out, this liminality has to be situated within a long colonial history that has shaped the relationship between Jews, Arab-Muslims, and French. For most, though not all, Algerian Jews, the passage of the Crémieux Decree in 1870 granted them French citizenship en masse—even though many were not interested in becoming French citizens. In 1865, five years before the Crémieux Decree, less

[10] Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*, 6.

than 5% of town-dwelling individuals took up voluntary naturalization, and the masses and the rabbinate generally opposed the Crémieux Decree.[11] For Jews in Morocco and Tunisia, where the Crémieux Decree was not enforced, the *Alliance israélite universelle* and the French government ensured that belonging to the Jewish community granted a set of privileges and benefits not afforded to their Mulsim compatriots—thus further manufacturing and entrenching divisions between them. The *Alliance*, as is by now well known, played a central role in this, in large part by seeking to "educate" and "uplift" North African Jews from their "misery" by "opening their minds to Western ideas, to destroy certain prejudices and certain outmoded superstitions that have paralyzed the communities' activity and expansion."[12] Though this was not a straightforward process, over the 19th and 20th centuries, many Jews in North Africa became more Westernized through their education, economic, or political opportunities.

Through these and many other colonial mechanisms, one might trace what Shohat refers to as an oriental genealogy that led to a gradual de-orientalization of the Jew in relation to the Arab-Muslim.[13] Writing about Algeria, Benjamin Stora characterizes this process as a series of exiles that alienated Algerian Jews from their land, people, and culture.[14] Although Shohat and Stora evince a critical relation to this history and distance their analysis from the French colonial narrative of the civilizing mission, it is only in recent years that scholarship has moved away from a linear account of

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[11] See Doris Bensimon-Donath, *L'Intégration des Juifs nord-africains en France* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1971) 13. For a more extended discussion of the ways the civilizing mission was received in Algeria, see Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

[12] Instructions générales pour les professeurs (Paris, 1903) 94–5, cited in Zytnicki, "The 'Oriental Jews' of the Maghreb" 44-45

[13] Ella Shohat, "On Orientalist Genealogies," in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Postcolonial Middle East*, ed. Ball, Anna, and Karim Matter (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

[14] Stora, *Les trois exils*, 2006.

Jewish life in North Africa that assumed its teleological end in either Israel or France. In describing the state of research on Algerian Jews in 2012, Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Susan Slyomovics point out that it continues to be dominated by a colonialist orientation that "has yet to entirely dispense with certain basic theoretical underpinnings of the civilizing mission and Jews' place therein.. [and] it is only in roughly the last two decades that scholars have begun to question the premise that Jews in Algeria were destined to attach themselves to the occupiers, to find favour in the eyes of colonial law; that they uniformly benefited from a relationship with French authorities; or that their histories were inevitably (or indeed could be historiographically) distinct from that of the Muslim majority of Algeria's residents."[15] Such narratives are beginning to loosen their hold, and the history of colonialism and its effects on North African Jewish and Muslim communities is being retold through more nuanced lenses.[16]

Stora describes three exiles that ultimately alienated Algerian Jews: the passage of the Crémieux Decree, Vichy and WWII, and the Algerian War. By the war's end, almost the entire Algerian Jewish community had emigrated, mainly to France. Between 1950 and 1969, 220,000

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[15] Susan Slyomovics and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "Jews and French Colonialism in Algeria: An Introduction," *The Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 5 (2012): 751.

[16] For more considered narratives, see, among others: Emily Gottreich, *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015; Emily Benichou Gottreich and Daniel J Schroeter, eds., *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Heckman, *The Sultan's Communists*; Stein, *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria*; Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Joëlle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Vince and Everett, *Jewish-Muslim Interactions*; Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*; Jessica M Marglin, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

North African Jews moved to France.[17] By the 1980s, over half of Jews living in Paris had North African origins.[18] This had a series of cascading effects on French Judaism. Not only did Jews from North Africa entirely change the demographic makeup of the Jewish community, but the latent and not-so-latent orientalism of French Jews and the tensions between the communities rose dramatically. Despite the colonial divisions between Jews and Arab-Muslims, in the metropole, many North African Jews were still perceived as very much Arab, and tensions abounded between them and the larger Jewish community. In Chapter 2, I noted how some of these tensions appeared in the *Colloque* as figures like Neher and Levinas sought to assimilate Algerian Jews into their intellectual project. Similarly, Naomi Davidson argues that one of the paradoxes of decolonization was that although many Algerian Jews saw themselves as French, in the metropole, they were considered by many as Arab. As she puts it, "metropolitan Jewish leaders tried to simultaneously celebrate and efface Algerian Jewish difference."[19] As we'll see, on the one hand, North African Judaism was celebrated for rejuvenating a lapsed and not very vibrant French Jewish landscape. On the other hand, it also marked Jews in religious, racial, and political ways that many French Jews sought to suppress. Questions of orientalism, race, and history played out in distinctive ways in the following years as the demographic makeup of the Jewish community in France radically changed.

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[17] Bensimon and Della Pergola, *La population juive de France* 36. Though historians have often been folded the history of Jewish emigration from North Africa into the broader history of pieds-noirs, recent accounts have begun to tell a more specifically Jewish story. For more, see also Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*, Chapter Two; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015, Chapter 5; Bensimon-Donath, *L'Intégration des Juifs nord-africains en France*; Michel Abitbol, "The Integration of North African Jews in France," *Yale French Studies*, no. 85 (1994): 248–61; Stora, "L'impossible neutralité des Juifs d'Algérie," 2004; and Claude Tapia, *Les Juifs sépharades En France, 1965-1985: Études Psychosociologiques Et Historiques* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1986).

[18] Bensimon and Della Pergola, *La population juive de France*, 46.

[19] Davidson, "'Brothers from South of the Mediterranean'," 77.

THE DEBATES OVER THE ARAB-JEW

In 1979, Shmuel Trigano organized and published a landmark issue of *Les Temps Modernes,* Sartre's journal, that was at the forefront of political and intellectual discourse. The issue was called "Le second Israël: La question Sépharade." In his presentation of the text, Trigano claims that "the Sephardi problem" has been subject to an "immense taboo," and no one in Israel, the West, or the Arab world was willing to discuss it.[20] This special issue, in his mind, was meant to facilitate that, not only for the Jewish community but for the larger public: "It is without a doubt," he writes,

> the first time in history that Sephardim can speak freely, in total independence of Jewish or Israeli institutions, the first time that they pass from a visceral cry, from this frenzy that we have all heard in the debates and demonstrations, to the formulation, to speech [la parole]: from a "problem" to a "question."[21]

In many ways, the issue began articulating a vision of Sephardi identity in France and claimed a space for narrating its history and future. Interestingly, this special issue came immediately after—and separate from—another special issue of *Les Temps Modernes,* organized by Abdelkébir Khatibi and entitled "Du Maghreb."[22] In Trigano's issue, the question of Arab-Jews in Israel frames large parts of the text, and a long section is devoted to education, discrimination, and working conditions in Israel.[23] The section even features an interview with the Israeli Black Panthers—a leftwing political group organizing on behalf of Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews, who were among the first to support

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[20] Shmuel Trigano, ed., *Le second Israël: La question Sépharade*, vol. 394 bis (Paris: Gaillmard, 1979), 7.

[21] Trigano, *Le second Israël*, 1979, 394 bis:9.

[22] Idriss Jebari, "Rethinking the Maghreb and the Post-Colonial Intellectual in Khatibi's *Les Temps Modernes* Issue in 1977," *The Journal of North African Studies* 23, no. 1-2 (2018): 53–70.

[23] This framing did not go entirely unrecognized, and elsewhere Haïm Vidal Sephiha would sharply criticize the equivalencies Trigano draws between Sephardim in Israel and in the rest of the world. In such a situation, he writes, where the decisive factor is a form of economic and cultural wealth, "in Trigano's dichotomy, every wealthy Jew would become Ashkenazi." (Haïm Vidal Sephiha, "Diganostic du judaïsme français: une sépharadité aiguë," *Combat pour la diaspora* N. 3 (1980): 58)

the Palestinian cause explicitly. However, despite this general interest in Israel/Palestine, the first section of the issue is more generally dedicated to Arab-Jewish history. It features notable historians and writers such as Alfred Morabia, Haïm Vidal Sephiha, and Richard Ayoun. The historian Haim Zafrani, recognizing the weight of the moment, wrote in his contribution that "today we are witnessing the awakening of a Sephardic and Oriental consciousness, an awareness of belonging to an ethnic category and to a different cultural landscape within the constellation of cultures, ethnicities, and mentalities that make up the Jewish world."[24]

Shmuel Trigano was a central figure in the debates over the Arab-Jew in the 1980s. Born in 1948 in Blida, Algeria, Trigano emigrated to France in 1962 on the eve of Algerian decolonization. He has written extensively about Jewish philosophy and politics, publishing to date over 20 books including *La République et les juifs* (1982) and *L'idéal démocratique: À l'épreuve de la Shoah* (1999), as well as serving as editor of the two volume series *Le monde sépharade* (2006). He founded multiple journals dedicated to Jewish Studies and politics, including *Pardes* (1985) and *Controverses* (2006), and he also created the Collège des Etudes Juives (1986), a secondary educational school under the aegis of the *Alliance israélite universelle.* However, rather than a proponent of the Arab-Jew or, for that matter, any Arab-Jewish entanglement, he is more well known for his public Islamophobia and his relentless pursuit of proving new forms of "Muslim anti-Semitism" and his sharp divisions between Jews and Arabs.[25] He has continually condemned what he sees as the pernicious narrative that compares the history of Jewish and Muslim immigration, which, he thinks, "denationalizes" the Jewish

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[24] Trigano, *Le second Israël*, 1979, 394 bis:109–10.

[25] For a good overview of his position, see his recent essay Shmuel Trigano, "A Journey Through French Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Review of Books* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 5–7. See also Maud Mandel and Ethan Katz's counter to Trigano, Ethan B Katz and Maud S Mandel, "Strange Journey: A Response to Shmuel Trigano," *Jewish Review of Books* 22 (2015): 47–48, and Trigano's response in turn, Shmuel Trigano, "The View from Paris: A Rejoinder to Ethan Katz and Maud Mandel," *Jewish Review of Books* 6, no. 2 (2015): 49–50.

community.[26] We will meet Trigano again in Chapter 5, where we consider the discourse of "Muslim anti-Semitism" in more detail.

However, Trigano was not the only one writing about the Arab-Jew in this period. He represents but one pole and perspective on the entanglement of the Arab and Jewish questions, which not everyone agreed with. Others saw a much closer relationship between the two and developed alternative models for thinking through their history and future. Kimberly Arkin, for example, describes how some in the Jewish community advocated for immigrant workers and, more generally, for anti-racist politics. An editorial in *Tribune Juive* in March 1980 was entitled "La nécessaire solidarité avec les travailleurs immigrés" and argued for creating dialogue and solidarity with the "Maghrebi citizens," even if they disagreed about Israel.[27] Eric Ghebali, the president of the Union des étudiants juifs de France (UEJF) and the secretary general of SOS racisme, went so far as to advocate for Jewish-Arab solidarity based on a shared immigrant history as well as racial appearance: it is vital for "young Jews," he wrote, "who are often themselves second-generation immigrants, to participate in this new fight that, this time, affects all basanés [slang for dark-skinned people]."[28]

Working almost directly parallel to Trigano, the editors of *Combat* also saw themselves opening a new space for North African and Middle Eastern Jews to narrate their history outside of the French Jewish institutions and scholars that had dominated the narrative. As we saw, *Combat* was a leftwing Jewish journal founded primarily by Jews from North Africa and the Middle East, which served as an instrumental space for articulating and giving voice to new visions for Arab-Jews in

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[26] Shmuel Trigano, *La démission de la République: Juifs et musulmans en France* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003).

[27] Cited in Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*, 2.

[28] Cited in Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*, 67.

France. The journal's third issue was published in 1980 and was dedicated to "Juifs d'orient et de méditerranée" and features essays, scholarship, personal memoirs, and different perspectives on Arab-Jews in France. The editors underscored the degree to which that moment entailed a certain coming to consciousness, an opportunity to regain control of a narrative dominated by the colonial encounter. They wrote: "Torn between identification with the colonizer and the values of the culture of the colonized, Oriental and Mediterranean Jews are looking back on themselves and gradually gaining awareness of their identity, of their history."[29] This volume, they continue, is contributing to "a formidable liberation of speech."[30]

In conjunction with *Combat* and organized by many of the same people*,* the conference *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales* (1982) operated in a similar vein. In scope and ambition, the conference was a landmark event that brought together a diverse group of writers, scholars, and activists from across North Africa, Turkey, and Egypt. It included important historians such as Esther Benbassa, Doris Bensimon, and Maxime Rodinson, as well as renowned literary figures such as Albert Memmi, Edmond Jabès, Paula Jacques, Naïm Kattan, and Annie Goldman. Over three days in September of 1980, they gathered in Centre Pompidou to reflect upon the past, present, and future of Middle Eastern Jews; they discussed the historical relationship between Jews and Islam, listened to poetry readings, musical performances, and interviews, and vigorously debated the question of Zionism.[31] Taken together with the special issue of *Les Temps Modernes* and the issue of *Combat,* these closely related events signal a crucial moment in the articulation and debate over Arab-

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[29] "Editorial," *Combat pour la diaspora* 3 (1980): 5.

[30] "Editorial," 6.

[31] A conference on Yiddish Culture had also taken place two years previously in 1978 at Centre Pompidou, which indicates the degree to which this was part of a larger Jewish renewal. Benbassa, *The Jews of France* 193

Jewish identity in postcolonial France and an important site for exploring how the figure of the Arab-Jew might be situated amidst questions of immigration and colonialism.[32]

Note, however, the way Trigano frames his interventions. He doesn't talk about the Arab-Jew, but about the *Sephardi Question.* By the 1980s, the distinctions between Ashkenazi and Sephardi were entrenched within everyday discourse, as were the common stereotypes associated with each of these groups in France (such as the notion of North African Jewish religiosity).[33] Yet members of *Combat* and the conference organizers took umbrage with the way Trigano framed the moment as a "Sephardi Question." They argued that it reduced the diversity of histories, languages, and cultures to a catch-all term that risked homogenizing and essentializing vastly different experiences. In their introduction to the conference, the organizers note that their specific formulation, "Mediterranean and Oriental Jews," was meant as an opening rather than a foreclosure, an insistence on plurality and multiple histories rather than an appeal to some homogenous notion of Oriental Jews. "We wanted

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[32] In some ways, the conference poses a historical and methodological question about the historicization of Jews in the Middle East and about what it means to think across different histories, geographies, and cultural communities. For, despite the many historical, legal, and political differences between Moroccan, Algerian, Turkish, and Egyptian Jews, their grouping together nevertheless indicates something of a shared project across these geographical and cultural differences. That is to say, without reducing these differences and without needing to homogenize different communities, there is a transnational project here that cuts across borders and insular notions of national identity. This is immediately evident in the discussion between the writers Paula Jacques, Albert Memmi, and Naïm Kattan (Egyptian, Tunisian and Iraqi, respectively). Jacques notes that Memmi's novel *Le statue de sel*—about a young boy in French colonized Tunisia—was an important text for her, despite the different conditions they found themselves in, and despite Egypt's very different relationship to France. The ensuing discussion between Memmi and Kattan about their respective relationships to France and to writing in French is, despite their vast and substantive differences, another indication of the circulation, presentation, and performance of a contemporary Arab-Jewish positionality that cuts across national borders. See Bernard Chaouat, Françoise Chaouat, and Claudine Guittonneau, eds., *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales* (Paris: Syros, 1982) 299-311

[33] See Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: An Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) xlvi. For her part, Schnapper considers the terms "native" versus "transplant" to better capture the types of subject positions and their relation to France. See Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France* 26

to insist," they wrote, "on a plurality of stories, backgrounds, [and] experiences, which we found interesting to confront, insofar as these days [of the conference] were for us a place of exchange, of discussion, and the affirmation of an existence that continues in new forms."[34] Their disagreement with Trigano is also explicitly marked in the conclusion, where they revisit this question and note their hesitation with Trigano's use of the term in the *Les Temps Modernes* issue, writing that "the debate remains open…"[35] The historian Haïm Vidal Sephiha made the case against using Sephardi for historical reasons. A contributor to the *Les Temps Modernes* issue, the *Combat* issue, and the conference, Sephiha described the specific history of Judeo-Spanish that the term Sephardi marks. However, he argues that today Sephardi is being widely used without any sense of its historical and terminological specificity. Sephiha went so far as to make clear that he wasn't consulted about the framing of the Les Temps Modernes issue and strongly disagreed with Trigano's criteria and perspective. In his article for *Combat,* Sephiha wrote that the term Sephardi goes back to a colonial nomenclature instituted by the British in mandate Palestine to divide broadly between European and non-European Jews and that ultimately, "there is no reason to accept such criteria, nor those of S. Trigano… Similarly, in Trigano's dichotomy, every wealthy Jew would become Ashkenazi."[36]

The question to use Sephardi, Arab-Jew, Mediterranean and Oriental Jew, or any other formulation was not merely a historical one but deeply embedded within a set of political touch points that most directly concerned the relationship between Jews and Arabs in France and Jews' broader relation to and status under colonialism. We get a particularly vivid illustration of this toward the end of the conference during a roundtable entitled "Mediterranean and Oriental Jews in

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[34] Chaouat, Chaouat, and Guittonneau, *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales*, 14.

[35] Chaouat, Chaouat, and Guittonneau, *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales*, 397.

[36] Sephiha, "Diganostic du judaïsme français," 58.

France and Israel." As the title suggests, the discussion explored the myriad links between terminologies of self, language, French colonial history, and the Zionist colonial present, all of which were encapsulated within the figure of the Arab-Jew. By 1980, all the participants were starkly aware of the experiences of Middle Eastern Jews in Israel. Yet, some went so far as to make explicit the ties between their own colonial histories in North Africa and the ongoing colonial present in Israel-Palestine. Fanny Mergui, one of the organizers who was originally from Morocco, perfectly captures this troubled intersection of terminology of self, colonial history, and Zionism: "I am not Sephardi," she writes, "I am Jewish, I am Moroccan, I am an Arab, of French culture. I was born in a colonized country, and it took me years to realize it precisely because I was colonized by both France and Zionism."[37] Note how the terminological question is intertwined with the double scission of a colonial history that traverses France, Morocco, and Israel-Palestine and the sense that this doubled colonial history has rendered the terminology of self all the more difficult. Note too how Mergui addresses this through her insistence on multiplicity: the repudiation of a catch-all Sephardi and the refrain 'I am,' repeated multiple times, asserting a plurality against a reductive colonial history. The question of terminology and self was continually routed through, complicated, and indexed by a colonial history that traverses France, North Africa, and Israel-Palestine, and in which the question of the Arab-Jew serves as a critical lens that exposes this colonial matrix.

As I noted at the outset, it is essential to understand these debates not merely as academic questions of history but as meaning-making projects that are carving out a space for Jews in France. In the 1980s, the contours of North African Jewish identity and its place in France had not yet congealed and were still being articulated. What form this would take and what entanglements it would entertain in relation to the question of colonialism and immigration were still being worked

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[37] Chaouat, Chaouat, and Guittonneau, *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales*, 366.

out. At stake is what such a space looks like, who it includes, and what boundaries define it. When, as I'll show, Trigano excises the Arab from that space, he is also establishing the borders, indicating who and what might be included and what forms of political, cultural, and racial formation are possible. And the same is true in reverse; insisting on the figure of the Arab-Jew, refusing the inevitability of their becoming French, and foregrounding the role of colonialism in disrupting and separating them from their Arab neighbors, is also a means of declaring a different kind of space, one which tells a different set of stories and thereby elicits an altogether different version of politics.

JEWISH RENEWAL AND THE IMMIGRANT QUESTION

One important evolution in Jewish life during this time was the explosion of cultural activity, which some scholars called a Jewish renewal. Though in the last chapter, I noted how the 1967 war in Israel/Palestine engendered a more communal and collective Jewish political identity in France, it was arguably in the late 1970s and '80s that this Jewish renewal reached its zenith.[38] Jews from North Africa were often at the forefront of this. According to Ewa Tartakowsky, around 441 different texts were written by 109 authors between 1950-2010 in a mix of novels, poetry, short stories, plays, and memoirs.[39] These years saw a plethora of cultural, political, and religious activism in the Jewish community that challenged the dominant Franco-Jewish model. While the latter had de-emphasized communal or specifically Jewish elements and foregrounded a French-Jewish symbiosis, the Jewish renewal was less abashed about its Jewish presentation and more intent on discovering the specific

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[38] This account is indebted to Thomas Nolden, see especially Thomas Nolden, *In Lieu of Memory: Contemporary Jewish Writing in France* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006) and Nolden, "À La Recherche Du Judaïsme Perdu."

[39] Ewa Tartakowsky, *Les Juifs et le Maghreb: Fonctions sociales d'une littérature d'exil* (Paris: Press Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2016); and Ewa Tartakowsky, "The Literary Work of Jewish Maghrebi Authors in Postcolonial France," in *Contemporary Sephardic and Mizrahi Literature: A Diaspora*, ed. Dario Miccoli (New York: Routledge, 2017).

cultures, philosophies, and contributions of Judaism. At the outset of the 1980s one finds special issues of the journals *Ésprit* and *Histoire* on "The Jews in Modern Times" and "The Jews in France," Dominique Schnapper's, *Juifs et israélites* (1980), Shmuel Trigano's *La nouvelle question juive* (1979), Luc Rosenzweig's *Catalogue pour des juifs de maintenant* and *La jeune France juive* (1980), Alain Finkielkraut's *Le juif imaginaire* (1980), and the founding of *Combat pour la diaspora* (1979). Marking this shift, Annette Wierviorka writes that "Whether one likes it or not, the republican model is behind us. There are no longer Frenchmen of the Jewish faith in our country."[40]

This shift in the politics of Jewish self-presentation was part of a broader evolution of French political life in the 1980s that was closely linked to the waves of North African postcolonial immigration after the Algerian War. This period is widely recognized to have ushered in two, often competing political movements: an exploration of multiculturalism and alternative forms of French universalist politics, together with the rise of Jean Marie Le Pen, the far right, and an explosion of xenophobic discourse centered on the figure of the immigrant.[41] On the one hand, the early 1980s set the stage for increased minority visibility and multiple sites of Jewish-Muslim solidarity and anti-racist activism. In 1981, François Mitterand's socialist party ascended to power in France, campaigning partly on the prominent slogan 'the right to difference' *[droit à la différence]*.[42] That summer, the government repealed legislation against immigrant associations and increased funding for rehabilitation programs and education reforms, ushering in a wave of new immigrant groups and

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[40] Cited in Nolden, "À La Recherche Du Judaïsme Perdu," 118.

[41] In a slightly different key, Maud Mandel describes both the opportunity and the conflict in these years as the tension between "Particularism versus Pluriculturalism." See Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*. Chapter 6. Ethan Katz argues that much of this work was actually presaged by ideas that took root in the '70s. See Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015 281

[42] For more on the right to difference and the question of universalism as it pertains to the Jew, see Samuels, *The Right to Difference*.

political activism. These events were bolstered by the emergence of the so-called Beur movement, a second generation of immigrant activists who developed sharp critiques of French racism and demonstrated prominently against the oppressive conditions of immigrants.[43] In 1983, they launched the March for Equality and Against Racism, colloquially known as the *Marche des beurs,* the first national march of its kind that publicly and politically took a stand against racism and immigration. The March signaled the appearance of the politicized figure of the postcolonial migrant in the public sphere for the first time. As the historian Abdellali Hajjat writes, "for the first time in the history of France, this category of the population would become the subject of a media and political discourse at the national level, and the final demonstration in Paris, which brought together around one hundred thousand people, produced immense hope and a collective anti-racism [unanimisme antiraciste] in public opinion."[44] One year after the March in 1984, the anti-racist organization SOS racisme was launched with prominent Jewish and Muslim participation, widespread support, and a slogan that quickly became famous, "touche pas à mon pote" [don't touch my friend].[45] The scholar

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[43] Silverstein, *Algeria in France.*

[44] Abdellali Hajjat, *La marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2013), 15.

[45] Katz writes that in March 1985, they had sold 300,000 of their popular badges which depicted a yellow hand with the slogan written on the palm. By years end, they had sold 1.5 million. Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood*, 2015 304. For Mandel, the Beur movement and SOS racisme represent, respectively, the two poles of particularism and pluriculturalism, the one focused on the needs of specific communities and the other attempting to create a larger coalition. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*, Chapter Six. However, Saïd Bouamama argues that SOS racisme in fact moved away from the more radical language of equity that was prominent in the March for Equality and Against Racism to a more generalized—and neutralized—antiracism. See Saïd Bouamama, "Extrême gauche et luttes de l'immigration postcoloniale," in *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales: France, 1920-2008*, ed. Ahmed Boubeker and Abdellali Hajjat (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2008). See also Hajjat's discussion of how SOS Racisme is commonly assumed to be the inheritor of the March, despite different actors and opinions. Hajjat, *La marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme* 10-12

François Cusset described this decade as one of increasing visibility of minority difference in France and as a "lyrical elegy to mixedness" and "tireless saraband to hybridity."[46]

However, on the other hand, with the economic slowdown in the 1970s, France placed much harsher limits on immigration. The late '70s and '80s saw a proliferation of exceedingly xenophobic discourse around the figure of the immigrant and its perceived challenge to French national identity. In 1983, the far-right Front National (FN) party led by Jean-Marie Le Pen won double-digit vote percentages in multiple local and national elections and fueled widespread racism and moral panic, much of which centralized around the figure of the immigrant. In October 1985, the right-wing magazine *Le Figaro* published a special issue wondering, "Will We Still Be French in Thirty Years?" and featuring a veiled Marianne on the cover.[47] On the opposite end of the spectrum, in 1984, *Les Temps Modernes* published a special issue entitled *L'immigration maghrébine en France: Les faits et les mythes* which sought to highlight the colonial origins of anti-immigrant racism and the way Maghrebi immigrants were being made into scapegoats for more significant issues of unemployment and insecurity. By the end of the decade, the figure of the immigrant had solidified its place within the national imaginary.

The moral panic around the figure of the immigrant was a refraction of a latent colonial discourse that France was now reckoning with. One of the classic references on the history of immigration is Gérard Noiriel's *Le creuset français* (1988).[48] However, though Noiriel's text did much

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[46] Cited in Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France," *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011-1-1): 121–56 140. Despite the proliferation of discourses around 'the right to difference,' scholars have pointed out how this rarely led to material benefits to immigrant communities in the *banlieues*.

[47] Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, 71.

[48] This was translated into English as Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

to expand the horizon of the historical study of immigration in France and to draw out the continuities between the panic of the 1980s and previous immigration patterns, he fails, ultimately, to consider how "the immigrant" of the 80s differs substantially from earlier generations due to its already existing position within the colonial apparatus. The xenophobia Noiriel describes against Italian or Belgian immigrants in the 1930s cannot be compared with that against North Africans in the 1980s. Indeed, most notable about Noiriel's text is the almost complete absence of any discussion of colonialism with regard to the current question of immigration and the effects that had, either on immigrants themselves or on their reception in France. Thus, Noiriel writes that "while the stigmatization of foreigners took on various forms, it was by no means specific to one or another ethnic group or nationality; it was not a 'Jewish problem,' or an 'Arab problem,' nor was it related to 'religious,' 'cultural,' or 'physical' particularities."[49] However, this misunderstands the ways that North African immigrants had already been the object of colonial violence and discrimination for centuries. Their reception in the metropole, then, had and continues to have everything to with this specific colonial past more so than the generic "fear of foreigners" that Noiriel describes.[50]

This is the political frame in which discussions of the Arab-Jew emerged. However, if we understand 'the immigrant' as a category formed in relation to colonialism, how then do we understand the Arab-Jew? It, too, is a figure deeply informed by its subjection to colonialism. How is it that the historiography around it has often allowed the centrality of colonialism to disappear from the narrative? The history of Jewish renewal and the articulation of new forms of Arab-Jewish identity should be placed within the context of the more general experiments with multiculturalism

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[49] Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot*, 126.

[50] A different avenue might be explored through the work of Abdelmalek Sayad, whose analysis underscores that "emigration-immigration is the direct 'child' of the very colonization that generated the underdevelopment in the first place." Abdelmalek Sayad, *The Suffering of the Immigrant* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

and the apparent—if ultimately brief—attempt at thinking more critically about difference and universalism that spread across France in the '80s and which was closely associated with the Beur movement.[51] This is to say that Jewish renewal should be seen as part of a broader postcolonial phenomenon whereby the strictures of French republicanism and its exclusive focus on universalism and the denial of difference was—at least for a period—being rethought in light of questions of immigration and colonialism. Where, then, does the Arab-Jew 'fit' in France's postcolonial schema? As the colonial discourse on the immigrant took hold in the 1980s, how was the Arab-Jew perceived, received, and understood in the French imagination? And how, in turn, do they understand, represent, and articulate a nuanced image of themselves? What relationship did they maintain with their histories and the present political context in France?

SÉPHARADITÉ

I want to think through Trigano's project and his framing of the Sephardi Question a little more. For, though Trigano's lasting impact may be the denial of the Arab-Jew and his espousal of Islamophobia, I think the way he goes about this tells us something important about the politics of the Jew and its relation these broader questions of colonialism, immigration, and Islamophobia. Beyond his central role in shaping discourse about North African Judaism, his views fit neatly into a more general evolution of postcolonial Jewish politics. Trigano, I want to suggest, carries through the conundrum we first saw with the *Colloque:* on the one hand, he is at pains to position the Jew, and as we'll see specifically the Sephardi Jew, as a subversive figure who can upend the dominance of Western modernity. Yet simultaneously, he articulates this space of alterity at the expense of

[51] For an example of someone who does this, see Michael Robert Shurkin, "Decolonization and the Renewal of French Judaism: Reflections on the Contemporary French Jewish Scene," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 2 (2000): 156–76.

positioning the Jew over and against Arab-Muslims. The push and pull of this dynamic marks Trigano's project from almost the very beginning.

When Trigano referred to the world's awakening to consciousness of the Sephardi Question in the issue of *Les Temps Modernes,* he did so by developing a specific notion of what he called *"sépharadité,"* or Sephardiness. With this term, he embarked on an all-encompassing corrective project designed to address what he saw as a crisis of Western and Jewish modernity. In a text published the same year as the *Les Temps Modernes* issue, *La nouvelle question juive: L'avenir d'un espoir* (1979), Trigano describes how the old institutions of Western modernity were crumbling and the very idea of Western civilization had begun to decline. Let us recall that Trigano was writing in a moment when the effects of colonialism were beginning to be reckoned with, when France was beginning its experiments with multiculturalism, and when groups such as SOS racisme captured the public imagination. For him, the West was forced to face its moral and ethical failures. Though the Holocaust and Auschwitz are the major touch points for him and served to illustrate his argument about the shortcomings of Western civilization, so too is the fall of empires and the rise of feminism. All of these different elements mark a generalized failure of the Western ideal. In his own highly idiosyncratic way, Trigano was joining anti-colonial activists and feminists in calling for a wholesale re-evaluation of the West and new forms of political and cultural modernity re-written from the position of the oppressed.

In Trigano's account, however, Judaism does not constitute one element among others but amounts to the most significant form of alterity, a difference so fundamental to challenge the very heart of Western modernity. He writes that

> Only the imagination of an essential, radical, and absolute alterity: the creation of a "novelty on the earth," implementing the transcendence of the relation of mastery, of the oedipal relationship, of daily death, of everything that is incapable of creating, of giving, of giving birth and dooming the being to reproduction [d'enfanter et voue l'être à la reproduction], to the despair of the eternal return, to eternal death. It alone and

> not a restrictive notion of national-cultural "difference" based on despair, cowardice, and failure, of the past and not of the future.[52]

Jewish alterity, for Trigano, is sharply offset from the notion of a mere national-cultural difference. He suggests that it is only the Jew which constitutes, in its very being, a challenge to Western hegemony. While there may be other groups who are different, they do not pose a challenge in the same way as does the Jew. The Jew, in other words, is given a privileged place of alterity.

Yet, despite this characterization of Judaism and its function as a critique of Western modernity, Judaism also plays a somewhat ambiguous role in Trigano's narrative. For, it too has been infected by the crisis of the West. It has been normalized, tamed, domesticated, and made to participate in a newly imagined "Judeo-Christian civilization."[53] In fact, Trigano argues, it has lost its essential alterity, its space of difference, and its own cultural and political life. In effect, Trigano not only critiques the demise of the West but the way that the Jew has been made to participate in that very demise. Insofar as it has been integrated into modernity, Judaism too has become ossified and lost its revolutionary ethos. This "normalizing" effect—the word Trigano uses to signal the decimation of Jewish alterity—has ossified Judaism and denied its liberatory potential, the challenge it might have posed to the heart of Western modernity. "The Jews," he writes, have become "the last Westerners of the West."[54] Trigano, in a strange sense, has his finger on the postcolonial evolution of the Jewish Question. He is keenly aware of precisely what's at stake, of the ways Jewish alterity has become a dormant category, and how this has transpired in and through its relation to Western modernity. It is his response to this, however, which proves illuminating.

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[52] Shmuel Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive: L'avenir d'un espoir* (Saint-Amand: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), 79.

[53] This notion has been the subject of much scholarly discussion recently. See, for example, Nathan and Topolski, *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*.

[54] Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive*, 1979, 27–28.

With this idea of normalization in view, Trigano begins to outline and reclaim a new space of alterity for Judaism, predicated on the notion of *sépharadité*. In an essay for the *Les Temps Modernes* volume, he describes his vision for *sépharadité* and its function within the Jewish and Western world:

> One must, therefore, also have the audacity to affirm today the untimely [intempestive] scope of the Sephardi question: its meta-political scope, a camp for the manifestation of a true and liberated Jewishness, one which Western modernity has obscured and destroyed. The Sephardi movement thus carries within it a profound "cultural revolution" wherein the powerful and new voice that has been lost in us for two centuries will spring forth.[55]

Trigano is announcing in the pages of *Les Temps Modernes* a new political and intellectual figure through which to think an alternative to Western modernity. The project's scope, its place within and against Western modernity, is vast and overarching. If the Jew has lost its place as a figure of alterity, Trigano suggests that it can be reclaimed through the idea of sépharadité, that this can reinvigorate a cultural and political revolution predicated on the Sephardi Jew.

For the readers of *Les Temps Modernes,* Trigano's project for *sépharadité* and his use of the Jew as a site of alterity was not entirely foreign. Indeed, for a generation of intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida, this association between the Jew and alterity would come to have strong ethical connotations that allowed them to rethink notions of identity, community, and difference. This reached a fever pitch during the student protests of May '68. When Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a German Jew who had become a central figure in the student movements, was expelled from France, protesters flooded the streets chanting, "we are all German Jews" [nous sommes tous des juifs allemands]. As Sarah Hammerschlag has shown, the phrase drew on a long history of association between the Jew and alterity that was being reworked

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[55] Trigano, *Le second Israël*, 1979, 394 bis:363–64.

and reimagined to serve a positive, ethical valence.[56] The tension between their act of identification and disidentification spoke to the political instability of identity and the centrality of the Jew for interrogating those boundaries.

Trigano was very much aware of this history. However, he offered a slight yet substantial change to its form: instead of the *German* Jew being the basis of a renewal of solidarity and a re-imagined notion of difference, he argued that it is the Sephardi Jew who opens up that space of alterity. A new epoch was being announced, one which drew on a history of thinking with and about the Jew as a site of alterity but which shifted the valence of what was meant by the very term Jew. The European Jew, according to Trigano, had been normalized, ossified, and transformed into the last of the Westerners. It could no longer provide that subversive ethos. To rethink the Jew in the postcolonial moment, for him, one had to turn to the Sephardi Jew. In the pages of *Les Temps Modernes,* he announces this by rewriting the script of the May '68 slogan to read: "Nous sommes tous des Juifs *sépharades.*"[57]

Despite this analysis of Western modernity and European Judaism's place within it, Trigano's revolutionary idiom and vision for *sépharadité* was predicated upon the absolute separation of Jews and Arabs and the need to maintain the pride of place for Judaism. In *La nouvelle question juive,* he sharply distinguished the liberatory function of Judaism from any other form of activism or critique. Only Judaism, for him, in its very essence, constitutes a challenge to Western modernity, an authentic site of alterity and change. All the others are merely "national-cultural difference[s]," whose challenge to the West is functional and pragmatic rather than essential:

> If the Jews begin to challenge their death and fossilization, this cannot be indifferent to the West, which can only see in it *a profound challenge to its very identity.* If such or such

[56] Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew*, 2010.

[57] Trigano, *Le second Israël*, 1979, 394 bis:478, my emphasis.

> a people of Africa or Asia did it, that, of course, would have no meaning for them… It [the West] would see in it the contestation of action, of its enterprise of universal domination, *but not of its very being*…[58]

That Trigano cannot see—or else naively dismisses—the centrality of colonialism to the modern world order is not ultimately surprising nor particularly well-argued. However, it does allow us to see how insistent he is on distinguishing Judaism from other forms of critique.

From 2001-2011, Trigano ran the journal *Observatoire du monde juif*, which purportedly published cases of anti-Semitism that weren't being reported elsewhere. The journal was established after the second Palestinian intifada and often featured articles about anti-Zionism and the left. It also served as a forum for Trigano to sharply demarcate the position of Jews and Arabs in France. In the first issue, for example, he writes a report that states that "the position of Judaism in the Republic is in no way comparable to that of Islam… In relation to its roots in the nation, it must be remembered that the 'Jewish community' as such is in no way an 'immigrant community.'"[59] The Jew and "immigrant" bear no resemblance to one another in Trigano's account—this, of course, despite his own history of immigration and the hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. He continues:

> To assimilate them [Algerian Jews] to the newly arrived North African immigrant community constitutes one of the worst regressions that could exist, as if their choice [the Crémieux decree] a century ago was denied: they became French precisely so that they could leave Muslim society, in which their status was hardly admirable.[60]

Trigano recasts the Crémieux decree and the history of Algerian Judaism as a linear process that inevitably results in becoming French. The fact that many, if not most, Algerian Jews initially

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[58] Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive*, 1979, 63 my emphasis.

[59] Shmuel Trigano, "Les juifs de France visés par l'Intifada?" *Observatoire du monde juif* 1 (November 2001): 25.

[60] Trigano, "Les juifs de France visés par l'Intifada?" November 2001, 25.

resisted the Crémieux decree and that it functioned as a colonial mechanism for a divide and rule politics does not seem to matter. Such statements reinforce colonial divisions between Muslims and Jews and then perpetuate them within the metropole and postcolonial context.

As one might expect, the figure of the Arab-Jew with which we began is not particularly appealing to him for all the obvious reasons: its relation to Arabness, its insistence on historical and futural entanglements between Jews and Arabs, and the very fact that it places them in the same breath. He writes:

> Some people even say that the Sephardi dimension introduces Arabness in Israel, which is the same as saying that the Ashkenazi dimension is "Aryanism" in Judaism… The Sephardi Jew is, therefore, not an "Arab Jew" because that would be as absurd as talking about an "Aryan Jew." He is even less an Arab of the Jewish religion because that would be as absurd as talking about an Aryan or European of the Mosaic confession.[61]

Taken as a whole, Trigano's project for *sépharadité* is driven by sharply setting apart Judaism and demonizing Muslims. Its attempt to position itself as a corrective to Western modernity is carried out based on or in conjunction with the dismissal, rejection, and diminishing of other minorities, predominantly Arab postcolonial subjects. Trigano can talk of the ways Judaism offers the only possible path forward for a Western world that has lost its moral and political compass while simultaneously doing so through the complete and wholesale rejection of Arabs from having any chance at participating in this. It is almost as if the desire to reclaim a space for Judaism, to give it pride of place and stature, necessarily entails the need to distinguish—and thereby diminish—

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[61] Shmuel Trigano, "La conscience sépharade," *Tribune Juive* 621-622 (May 23 - June 05 1980): 14; I first found this in Arkin, *Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic*, 78; this article was part of a series of three essays that Trigano wrote for *Tribune Juive* under the heading of "Les Sepharades comme question," see Shmuel Trigano, "L'exil des Sepharades au sein du peuple juif," *Tribune Juive* 619 (May 09 - 15 1980): 14–15; and Shmuel Trigano, "Une ère nouvell s'ouvre," *Tribune Juive* 625 (June 20 - 26 1980): 20–21.

everyone else. There are, of course, numerous problems with this. One of the most prominent, however, is the ways it reproduces a colonial worldview that divides Jews and Arabs, continuing a particularly French tradition begun at least with the Crémieux decree and which has steadily enmeshed itself in public and political life. Such divisions result from a colonial order that continues to be perpetuated after decolonization and which substantially affects everyday life. As a result, such projects paradoxically facilitate the inclusion of Jews into the West via the exclusion of Arabs. In other words, they have the effect that their critiques of the West functionally solidify Judaism's place within it over and against others. We might say that it is at once the refusal of the assimilatory gesture (insofar as it insists on the uniqueness and value of Judaism) and the effective perpetuation of it par excellence (the continuation of a colonial order, the continued discrimination of and against the other).

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF THE JUDEO-ARAB

In a letter dated May 7, 1983, the Egyptian-Jewish writer and psychoanalyst Jacques Hassoun wrote to Abdelkébir Khatibi about the intimate entanglement of his Arabness and Jewishness and why the two have become inseparable for him. Neither the appeal to a past historical unity nor the purely political and futural promise of Arab and Jewish reconciliation seems to him enough to adequately capture this inseparability. Instead, what he describes is a combination of past and future, or perhaps the experience of the dissolution of what is past and what is future. He writes:

> What heritage allows me today to consider that without 'my Jewishness,' I would not know how to understand 'my Arabness' and that without the latter, the former would be null and void. It is neither the mass of images from the depths of History nor the spell of politics. I suspect that this or that journey has allowed me to constitute what I consider to be a legacy and an inaugural at the same time… But perhaps its flattening

> would be illusory, risky, and useless at the same time. In these letters, we open the door to our stories.[62]

Hassoun's tone is hesitant, uncertain, as if he's writing on the threshold of something that might not arrive and which he doesn't want to risk naming. He worries about whether the project that their letters embark on will have the political purchase they want it to or whether it will fall flat. He attempts to give a name to an experience of history that is also one of the future. The letter is not without its sense of hope. For it is through their letters, he suggests, that they might open up those neglected histories and discover their resonance in the present.

Between 1980 and 1985, Hassoun and Khatibi sent each other a series of letters later published as *Le même livre*. I want to linger briefly with these letters. For one, they form an important component of the Arab-Jew debates we've been discussing thus far. Hassoun was intimately involved in the conversations we've been tracking; he was on the editorial board of *Combat* and an organizer of the conference *Cultures juives méditerranéennes et orientales*. However, the letters are also important because they evoke a very different relationship and approach to Arab-Jewish history, solidarity, and future. Hassoun's and Khatibi's letters are an intimate yet sweeping correspondence that traversed a wide range of political, historical, and philosophical reflections oriented around what they called the "Judeo-Arab question." At its heart, the project explores questions of difference and alterity, of writing and language, of colonial pasts, presents, and futures, and of the entangled and generative histories that mark Jews and Arabs. I say project—with its connotations of direction and coherence—however their letters bear nothing of this sense of finality or unity. They are, instead, fragmentary and wandering, relishing in the unexpected and fortuitous lines of thought that emerge

[62] Khatibi and Hassoun, *Le même livre*, 76, my emphasis. Further citations are in parentheses.

when thinking together. They gesture toward a different paradigm in which to think the Judeo-Arab question both in its inflection by colonialism and in its futures.

Hassoun's life in Egypt was cut short in 1954 when he was expelled for his political organizing—two years before much of the Jewish community was forced to leave due to the Suez Crisis.[63] In an interview later in life with the scholar Joel Beinin, Hassoun marks this difference, noting how it was as an Egyptian that he was expelled rather than as a Jew. Moreover, affirming his relation to Egypt, he says, "I completely identified with the struggle of the Egyptian people. I considered myself completely Egyptian; I even had an expression for a very long time, which I repeated as recently as ten years ago: 'I am Jewish because I am Egyptian. I am Egyptian because I am Jewish.'"[64] Once he settled in France, he became a practicing psychoanalyst associated with Jacques Lacan's school, *École freudienne de Paris,* and later with *Le Cercle Freudien*. In addition to his prolific psychoanalytic work, Hassoun was instrumental in reclaiming Egyptian-Jewish memory among the diasporic community in France. In 1979, he helped found the *Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Culturel des Juifs d'Egypte* (ASPCJE). When it became politically viable, he returned to Egypt on numerous occasions between 1977 and 1999. With the ASPCJE, he published multiple texts on Egyptian Jewish history, including *Juifs du nil* (1981), *Juifs d'Egypte: Images et textes* (1984), and *Histoire des Juifs du Nil* (1990). He also published a novel, *Alexandries* (1985), which offers a

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[63] Hassoun often remarks on how political organizing and Marxist politics in particular facilitated integration for large portions of the Jewish community. "For generations of young Jews from Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East, Marxism (Bundism, Communism) provided the keys to understanding parental religious alienation. Their passage to modernity through Marxism allowed them to not be invaded by the feeling of betrayal or contempt." Jacques Hassoun, *Les contrebandiers de la mémoire* (Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2011) 86-87. In her chapter on Hassoun, Aimée Israel-Pelletier also makes this point and takes up the question of Marxism, ethnicity, and his work on Egyptian Jewish history. Aimée Israel-Pelletier, *On the Mediterranean and the Nile: The Jews of Egypt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018) chapter 1.

[64] Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (University of California Press, 1998), 271.

polyphonic retelling of Egyptian-Jewish history from the point of view of multiple diasporic and exiled figures. In 2001, a collection of his essays and lectures on the history of Egyptian Jews was published as *Alexandrie et autres récits*.[65]

Hassoun's Egyptian upbringing and Khatibi's in Morocco meant they did not always maintain the same relationship with France. For Khatibi, the French project could not be disassociated from its history of colonialism in Morocco. In contrast, Hassoun once wrote that Egyptian Jews understood French as a language "which was the bearer not only of modernity but also of a certain conception of a utopian socialism which came to join up with the aspirations of the Egyptian people."[66] Many Egyptian Jewish writers, particularly among the upper classes, adopted French as their written language, including Paula Jacques and Edmond Jabès, and Hassoun suggests that French represented for many minorities in Egypt the "Republican ideal" and an "opening to modernity, to laïcité."[67] Despite this, both were distinctly aware of their foreigner status and outsider position. Khatibi famously described himself as a "professional stranger" and often introduced "idiomatic arrangements" in French in such a way as to animate its syntax and its grammar otherwise. Hassoun similarly writes in one letter that he was "condemned—reluctantly, willingly—to

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[65] Despite his commitments to so many facets of Jewish life in France and in Egypt, Hassoun's work has received scant scholarly or popular attention. The exceptions being Israel-Pelletier's chapter in her book on Egyptian-Jewish writers, Israel-Pelletier, *On the Mediterranean and the Nile* chapter 1, and two essays by Collette Wilson, Colette Wilson, "Uncanny City: Revisiting Alexandria's Haunted Spaces," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 14, no. 4 (2011): 473–515; and Colette Wilson, "Multidirectional Memory and Exile in Jacques Hassoun's Polyphonic Novel Alexandries," *Journal of Romance Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 94–115. He has, alternatively, been memorialized by his psychoanalytic colleagues, see Claude Spielmann, ed., *Jacques Hassoun. de mémoire* (Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2010).

[66] Jacques Hassoun, *Alexandrie et autres récits* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 172.

[67] Hassoun, *Alexandrie et autres récits*, 174.

write French in Arabic or Hebrew, which sometimes produces strange stylistic results"[68] (15). It is no coincidence that the figure of the stranger and the foreigner feature prominently in their work, and the question of recognition and difference are central features in their letters. Their project might be read, they say, as "an exercise in alterity, which falls under the law of language and writing.. an exercise of recognition among others. And it is toward the Stranger—whoever it is and from wherever it comes—that this book turns" (9-10).

As Khatibi notes at the outset, the guiding question of their letters is to try to understand "what is going on with the *Judeo-Arab question*" (7). Against an all too common perspective that understands Jews and Arabs as perpetual enemies, Khatibi and Hassoun deconstruct this phrase in all its linguistic, historical, and political meanings. As Gil Anidjar has suggested, this process might involve asking how and why the idea of enmity was instituted in the first place. "Beyond a horridly all too familiar and inescapable 'cycle of violence,'" he writes, "what is it that maintains the distance and kindles the enmity between the Arab and the Jew? What purposes are served by, what are the reasons for, the naturalization of this distance, the naturalization of the opposition, of the enmity between Arab and Jew?"[69] For Hassoun, the idea of enmity between Jews and Arabs is a complete anathema. He describes how the familiar phrase 'Judeo-Arab conflict' is an invented construction that serves the purpose of entrenching and perpetuating divisions: "At its heart," he writes: "what is the Judeo-Arab conflict? Is not formulating it in these terms giving in to an imported language? For those who were brought up in an Arab culture (language, customs, food, and sleep manners), to say

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[68] Abdelkebir Khatibi and David Fieni, "The Language of the Other: Testimonial Exercises," *PMLA* 124, no. 4 (2010): 1002–19; Khatibi, *Plural Maghreb*, 2019, "Bilingualism and Literature." Indeed, the notion of bilingualism was an important motif in both of their writing and the two first met at a conference on bilingualism in Rabat. See Jalil Bennani, ed., *Du bilinguisme* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1985).

[69] Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, 2003 xiii.

Judeo-Arab conflict would suppose an existential tear" (101). By contrast, in their text, the Judeo-Arab marks a margin, a pairing sutured and sundered by colonial history whose contours are still indistinct, whose futures as yet unclear.

The notion of the break, the *déchirure,* and the chasm are critical components of both Khatibi's and Hassoun's theoretical interventions. They form an essential part of how they understand the Judeo-Arab question. As Olivia Harrison suggests in her reading of these letters, "Khatibi's sustained reflection on linguistic division both parallels and allegorizes the separation between Jews and Arabs."[70] The text refrains from shallow and naïve statements of coexistence and peace, preferring to linger in the margins and breaks, in the chasms created by language and history. "Such a dialogue," Khatibi writes, "would be trivial [dérisoire] if it did not stay on the threshold of collapse and ruin" (24). Khatibi explicitly resists the easy resolution of the Judeo-Arab question and foregrounds the necessity of attending to the chasms and all that has been lost between them. Hassoun echoes the sentiment: "Are we far removed from the Judeo-Arab problem?" he suggests, "I do not think so. Maybe our exchange proceeds from this cut… which I feel we must urgently insert into this question to restore its true significance." Rather than insist on similarity or the redemptive possibilities of Jewish-Muslim solidarity, the Judeo-Arab question is a matter for them of finding new ways to live in the ruins. As Khatibi writes, part of what brings them together is the sense that "Muslims and Jews write in the same book, without knowing it" (17). This not-knowing—with all of its historical and political conditions—sets the stakes of their exchange and stamps itself on the very title of their work.

This also differentiates them from other groups at the time, such as SOS racisme, which also advocated for Jewish-Muslim solidarity and anti-racism. In his seminal essay "Pensée-autre," Khatibi

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[70] Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*, 105.

sharply criticizes the ineffectiveness of the discourse around 'the right to difference,' which he argues fails to account for the past and present structures of colonial violence.[71] "Whatever the case may be," he writes,

> this intimate part of our being struck and tormented by the so-called Western will to power, this intimateness [intime] which is hallucinated by humiliation, by brutal and deadening [abrutissante] domination, cannot be diminished by a naive declaration of a right to be different, as if this "right" were not already inherent in the law of life, that is to say in insoluble violence, that is to say in insurrection against its own alienation.[72]

The right to difference, in this account, amounts to little more than a shallow call for coexistence without interrogating the structures by which such difference was constructed, without questioning the very notion of difference itself.

Le même livre exemplifies a form of thinking and friendship on the margins when such relationships were deemed almost impossible. One might hear in their text a variation on what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih have described as "transcolonial solidarities," or horizontal thinking across different minority communities rather than vertically between France and its others. "More often than not," they write, "minority subjects identify themselves in opposition to a dominant discourse rather than vis-à-vis each other and other minority groups. We study the center and the margin but rarely examine the relationships among different margins."[73] In a France riled by debates over immigration and increasing fear of the Arab and the immigrant, the very premise of their dialogue risked being rendered illegible. As Hassoun writes, "can we consider that the Reason

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[71] The essay was originally published in 1977 as "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée" and then republished as part of *Maghreb pluriel* in 1983.

[72] Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Maghreb Pluriel* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 11–12.

[73] Françoise Lionnet and Shumei Shi, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 5. See too Olivia Harrison's discussion of the text amidst a similar framing, Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb*. Chapter 5. My own reading differs from Harrison's by moving away from the framing of Israel/Palestine and considering the more immediate context in which they're writing.

of the State might accept that an unexpected if not forbidden dialogue for it can take place between individuals who are deemed enemies?" (160) This threat of illegibility is perhaps why Khatibi describes their work as "a subversive friendship"—a way of living together and thinking on the margins of what's deemed possible. "What concerns me are individuals (Jewish or Arab) who think of themselves at the margin and no longer reproduce a creed of archaic origin and identity. Individuals who embody subversive friendship" (139).

Explicit throughout their project is a twofold excavation into the history of Jews and Arabs and into the ongoing colonial frames in which this relationship is heard in the present. Part of what *Le même livre* accomplishes is to describe and make present these diffuse forms of colonial power. Khatibi and Hassoun thus both write about the necessity of calling attention to the grids of intelligibility within which they write, the given frames which render their dialogue illegible. Hassoun, for example, describes how Jews and Arabs continually outperform each other in seeking to gain the acceptance of the Christian West. They don't hesitate to point fingers at each other if it means a marginal gain in the eyes of power. "The time has come when Jews and Arabs are cartwheeling, making an assault of courtesy with imaginary Christians who, in the West, let us not forget, were persecutors of the finest kind (of the predator species). Here is the Jew and the Arab pointing their fingers at each other while singing to the tune of lanterns 'here is the bad guy!! here is the bad guy!!'" (97) Hassoun's point illustrates what some scholars have argued is the constant backdrop of Christianity that structures the relationship between Jews and Arabs and against which they seek to represent themselves. For example, David Nirenberg writes, "we should not speak of 'Muslim-Jewish relations' in medieval Christian Spain, for these relations are not autonomous. Rather, they are in constant dialogue with the views of those with the power to arbitrate the shape of

those relations, in this case, the views of Christian Europeans."[74] For Hassoun and Khatibi, that situation has not changed.

Khatibi, for his part, offers a literary reading on what it means to understand the triangulated relationship between Jews, Arabs, and Christians. He describes a postman who disseminates the words and letters through which we make sense of and construct the world around us. As they accumulate, these words and letters form the given frame and the range of possible meanings through which it becomes possible to speak and understand. Far from being neutral, however, this grid of intelligibility is produced and enforced by colonial mechanisms of control. He suggests that the Judeo-Arab question operates along a similar line of thought, overdetermined by colonial histories, geographies, and epistemologies that limit what we can even begin to understand by it.

> He [the postman] distributes and disperses the letters, leaving some blanks. It is necessary to write in the trace of this blankness [blanc], here (in the Jewish and Arab debate) struck by something irremediable. I am convinced that one can only write from the irremediable and a traumatic trace, whether it is the result of an event or entirely fictitious. The letter is always on a traumatic background, to be turned over to read the trace (98-99).

The blanks that Khatibi alludes to play with the word *blanc* (literally: white), simultaneously signaling the empty space between words and the racialized regimes of whiteness that Jews and Arabs have been subject to.[75] To write through that question, however, to write in the trace of that regime is always already to be fractured by it. Thus it is to the blank spaces that Khatibi turns. Thinking through the Judeo-Arab question at this moment requires attending to both elements alike, the ways

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[74] David Nirenberg, "What Can Medieval Spain Teach Us about Muslim-Jewish Relations?" *CCAR JOURNAL: A Reform Jewish Quarterly* 49, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2002): 30.

[75] In her translation of the text, Olivia Harrison renders *blanc* as whiteness. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb* 116

colonial power continues to enforce particular grids of intelligibility and the marginal spaces through which it is destabilized.

Consider, finally, Khatibi's meditation on what he enigmatically refers to as the "Semitic archaism:"

> Something has been lost between Jews and Muslims, something terribly old (a Semitic archaism!), and which has deteriorated in extraordinary ignorance. I do not believe a miraculous return endowed with infinite goodness is still possible. What is finished, there in the Arab world, is indeed the presence of a tolerated Judaism, of a historical Judaism which would have its effective political place in the city of the *"Oumma,"* itself decentralized and torn. The [national] Independences [and] the State of Israel sounded the death knell even more so by uprooting the Sephardim. And those among them who now call for nostalgia for their "lost" Arab identity must feel in themselves, I experience it myself, as ghosts and phantoms in their native country. This phantasmagoria, this breaking up of the Semitic archaism, excites my imagination, it's very strange. Perhaps among these damages and through them, "our" primitive relation to the letter risks its chance without returning to the Book and beyond the end of the Book (24-25).

Note Khatibi's wariness about a naïve version of pre-historic return. The notion of Semitic archaism is decidedly not a plea for easy tolerance predicated on historical visions of unity.[76] Decolonization and national movements, both Arab and Jewish, have rung the death knell; there is now permanently the threshold of loss. Yet there is also hope, a new type of "phantasmagoria" that might offer new paradigms and modes of living together. Despite and through these traumatic traces, their dialogue imagines alternative heritages, new configurations, and a different cultural and political imaginary. As Hassoun writes in his final letter: "I remain convinced that the conviviality that our elders acted upon is possible, and that beyond jargon and ideological incantations, some people here, there, or

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[76] For more on the idea of the semite, see Anidjar, *Semites*, 2008. For a reclamation of the term semitism as a decolonial critique of Western imperialism, see Gil Z Hochberg, "'Remembering Semitism' or 'on the Prospect of Re-Membering the Semites'," *ReOrient* 1, no. 2 (2016): 192–223. For a different approach, see Joseph Massad, "Forget Semitism!" in *Living Together: Jacques Derrida's Communities of Violence and Peace*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 59–79.

elsewhere, will be able to talk to each other, to write to each other, and to not shut themselves up in an identitarian imaginary nor camp themselves in hateful retaliation. Is it blissful optimism to express these wishes? I do not know." (160-161) A history and a future, beyond nostalgia and shallow political profundities, articulated on the grounds of a possible illusion—these are the stakes of a project that risks being illegible from the outset.

CONCLUSION

In one of the essays published in the special issue on "Oriental and Mediterranean Jews" for *Combat,* Joëlle Bahloul describes the schism of the North African Jew in the following way:

> Where does my identity as a North African Jew tend towards, resemblance or difference with the Arab, familiarity or strangeness, belonging or distinction? And if there is a distinction, should we believe the story that distinguishes Jews and Arabs by founding the first of these in the great Western cultural ensemble? This story which led the North African Jew on the seductive path of the West, has sown confusion and blurred the cards of identity. Still, it has not been able to erase the tiny signs of recognition diluted in the continuum of daily gestures in which I discover points of reference, permanent reminders… The great confusion of the Algerian Jew is today part of this incredible contradiction between the discourse which wishes to distinguish itself from the Arab and identify with the French way of life and the daily practice in which the Arab recognizes their counterpart.[77]

Bahloul's question speaks to the tumultuous history of the North African Jew and the colonial backdrop against which their relation to the Arab played out. It asks its readers to dwell with this history, to think through its overarching narratives, to understand its seductive allure—but also to remember the small, intimate, everyday spaces where the purported distinction between Jews and Arabs is erased. Moreover, the tenor of her question reflects the sense that she was writing at a liminal, though pivotal, moment in its evolution. The narratives exist, the practices continue to prevail, and North African Jews find themselves at a historical precipice faced with how to respond.

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[77] Joëlle Bahloul, "Le Nom mode d'emploi," *Combat pour la diaspora* 3 (1980): 41–42.

I've suggested in this chapter that thinking with the Arab-Jew and its attendant political and historical features offers an analytic for making sense of these questions and the different perspectives people adopted toward them. Trigano and Memmi's repudiation of the term Arab-Jew or the Union des Juifs Arabes' espousal of it reflects this. Each sought to position and situate the North African Jew within France's postcolonial hierarchy. They were each providing an answer to Bahloul's question. Moreover, Trigano's notion of *sépharadité* allows us to see how even the attempt to articulate a revolutionary idiom for the North African Jew can still reinforce a linear narrative in which they inevitably tend toward France. Highlighting the contingencies of these debates and their various perspectives also allows us to develop a more circumspect account of the relationships between Jews and Arabs in France. When these relationships are framed as the "history of a conflict," as one recent account has it, we lose the ability to discern fact and narrative, cause and symptom, and give in to a frame whose plot only has one possible outcome.[78] That Jews and Arabs became separated in public and national imaginations was not in any way a foregone conclusion or historical necessity. Thinking with the Arab-Jew provides a set of historical and political markers through which to understand that.

In this sense, the Arab-Jew also offers a uniquely situated lens through which to understand one of, if not the key predicament of the Postcolonial Jewish Question: the relationship between Jews and Arabs and the ways that unfolded in the latter half of the twentieth century. These debates I've described were simultaneous with the beginnings of the Muslim Question in France. As Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed note, the construction of the Muslim problem was a state-supported discourse that had virtually nothing to do with the actions of individuals or groups who

[78] Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France*.

may or may not have identified with Islam.[79] As they write, "stigmatizing discourse and appeals to the hatred of North Africans as a national or racial group, decreasingly legitimized in public discourse, had been usurped by 'respectable' or 'virtuous' racism targeting North Africans as an Islamic religious group, which was justified, or at least downplayed, by the highest levels of the state."[80] As we'll see more in the next chapter, many influential Jewish intellectuals, including Trigano, would become an integral part of this Islamophobic apparatus. The alignment or dis-alignment between Jews and Arabs set the stage for transitioning from an "immigrant problem," which may or may not have included North African Jews, to the "Muslim problem," which conscientiously and purposely did not. Trigano's Islamophobic orientation and, indeed, the entire discourse of Muslim anti-Semitism was only made possible by this initial separation of Jews and Arabs, which I've illuminated here through the politics of the Arab-Jew.

[79] Though most accounts date the origin of this question to 1989 when the first headscarf affair riled public opinion and controversy erupted over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses,* they show that it was in fact earlier during strikes at the Citroën Aulnay and Talbot-Poissy plants in 1982 that employers, the media, and politicians began politicizing Islam. Thus in 1983, the Minister of the Interior complained on the radio of "holy strikes, fundamentalists, Muslims, and Shi'ites." Abdelalli Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed, *Islamophobia in France: The Construction of the "Muslim Problem"* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2023) 85

[80] Hajjat and Mohammed, *Islamophobia in France*, 90.

Chapter Five

Between Racism and (New) Anti-Semitism: The Separation of Discursive Regimes

In 1961, the TV series *Faire Face,* created by Igor Barrere and Etienne Lalou, premiered an episode entitled "Le Racisme."[1] Shown in two parts and utilizing a range of interviews, archival footage, and commentary, the episodes confronted viewers with the persistent racist attitudes and beliefs held by the French public. Set to a stirring violin solo, the episode opens with scenes from the Nazi occupation of Paris and then juxtaposes them with views from South African apartheid and the KKK in the US. The clips shock the viewer with their blatant racism and horrific tenor, but then the episode subtly shifts gear. The setting is a classic Parisian street, and we see an interracial couple seated on a bench chatting amicably. A voice-over begins speaking and asks: is racism possible in France? The camera lingers on the passerby's expressions as they walk past, staring at the couple, and the video freezes on their face for a moment, gauging their reaction. Adopting the second person, the voice-over asks: How do *you* look at the couple? With surprise? Contempt? Disgust? Lalou and Barrere begin stopping people on the street for impromptu interviews, asking them pointed questions about race and racism. Would they rent a room to an Asian person? Many respond they would. Would they let their daughter marry a Black man? Most would not. Are you a racist? Most certainly not, the interviewees reply! The exchange is repeated, the answers almost exactly the same, and the dissonance in the refrain "I'm not a racist" grows more acute. Races

[1] The first part of the series is available to watch here: https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire-actu/video/cpf86614340/le-racisme-1ere-partie

should keep to themselves, one White woman explains, while insisting that she is not a racist. And no, she would not want her sons to marry a Black woman—or a Jewish one, for that matter.

Less often, Lalou asks his interviewees if they think there is still a "Jewish problem" in France. Some respond by merely assimilating Jews to the larger question of race and reiterating their desire that their kids never marry outside their race. At one point, the episode makes a somewhat jarring transition to talking about Israel and explains how the state replaced the idea of race with that of the nation. An Israeli suggests a distinction between "Israélien" (national belonging) and israélite (a religious marker). Perhaps, the show seems to blithely suggest, Israel has solved the Jewish race problem. Yet the association between Jews and Black people also provoked angst in some viewers. In a review of the episode published for the Jewish journal *Evidences*, Albert Memmi describes how among the ways that people sought to defend themselves in the over 500 unsolicited letters that were sent after the taping was to distinguish between Black people and Jewish people.[2] As one letter put it: "Why did you mix up this brave Negro in the Jewish question?" Still, others, upset at the implication that they were racist against Jews, argued that Jews are not a race, so hating them is not racism. "Is it necessary to recall," one stated, "that if the black race exists, there is no Jewish race [race israélite]?"

The show premiered in 1961—a crossroads in France's racial regime and a moment when the idea of a Jewish race had begun to shift. The Eichmann trial took place that year and captured the world's attention by opening a wave of Holocaust memory, all while the Algerian War was still raging, now in its seventh year.[3] Tellingly, however, it is anti-Black racism which features most prominently in the episode, and almost no mention is made of racism against North Africans nor of

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[2] Albert Memmi, "Fallait-it en parler ?" *Evidences* 90 (September-October 1961): 20–23.

[3] For more on the relation between these two events, see Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* especially chapters six and seven

the larger colonial context. No doubt that subject was still too alive, too present to be coherently rendered—something which Memmi also noted, and he described the camera's "silence and timidity" around colonialism and Algeria. The absence of France's colonial wars also underscores the individualist approach of the show, which concludes with the lines, "we are all, more or less, in one way or another, racist." The version of racism it presents is personal and individual, a matter of ingrained habits and biases that pertains equally to White people, colonizers, and the colonized. What of the Jewish race, however? Was the association between those terms, Jew and race, still operative? Or, as the Israeli and the letter writers would have it, Jews are no longer—or perhaps never were—a race? More broadly, the show oscillates in its presentation of anti-Semitism and its relation to the larger structures of racism. In the beginning, anti-Semitism and the Nazi Holocaust are marked as prime examples of racism. Yet, later, these are minimized or even set off from the more immediate questions of anti-Black racism that Lalou confronts his interviewees with. Present in the same frame, yet still undetermined, the relationship between anti-Semitism and racism and between Jews and race in France's larger racial regime was in the midst of fundamental change.

Despite France's purported race-blind model, race and racism have long been methods of control and domination, both within the metropole and the colonies. This chapter explores the evolution and shifts in the idea of race and racism and the ways it pertains to Jews and Arabs from the immediate postwar period through the turn of the century. It tells the story of an emergent racial logic and how in light of the genocidal racialization of Jews during WWII, race and even the notion of racism were slowly disassociated from Jews and, ultimately, even from anti-Semitism. By the 1970s and '80s, I show, rising fears around immigration and the postcolonial context dominated discussions of racism. By the turn of the century, though nominally still attached, racism and anti-Semitism had been almost entirely divorced from one another in scholarly, governmental, and popular imaginations.

Understanding the position of Jews and anti-Semitism within what Jean Beaman, borrowing from Omi and Winant's famous articulation, refers to as the French racial project has significant consequences for thinking about the relationship between Jews and Arabs and between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.[4] First, it tells a particularly French story of "how Jews became White folks and what that says about race in France," to borrow from a famous work on the subject in an American context.[5] Rather than the predominantly Black-White racial logic in the US, the Holocaust and colonialism dominate the French context, and the de-racialization of Jews follows a different logic than in the US. Second, although scholars have argued for studying anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in relation to one another, this often entails collapsing the two or arguing that hatred against Jews has now transferred to Muslims—sometimes even referred to as the "new Jews." In contrast, by tracking the split between racism and anti-Semitism, I show how different racial logics structure the relationship between these two discourses. In her book on the ongoing relevance of race, Alana Lentin argues that "the detachment of the definition of antisemitism from that of Islamophobia is bound up with our impoverished public understanding of race."[6] This chapter attends to how and why French racial logic has changed and its consequences on the relationship between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Finally, tracking the relationship—and split—between anti-Semitic and postcolonial racism also sets the stage for a critical intervention in debates around "new antisemitism."[7] This discourse in France, which has become widespread in recent years, locates

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[4] Jean Beaman, *Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

[5] Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[6] Lentin, *Why Race Still Matters*.

[7] In most scenarios, new antisemitism is spelled without a hyphen. Spelling anti-Semitism with a hyphen calls attention to the shared, racial history of Jews and Muslims—precisely what proponents of new antisemitism wish to avoid. When referring to it directly, I spell it without a hyphen.

the new antisemitism in critiques of Israel and the proliferation of so-called Islamism. Indeed, "Muslim anti-Semitism" could often be substituted for "new antisemitism." I argue that the split between racism and anti-Semitism set the conditions for this Islamophobic discourse in part by rendering anti-Semitism a sui generis category and a barometer of one's belonging to France. In sum, the evolution of race functions as a key marker of the change in the Jewish question and its relation to Arab-Muslims. This shift has had severe consequences for how we think about anti-Semitism and racism and the current landscape of Islamophobia and its connection to anti-Semitism.

ANTI-SEMITISM, RACISM, AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE SHOAH

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, race was an organizing feature of the French nation and empire. Both Jews and the colonized were subject to racial regimes of control that functioned in a symbiotic and mutually reinforcing relationship. Following the expansion of colonial rule in the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism also gained ground with Édouard Drumont's *La France juive* (1886) and the beginning of the Dreyfus Affair (1896-1904). In both instances, race was a primary category that anti-Semitic writers used to describe Jews. Drumont drew heavily from philological work on Semitic languages to argue for the interminable racial differences between Semites and Aryans. "[While] the generic name Aryan… designates," he wrote, "as everyone knows, the superior branch of the white race… which alone possesses the notion of justice, the feeling for liberty and the concept of beauty, the Semite, by contrast was 'not made for civilization.'"[8] Others like Jules Soury, the historian of science, similarly wrote that "we must fight for France and for the Aryans… I believe that the Jew is a race; or rather, a species… I really believe that the Jew is born of

[8] Cited in Wilson, *Ideology and Experience* 457. Drumont's success, Dorian Bell argues, was to combine economic, religious, and racial elements in a new anti-Semitic doctrine. Bell, *Globalizing Race*, Chapter Two

a special category of anthropoid like the black man, the yellow man, or the redskin… Read Renan's *Langues sémitiques*."[9] Indeed, Renan's work on Semitism was central for articulating racial anti-Semitism in the period. Renan blended philological, scientific, and racist elements to articulate two linguistic/racial groups, Semites and Aryans. Philology, at the time, bridged the gap between religious, biological, and racial categories; it naturalized religious distinctions, rendering the Semite—both Jew and Arab—trapped in an essentialized and essentially biological schema.[10] Moreover, the racialization of Jews also borrowed heavily from a colonially inflected race science, such as Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855). Largely considered one of the earliest examples of scientific racism, Gobineau argued for the intellectual differences between races and the supremacy of the White or Aryan race.[11] As Dorian Bell argues, anti-Semitism and colonialism were mutually reinforcing technologies of control that heavily influenced and shaped one another.[12]

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[9] Cited in Wilson, *Ideology and Experience*, 458.

[10] For more on Renan and the place of race in philology and science, see Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1992); Jonathan Boyarin, "The Missing Keyword: Reading Olender's Renan," *Qui Parle* 7, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 43–56. On the centrality of the Semite for thinking about race and religion, see especially Anidjar, *Semites*, 2008; Hochberg, "'Remembering Semitism' or 'on the Prospect of Re-Membering the Semites'," 2016. For more on the relation between race and religion, see Nasar Meer, "Racialization and Religion: Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 385–98; Anya Topolski, "The Race-Religion Constellation: A European Contribution to the Critical Philosophy of Race," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 6, no. 1 (2018): 58–81. In a similar vein, Ann Laura Stoler writes that "the porousness assigned to the contemporary concept of race is not a post–Second World War phenomenon, as Winant articulated and others have claimed. Fluidity was inherent in the concept itself, not a hallmark of a modernist much less postracial moment—and not necessarily a diagnostic of racism's demise. Histories of racism that narrate a shift from the fixed and biological to the cultural and fluid impose a progression that poorly characterizes what earlier racism looked like and weaken claims about what distinguishes and sustains it now." Stoler, *Duress*, 2016 259

[11] For more on the development of scientific racism and race science see Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*.

[12] Bell, *Globalizing Race*.

During WWII, the Vichy regime once again drew heavily on race as a means to manage, control, and deport Jews. In October of 1940, after Vichy had taken control of the Unoccupied Zone of France, it passed legislation known as the *Statut des juifs*, which collectively assigned an inferior place to all Jews living in France. The *Statut* defined who was Jewish in the eyes of the French state using a mix of racial and religious language. In March 1941, Vichy created the Commissariat général aux questions juives (CGQJ), led, at first, by the conservative Catholic, anti-German, French nationalist, and anti-Semite Xavier Vallat.[13] While some have claimed that Vallat renounced the racializing tenor of Nazism for a more culturally benign form, Robert Paxton and Michael Marcus argue that, in classic French anti-Semitic fashion, Vallat combined multiple elements of racial, religious, and cultural discrimination. They describe how,

> In his work at the CGQJ, he sometimes used racial criteria in his daily efforts to toughen the *Statut des juifs*. He wanted the law to be applied, and he wanted to diminish the Jewish presence in France… Race and religion were inextricably mixed in Vallat's definition of Jews. Jews were more than a race, he told the Uriage students in early 1942. Around an "important racial core" he saw a "margin" of peoples "impregnated with Jewish attitudes [esprit]," such as the 80,000 observant Jews of Abyssinia. Vallat was convinced that these "Jewish attitudes" were hereditary. Citing Bernard Lazare as an authority, he declared that the Jew is "a confessional type:… the Law and the Talmud have shaped him more powerfully than blood or climatic variations: they have developed in him the imitative characteristics that heredity perpetuated."[14]

Race and religion were closely linked for Vallat. In June 1941, in addition to subjecting all Jews living in the unoccupied zone to a census, he also enlarged the first *Statut* to make this link between race and religion more direct. The updated *Statut* stated that "any person who belongs to the Jewish

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[13] For more on the Comissariat see Laurent Joly, *Vichy dans la "solution finale:" Histoire du Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, 1941–1944* (Paris: Grasset, 2006).

[14] Michael R Marrus and Robert O Paxton, eds., *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019) 55, 56-57. See also David Carroll's article on Vallat which considers his mix of racial, religious, and cultural anti-Semitism. David Carroll, "What It Meant to Be 'a Jew' in Vichy France: Xavier Vallat, State Anti-Semitism, and the Question of Assimilation," *SubStance* 27, 3, no. 87: Special Issue: The Occupation (1998): 36–54.

religion or who belonged to it on June 25, 1940, and who is issued from two grandparents of the Jewish race" was considered Jewish.[15] By the fall of 1941, determining who was and was not Jewish had become so central that Vallat had to issue certificates to people to prove that they weren't a Jew—*certificats de non-appartenance à la race juive.*

Vichy's racial regime was not dissociated from France's colonial apparatus. As scholars have shown, there was a close interaction between fascism, racial laws in the metropole, and those in the colonies.[16] Only a few days after the Vichy regime took control, it abrogated the *Crémieux Decree* and stripped Algerian Jews of French citizenship, subjecting them to various quotas and discriminatory legislation.[17] These anti-Semitic racial laws cannot be separated from a long history of colonial rule. As Daniel Schroeter puts it, "we cannot disassociate the long history of colonialism from Vichy's racial policies and anti-Semitic laws. Nor can we separate, in the colonial setting, the anti-Semitic legislation from colonial policy that during the Vichy era sought to solidify the hierarchical relationship between Muslims, Jews, and the European settler community."[18] Accordingly, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both anti-Semitism and colonialism were central to France's racial regime and governed its relation to Jews and Muslims.

After the war, however, this dynamic changed. By the war's end, the figure of the Semite and its distinction from the Aryan race was abandoned. Consequently, as Gil Andijar argues, the relationship between race and religion was reconfigured. "The discursive shift from *Semites* to *Jew*

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[15] Cited in Carroll, "What It Meant to Be 'a Jew' in Vichy France," 46.

[16] See Eric T Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Petain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-44* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[17] For the application of Vichy laws in North Africa, see Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, eds., *The Holocaust and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

[18] Daniel J Schroeter, "Between Metropole and French North Africa: Vichy's Anti-Semitic Legislation and Colonialism's Racial Hierarchies," in *The Holocaust and North Africa*, ed. Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 24.

and *Arab*," he argues, "rewrites fantasmatic alliances and refigures the distinction between race and religion, religion and politics, and ethnicity and race, while occluding or even excising, as it were, the Aryan and the racist elements from the equation."[19] Jews became less a race than a religion, and indeed, the entire discourse of race began to shift.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF RACE

In the postwar period, the ubiquity of racial thinking in Europe underwent substantive changes. The link between Jews and race was slowly dismantled, and the very meaning and acceptability of racial science was discredited.[20] Yet this was not immediate. In 1946, in his classic text on anti-Semitism, Jean-Paul Sartre could still write, "I shall not deny that there is a Jewish race." Though he qualified what he meant by the term race, he still admitted that "for lack of a better term," it included "certain inherited physical conformations that one encounters more frequently among Jews than among non-Jews." Though maybe, he conceded, it would be better to say "Jewish *races* [*des* races juives]."[21]

It was not long, however, before the horrors of the war and the extent to which race science had been deployed in the service of genocide led to a strong desire to combat and eradicate the very notion of race, rendering it inoperative.[22] One of the primary sites at which the disappearance of race played out was the creation of the UN and the UNESCO statements on race. In addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Genocide Convention (1948), which emerged out of the war, UNESCO convened a committee to study and disabuse the scientific

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[19] Anidjar, *Semites*, 2008, 28.

[20] For more on this in the US context, see Eric L Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*.

[21] Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 43.

[22] For more on the history of racial science and its evolution during the war, see Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*, Chapter Seven

legitimacy of the concept of race. In 1950, it published its first declaration, the UNESCO Statement on Race.[23] The statement argued that "race was less a biological fact than a social myth" and that what biology proved was the "universal brotherhood of man." It contended that there was no scientific basis for race and advocated replacing a racial framework with one based on culture and ethnicity.[24]

The UNESCO perspective on race can be seen as a cultural-relativist approach, which, as Alana Lentin argues, stands in distinction to the more radical, anti-colonial vein.[25] In the French context, one of its primary theorists was Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss, who was forced to leave Paris during the war due to his Jewish background, was a pivotal contributor to the first Statement on Race. In 1952, he published a short pamphlet with UNESCO entitled *Race et histoire [Race and*

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[23] For thinking about these statements within the context of postcolonialism, see Sonali Thakkar, "The Reeducation of Race: From UNESCO's 1950 Statement on Race to the Postcolonial Critique of Plasticity," *Social Text* 38, no. 2 (2020): 73–96.

[24] The statement generated controversy amongst more conservative scientists who felt that the jury was still out on the value of race as a scientific category. The committee was also predominantly made up of social scientists, whom, these conservative scientists claimed, could not accurately make pronouncements on racial science. The controversy led to a second statement, issued in 1951, entitled "Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences," which was more tentative than the first and admitted the "classificatory" and "zoological frame" within which race continued to be an accepted concept. This statement was regarded by many as "a victory for racism and the defeat of a naive humanitarianism." It was followed by more statements down the road, which were collected as *Four statements on the race question* (1969).

[25] Lentin argues that we see antiracist organizing as a "continuum." The primary dividing line, for her, is between those who identity the historical inks between race and nation and those whose cannot or will not make that connection. On the one side are the grassroots anti-racist organizers, anti-colonialists, and those who implicate the state in racism itself, considering it to be one of the primary sources for racist thinking and activity. On the other are those who more closely align with the state such as UNESCO, NGOs, etc. Lentin argues that there were numerous issues with the cultural relativist approach. For one, it failed to link the production of race to the rise of nationalism and to see the state as the primary purveyor of race. Second, it attempted to simply replace race with "culture" and "ethnicity" without addressing the hierarchical power relations at stake. Alana Lentin, *Racism and Anti-Racism in Europe* (London; Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004). Chapter Two

History], an immediate classic.[26] The pamphlet was one of a series that UNESCO published in addition to their initial statements, which included other titles on race and culture, psychology, biology, society, myths, prejudice, and difference. In line with UNESCO's perspective and educational goals, Strauss argued that because race as a scientific concept no longer had any merit, it should be replaced with the terms "ethnicity" and "culture." Arguing against a biologically deterministic model of progress based on race, he wrote that "we cannot therefore claim to have formulated a convincing denial of the inequality of the human *races,* so long as we fail to consider the problem of the inequality—or diversity—of human *cultures,* which is in fact—however unjustifiably—closely associated with it in the public mind."[27] Strauss was contending with how to reconcile models of progress and development with the notion of cultural relativism.[28] He argued that one could not disassociate racism from a pernicious notion of linear history and progress whereby cultures developed and improved along a teleological line.[29] By conceiving of humanity as progressing from barbarism to freedom, even when that entailed "helping" other cultures progress, one was already falling prey to a racialized conception of history that placed White Europeans at the top of a linear process. Instead, he argued that

> Progress is neither continuous nor inevitable; its course consists in a series of leaps and bounds, or, as the biologists would say, mutations. These leaps and bounds are not always in the same direction; the general trend might change too, rather like the

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[26] We might see *Race and History* as an implicit critique of UNESCO's watered down statement, and moreover, of UNESCO's broader project for peace and humanization which Strauss found could itself constitute a form of racism. See Carolyn M Rouse, "Claude lévi-Strauss's Contribution to the Race Question: *Race and History*," *American Anthropologist* 121, no. 3 (2019): 721–24.

[27] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race and History* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 7.

[28] See Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon, *Conversations with Claude lévi-Strauss* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 147–48.

[29] For more on this argument, see Kamala Visweswaran, "The Interventions of Culture: Claude lévi-Strauss, Race, and the Critique of Historical Time," in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Sybol Cook (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 227–48.

> progress of the knight in chess, who always has several moves open to him but never in the same direction. Advancing humanity can hardly be likened to a person climbing stairs… a more accurate metaphor would be that of a gambler who has staked his money on several dice and, at each throw, sees them scatter over the cloth, giving a different score each time. What he wins on one, he is always liable to lose on another, and it is only occasionally that history is "cumulative," that is to say, that the scores add up to a lucky combination.[30]

The idea of culture and education framed Strauss's and UNESCO's approach. It contributed to the idea that the category of race no longer had any validity in public and scientific life. It is easy to see how, in a classic Foucauldian vein, the proliferation of texts contending with and elaborating on the very notion of race in the postwar period effectively delimited and ultimately eradicated the meaning of race. As David Goldberg describes, there was a phantasmic desire to abolish race, to make it so that "for Europeans, race is not, or really is no longer. European racial denial concerns wanting race in the wake of World War II categorically to implode, to erase itself."[31] UNESCO's campaign, the proliferation of texts against the idea of race, and the guilt of the Holocaust were all effective in this regard, and race was soon rendered unspeakable in France.

There is something paradoxical about the relationship between the Holocaust and race as it emerged at that time. On the one hand, the desire to eradicate race and the incorporation of Jews into a "Judeo-Christian civilization" effectively de-racialized the Jew.[32] The link between Jews and race was slowly if successfully, canceled out. On the other hand, because the Holocaust emerged as the primary vector for thinking about race, Jews, in some sense, became the principal object associated with racist dogma. The fight against anti-Semitism became a marker for the erasure of race, the be-all-end-all of race's borders and limits. In other words, anti-Semitism indexed both the

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[30] Lévi-Strauss, *Race and History*, 22.

[31] David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Europeanization," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006-3): 334.

[32] For more on the idea of the "Judeo-Christian," see Nathan and Topolski, *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*.

totality of race and its eradication. Understanding this paradox is crucial in making sense of how the Holocaust has at once become a foundational mythology for Europe's fight against racism—while simultaneously masking its ongoing colonial and racial wars in North Africa and Indochina. Because racial anti-Semitism was supposedly rendered obsolete, any critical interrogation of the *ongoing* operation of race was disallowed. Indeed, rather than serve as a preventative measure against similar racial genocides, the very institutionalization of the Holocaust as a central mythology for Europe served more to inoculate Europe against its responsibility in other cases. Enzo Traverso, for example, argues that the Holocaust now constitutes a "civil religion" whose memorializing edict was made part of Europe's self-image, but without thereby posing a challenge to its ongoing racial regime. As he notes, "when detention centres for illegal immigrants proliferate and governments organize their massive expulsion (sometimes on an ethnic basis, as with the Roms in France), a civil religion of the Holocaust impervious to this reality risks appearing as a diversion. It gives the impression of an enormous mechanism designed to protect the memory of a minority no longer threatened, in a context of collective indifference to those forms of oppression that really do exist in the present."[33] That the Holocaust was rendered the defining racial event in Europe's history served in part to erase and mask the ongoing forms of colonialism and racism. Made exterior to Europe, colonialism was not a part of that European story for which the Holocaust occupied a central role.

This is not to say that the Holocaust and France's responsibility for it was immediately incorporated into French public life, nor that race disappeared from writing at the time. Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and other anti-colonial writers' continued interventions make that eminently clear.[34] However, institutionally, race was denied as a fundamental legal category, and even

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[33] Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, 126.

[34] On the "disappearance" of race, see Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 2011-1-1.

analytically, the social sciences veered away from race as an organizing feature of society.[35] Famously, it took until Jacques Chirac's presidency in 1995, a half-century after the Shoah, for France to admit its responsibility for deporting Jews. Up until 1994, even the socialist president François Mitterand continued to argue that Vichy was not a part of France and that it bore no responsibility. "I will not apologize in the name of France," he said, "The Republic had nothing to do with this. I do not believe France is responsible." Nevertheless, regarding the formulation (and de-formulation) of race, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, France entered a new racial regime.

THE POSTCOLONIAL EVOLUTION OF RACE, 1970-90S

In the 1970s and '80s, multiple important shifts in the political landscape led to a renewed interest in the study of race and racism. Fear and moral panic around immigration grew widespread and new policies were developed to curb the flows of immigration; the Far Right gained popularity and electoral legitimacy in large part on a xenophobic and racist platform; in turn, the March for Equality and Against Racism marked a new generation of activists who explicitly placed the issue of racism on a national scale. In response, scholars, activists, and writers once again began to think and write about race—but this time, the postcolonial context was all but overshadowing. This was not without good reason. The primary targets of racism at this time were North African immigrants and their

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[35] To cite only one of the most recent iterations of this, see Stéphane Beaud and Gérard Noiriel, *Race et sciences sociales: Essai sur les usages publics d'une catégorie* (Marseille: Agone, 2021); for salient works that address this history and the lack thereof, see Tyler Stovall and Georges Van den Abbeele, eds., *French Civilization and Its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); Stovall, "Universalisme, différence et invisibilité"; Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (Berghahn Books, 2004); Fassin and Fassin, *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*; Sylvain Pattieu, Emmanuelle Sibeud, and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Black Populations of France: Histories from Metropole to Colony* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021); Silverstein, *Algeria in France*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Alain Policar, *L'inquiétante familiarité de la race: décolonialisme, intersectionnalité et universalisme* (Le Bord de l'eau, 2020); Sarah Mazouz, *Race* (Anamosa, 2020).

children. The issues of police violence, housing discrimination, economic policies, and everyday aggression became central flashpoints in a new landscape of postcolonial racism.

In this new landscape, a shift also emerged in understanding race and its history. Rather than the history of anti-Semitism, from the Dreyfus affair to Vichy, it was colonialism and immigration which became the primary vector for conceptualizing race, and Jews were barely if at all, included within its purview. Much critical work has been done to link the histories of race and colonialism in France. Consider Ann Stoler's statement that "governance in France rests on the logos and pathos of a racial state honed in a history of empire."[36] Étienne Balibar argues even more forcefully that racism in France is not merely tied to a past history of colonial rule whose aftereffects are still being felt today but rather that "racism in France is *essentially colonial,* not in terms of a 'leftover' from the past but in terms of the continuing production of contemporary relations."[37] Racism was being redefined in line with France's postcolonial reckoning and a new set of political concerns.

To appreciate the shifting relation of race/racism and its dis-imbrication with anti-Semitism, one might look at the noted sociologist Michel Wieviorka. As the wave of interest in racism took hold, he published *L'espace du racisme* (1991), followed by the edited volume *Racisme et modernité* (1992) and *Le Racisme: Une introduction* (1998). Anti-Semitism is entirely peripheral, if at all mentioned in these texts. In fact, *Racisme et modernité* includes a short essay by Léon Poliakov—whom we will discuss shortly—on racism and anti-Semitism where he argues that anti-Semitism should be separated from racism as a distinct phenomenon: "since it is anti-Semitism that we are talking about,

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[36] Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 2011-1-1, 129.

[37] Étienne Balibar, "Sujets ou citoyens: pour l'égalité," *Les temps modernes* 40, no. 452-453-454 (1984): 1726–53 1745, my emphasis; see also Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); for how this is also tied to the relation with Islam, see Driss Maghraoui, "French Identity, Islam, and North Africans: Colonial Legacies, Postcolonial Realities," in *French Civilization and Its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race*, ed. Tyler Stovall and Georges Van den Abbeele (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 213–34.

I will conclude with a final terminological impropriety, its inclusion among the 'racisms.'"[38] It is only in 2005 that Wieviorka publishes *La tentation antisémite: haine des Juifs dans la France d'aujourd'hui,* which is still considered to be a defining text on anti-Semitism. Though Wieviorka deems the later text a continuation of his earlier studies, he also proceeds under the assumption that racism and anti-Semitism, though related, need to be studied in isolation from one another.

Part of this new theorization of race and the move away from anti-Semitism involved the articulation of new forms of racism that weren't tied to biological but to cultural vectors. At the beginning of the 1980s, as Jean-Marie Le Pen and the *Front National* made electoral gains and a protracted moral panic around the figure of the immigrant began, some saw in Le Pen a continuation of classical racism of the sort that relied on biological determinism and was tied to fascism and the extreme right. The Faurisson affair and the proliferation of Holocaust negationism contributed to this sense that the Far Right's racist imaginary was continuous with the fascism of the war.[39] Pierre-André Taguieff, however—whose larger role in the relationship between anti-Semitism and racism we will consider later—disagreed and argued that the Nouvelle Droite led by Alain de Benoist and other groups was manipulating the socialist doctrine of "the right to difference" in order to insist on the uniqueness of cultural groups and the need to preserve White separateness and superiority. He argued that up until then, racism described "essentially a *theory of races,* the latter *distinct and unequal,* defined in *biological terms* and in *eternal conflict* for the domination of the earth."[40]

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[38] Léon Poliakov, "L'antisémitisme est-il un racisme?" in *Racisme et modernité*, ed. Michel Wieviorka (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1993), 84.

[39] One negationism in France, see Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2009); see also Judith Friedlander, "Anti-Semitism in France, 1978-1992: Questions and Debates," in *Auschwitz and After: Race, Culture, and "the Jewish Question" in France*, ed. Lawrence D Kritzman (New York; London: Routledge, 2014).

[40] Pierre-André Taguieff, *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Doubles*, ed. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 2.

Whereas now there was emerging a new "differentialist racism" which attempted to maximize differences between groups and which was articulated based on "cultural" traits such as language or religion.[41] Balibar, concurring with Taguieff, described this as the emergence of a so-called "neo-racism" that operates as "a racism without races:"

> The new racism is a racism *of the era of 'decolonization,'* of the reversal of population movements between the old colonies and the old metropolises, and the division of humanity within a single political space. Ideologically, current racism, which in France centres upon the immigration complex, fits into a framework of 'racism without races' which is already widely developed in other countries, particularly the Anglo-Saxon ones. It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but 'only' the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions; in short, it is what P. A. Taguieff has rightly called a *differentialist racism.*[42]

Note the backdrop for this articulation: the history of decolonization and the postcolonial context.

Another common refrain of the 1980s and '90s was the failure of the classic anti-racist organizations such as the Ligue des droits de l'homme (LDH) or the Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme, et pour la paix (MRAP), to develop meaningful responses to the new wave of racism.[43] Taguieff wrote extensively about the failures of anti-racism, which he argued were not up

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[41] More generally, Taguieff argued that three shifts occurred in the 80s with respect to racism and anti-racism. 1) Race became linked to ethnicity and culture and was de-biologized (think back to Strauss) 2) Inequality, which was usually the hallmark of racism was replaced by a more general discussion of identity and difference. 3) What he calls heterophobia, or the rejection of difference, usually based on biological factors, was replaced with heterophilia, which sought new forms of particularism.

[42] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 21.

[43] For thinking about how anti-racist organizations made sense of the relationship between colonial racism and anti-Semitism, see Daniel A Gordon, "Antisemitism, Islamophobia and the Search for Common Ground in French Antiracist Movements Since 1898," in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. James Renton and Ben Gidley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 217–66.

to the task of combatting the new differentialist racism and, at worst, had itself produced it. However, René Gallissot, the historian of the Maghreb and the international labor movement, gave an even more explicit rendering of this critique. In 1985, he published *Misère de l'antiracisme* and argued that the primary reason for the anti-racist group's struggle was that it was still enthralled by a fascist model of racism tied to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism:

> Anti-racism is, in fact, mistaken by a generation, if not by two; it is even mistaken about racism. It is as if the battle was still being waged against Hitler and the racial theses of Nazism, which, through the laws of heredity and discourse on natural selection, sought to give a scientific veneer to anti-Semitism… Anti-racism remains a prisoner of anti-fascism and anti-Semitism; it thus finds itself trapped in the game of difference and identity, of the sole consideration of the Other as if it were still a matter of saluting to Jewish particularity—and why exclusively Jewish?—when the hunt is for dark-skinned people [la chasse est aux basanés]. The challenge now is immigration, and the conflicts are, therefore, immediately social.[44]

Gallissot may have been more pointed than most in critiquing the antiracist organizations' reliance on anti-Semitism as a model. Nevertheless, his text reflects the larger sentiment and shifts emerging in understanding racism and its separation from anti-Semitism. The new postcolonial context demanded a different set of coordinates and responses to the evolution of racism. Anti-Semitism could not provide that, and, at least for Gallisot, relying on it even impeded the ability to combat the new forms of racism.

Although during this time, research on race flourished, broad resistance to the idea of race remained entrenched in mainstream academic and political life. Emmanuel Todd's 1994 book, *Le destin des immigrés,* repeatedly argued that race was an American category that had no bearing on France.[45] As Nancy Green writes, "there is one category that…has been conspicuously absent from

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[44] René Gallissot, *Misère de l'antiracisme: Racisme et identité nationale, le défi de l'immigration* (Paris: Éditions de l'Arcantère, 1985), 7, 8.

[45] Emmanuel Todd, *Le destin des immigrés: assimilation et ségrégation dans les démocraties occidentales*, vol. 345 (Paris: Seuil, 1994).

most French discourse about minorities: race."[46] Even as historians and sociologists critically examined xenophobic ideas about immigration, such as Gérard Noiriel's 1988 text *Le creuset français,* neither race nor the history of colonialism featured prominently in their analysis. Stoler argues that the absence of race was not due to forgetting or lack of available resources—indeed, Fanon, Memmi, and many others had been writing about racism for years—but rather what she calls "colonial aphasia," an inability to register and compute an analysis that was still too disruptive to the national consciousness. "At issue," she writes, "is the irretrievability of a vocabulary, a limited access to it, a simultaneous presence of a thing and its absence, a presence and the misrecognition of it."[47] Nevertheless, to the degree that it was viable, the discourse of race/racism moved further and further away from the Jew as Muslim North African immigrants and their children became the primary targets of racism at levels far exceeding attacks against Jews.

LÉON POLIAKOV AND THE STUDY OF RACE AND ANTI-SEMITISM

One figure occupied a central, if oft-forgotten, role in this new landscape. Léon Poliakov, a Russian-born Jewish historian most well-known for his studies of anti-Semitism, was also a central nodal point in a network of scholars and thinkers writing about race. His research opened significant pathways in both fields, and his work and its tentacular spread illustrates key elements of how these discourses evolved. Yet, although both the examination of racism and anti-Semitism were central in his career, the relationship between them was never fully fleshed out and lingered in the byways of his work. In reading Poliakov, I suggest we can get in view a transitional moment in the relationship

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[46] Nancy L. Green, "Le Melting-Pot: Made in America, Produced in France," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1188–208 1205. For the most part, this has not changed, and Emmanuel Macron and his government continue to impute ideas about race to American universities. See https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/09/world/europe/france-threat-american-universities.html

[47] Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 2011-1-1, 145.

between race and anti-Semitism in France and how they were thought of in relation to one another. Throughout his career, these projects evolved and morphed in an oblique dance, at times seeming to open on explicitly to the other, and at other times seeming to draw apart. I suggest that this fundamental instability of Poliakov's project reflects the broader transitionary moment in which he was writing.

Poliakov got his start as a pioneering scholar researching the Holocaust. During WWII, he fought with the French army and was taken prisoner before later escaping and joining the resistance; he made friends with Alexandre Kojève and Jacob Gordin, whom he credits with facilitating his "intellectual conversion to Judaism," and he ended up coordinating with Isaac Schneerson to co-found the *Centre de documentation juive contemporaine* where he became the lead researcher. At the end of the war, he somewhat fortuitously began translating a trove of Nazi archival material that the French had secured, and he was called as an expert witness in the Nuremberg trials. His first book, *Bréviaire de la haine,* was based on this material and was a pioneering work in Holocaust Studies that anticipated many of the field's ensuing debates.[48] Published the same year as Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt lauded the text in a review published in *Commentary*. His seminal work, however, is the four-part series, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme [The History of Anti-Semitism],* published over more than twenty years between 1955 and 1977 and covering everything from pagan antiquity through the rise of Nazi Germany. For Poliakov, anti-Semitism was never an aberration but part and parcel of the history of Western society. In the second volume, he wrote that

> To write the history of anti-Semitism is to write the history of a persecution that, in the bosom of Western society, was linked with the highest values of this society, for it was pursued in their name; to put the persecutors in the wrong—repeating the phrase

[48] For more on this, see Jonathan Judaken, "Léon Poliakov, the Origins of Holocaust Studies, and Theories of Anti-Semitism: Rereading *Bréviaire*," in *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945–1955*, ed. Sean Hand and Steven T Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 169–92.

> of François Mauriac, "to require an accounting from Christianity"—is to place this society and its values in question.[49]

These texts not only established Poliakov as a renowned scholar but made him a leading researcher on anti-Semitism whose work set the terms and focus of research.

In his contribution to a festschrift organized for Poliakov in 1981, Maxime Rodinson, the Marxist historian and orientalist, criticized Poliakov and wrote an essay entitled "Quelques thèses critiques sur la démarche poliakovienne."[50] Among his critiques, Rodinson detected two features of Poliakov's work that he calls into question. The first is one that has also troubled scholars of race and racism, namely whether to accept the object of study as a given. Rodinson argues that Poliakov assumes and accepts for granted that anti-Semitism is a legitimate, coherent, and explanatory concept. Moreover, he presumes the term can capture thousands of years of history.[51] Despite the many differences that have characterized the history of discrimination against Jews, Poliakov, Rodinson argues, is perfectly content with referring to them all under the heading of anti-Semitism. He writes that "the very title [of Poliakov's work], symboliz[es] the acceptance of the concept of anti-Semitism… as a legitimate, valid, operative concept… To write a 'history of anti-Semitism' in this way is to suppose, a priori and always implicitly, it is also to suggest a coherence, a continuity, a deep unity of these phenomena of hostility through concrete situations."[52] Polikaov may have taken

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[49] Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Volume 2: From Mohammed to the Marranos*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) vii.

[50] The festschrift, organized by Maurice Olender, brought together key scholars of the time including Pierre Birnbaum, Michel de Certeau, Colette Guilluamin, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Pierre Nora, and Jean-Pierre Vernant, among many others.

[51] On this point, see David Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism: An Essay in the Semantics of Historical Description," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 30–53.

[52] Maxime Rodinson, "Quelques thèses critiques sur la démarche poliakovienne," in *Pour Léon Poliakov: Le Racisme. mythes et sciences*, ed. Maurice Olender (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1981), 318.

Rodinson's argument to heart. In essays and interviews later on, he described anti-Semitism as an "incorrect" term, and lamented the fact that it had assumed widespread usage. He wrote that "logic dictates… we should have carefully distinguished between a thousand-year-old *anti-Judaism* and an *anti-Semitism* which, emerging in the 19th century, would, in fact, be a form of racism. But by dint of speaking, as we do nowadays, of anti-Semitism in connection with all forms of Judeophobia, we end up in unfortunate confusion. Unfortunately, it is difficult to rebel against the use of language…"[53]

Rodinson's second critique is also particularly instructive. He argues that although Poliakov is one of the few Jewish historians to *not* a priori dismiss racism or to make anti-Semitism a sui generis category, linking anti-Semitism with the study of racism could have opened up exciting avenues of research and provided more concrete explanations. Rodinson suggests that following Guillaumin's influence, Poliakov sharply delimited the category of race and set it off from the broader history of anti-Semitism and even nationalism. He writes:

> It is expected that he privileged the lines of thought which reinforced his fundamental attitudes. He tended to use above all those elements that could mark differences isolating Judeophobia as a specific phenomenon and to radicalize these. Hence, for him, the seduction of ideas tending already to situate a "gap" between ethnocentrism and racism… Hence the tendency to use "racism" in a limited sense which restricts it to the modern and contemporary West by cutting ties with ethnocentrisms and even (more or less) nationalisms.[54]

Rodinson has his finger on the pulse of a central tension in Poliakov's work concerning the relationship between racism and anti-Semitism. How are these two discourses related to one

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[53] Léon Poliakov, Catherine Francblin, and Philippe Muray, "Léon Poliakov interview: de l'antijudaisme à l'antisémitisme," *art press* 54 (December 1981): 33–35 35; See also Léon Poliakov and Roger-Pol Droit, "Un entretien avec Léon Poliakov," *Le Monde*, March 15, 1994; see also Jonathan Judaken's arguments about how Poliakov's work illustrates the place of philosophy in secularizing Christian theological concepts, Jonathan Judaken, "Léon Poliakov, Philosophy, and the Secularization of Anti-Judaism in the Development of Racism," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35, no. 1-2 (2014): 181–205.

[54] Rodinson, "Quelques thèses critiques sur la démarche poliakovienne," 319.

another? What reasons would one have for separating them? What kinds of explanatory and critical discourses might be opened up by thinking of them together?

Rodinson's critique came at the midpoint of Poliakov's career, and he didn't realize how much this question would preoccupy Poliakov for many years. Already by that time, Poliakov had embarked on a new chapter. At the end of the 1960s, he began meeting with Vidal-Naquet, Guillaumin, Serge Moscovici, and others to study the more extensive history of racial discrimination and xenophobia. Over the next twenty years, the study of race occupied much of his professional career. In 1974 he created the *Groupe d'étude d'histoire du racisme* with the CNRS and the Maison des sciences de l'homme which held monthly seminars on the topic. In 1981, together with Colette Guillaumin—whose work was central to the renewed interest in and analysis of race—and Maurice Olender, he founded *Le Genre Humain*, a journal bridging science and art, whose first issue, "La science face au racisme," brought together scientists, historians, and writers to reflect on the meaning and boundaries of race. And finally, between 1973 and 1977, Poliakov organized three colloques at the renowned Cérisy la salle, *Hommes et bêtes, Ni juif ni grec,* and *Le couple interdit,* all of which had the heading "entretiens sur le racisme."[55] The Cérisy colloques formed part of Poliakov's larger research agenda to understand race and its historical manifestations, how to delimit its provenance, and how the advent of modern science had transformed our conception of humanity.

How did the study of racism and anti-Semitism intersect in Poliakov's work? Although he had expanded his research agenda from his initial focus on anti-Semitism, in only a handful of places did Poliakov explicitly comment on the relationship between racism and anti-Semitism. And by and

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[55] See Léon Poliakov, ed., *Hommes et bêtes: Entretiens sur le racisme* (Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 1975); Léon Poliakov, ed., *Ni juif ni grec: Entretiens sur le racisme* (Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 1978); Léon Poliakov, ed., *Le couple interdit, entretiens sur le racisme: La dialectique de l'altérité socio-culturelle et la sexualité* (Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 1980).

large, despite the comparative tenor of his work, Poliakov differentiated between them. He did this based on several arguments. First, he distinguished anti-Semitism from racism by arguing that chronologically, anti-Semitism predated racism by many hundreds of years; for it began, in his account, with the dawn of Christianity and a theological anti-Judaism, while racism only dated to the modern advent of science and territorial expansion. He writes, "these are the differences or contrasts between the two 'isms.' Anti-Semitism dates back at least to the last pre-Christian century, as the Book of Esther bears witness to. On the contrary, racism only developed at the beginning of modern times in the wake of the great discoveries and corresponds above all to bestialization."[56] This distinction, however, opens another set of issues that follow almost directly from Rodinson's line of critique, namely the question of continuity between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and whether a blanket statement of this sort about "anti-Semitism" and racism can be made. Even according to Poliakov's logic, there are several reasons to be hesitant, for might it not be more accurate to say that anti-*Judaism* predates racism but that anti-*Semitism* and racism are entirely coterminous? Moreover, as Judaken argues in an essay on Poliakov, his work, in fact, illustrates how racism secularized theological categories and how "concepts like the great chain of being, providence, salvation, election, conversion, and evil were translated into the modern idiom of racial hierarchies, progress, emancipation, assimilation, and degeneration."[57] In other words, even for Poliakov, the distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism is more fluid than it initially appears. Thus, the relationship between racism and anti-Semitism or even between theological and scientific racism seems much closer than Poliakov allows for in these comments.

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[56] Léon Poliakov, "Racisme et antisémitisme," *Politica Hermetica* 2 (1988): 39–42 40; see also Poliakov, "L'antisémitisme est-il un racisme?" 1993.

[57] Judaken, "Léon Poliakov, Philosophy, and the Secularization of Anti-Judaism in the Development of Racism," 2014 182. For more on the relationship between religion and race see Meer, "Racialization and Religion"; Anidjar, *Semites*, 2008; Topolski, "The Race-Religion Constellation."

A second argument Poliakov makes is that "doctrinally," racism and anti-Semitism developed different vocabularies and ideologies for dealing with Jewish, Black, Indigenous, and other people. For the most part, he suggests, Jews were primarily demonized or considered diabolical, while other groups like Black and Indigenous people were bestialized and compared to animals. One of his most explicit essays on the topic, "Racisme et antisémitisme" (1977), more fully develops the relationship between these two discourses. Notably, the essay was first presented at a conference in 1975 dedicated to "L'idée de race dans la pensée politique française contemporaine," and marks a moment where anti-Semitism was still considered amidst a discussion around the idea of race. He begins the essay by lamenting the difficulty of terms like racism and anti-Semitism and how not only are these evolving and protean forms of discrimination, but they have come to be applied with reckless abandon. He says it has become possible to refer to the anti-Semitism of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and postwar Europe without any differences. And the same is true for racism, which passes from Jews to Black people, Women, and even poor people without any sense of discernment. Instead, he argues, one should pay attention to the "doctrinal" differences between these discourses. "I have mainly dealt with doctrinal positions," he says,

> because they seem to me to be the distinctive mark of racism, as I understand it, that is to say, *stricto sensu*. The elementary affective (unconscious) substrates are undoubtedly the same in all forms of hostility, collective hate, or other rivalries. They would allow themselves to be related to the intolerance of otherness.[58]

[58] Léon Poliakov, "Racisme et antisémitisme: Bilan provisoire de nos discussion et essai de description," in *L'idée de race dans la pensée politique française contemporaine*, ed. Pierre Guiral and Émile Temime (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977), 14–31 29. Contra some of Guillaumin's arguments, he suggests that the extension of "racism" to all sorts of discriminatory practices is a regrettable phenomenon that might result in diluting its inhumane force. The worker, for instance, can be admitted into a common origin despite their discrimination, while others cannot.

This argument about bestialization versus demonization frequently appeared in Poliakov's work. As far back as *Bréviare de la haine*, he wrote regarding Nazi ideology that "if the Jew occupied Satan's place in Nazi eschatology, the non-German or 'sub-human' lacking any sacred attribute was for the most part classified among the animals; at best, he was considered, according to a contemporary definition, as a 'transitional form between the animal and Nordic man.'"[59] Similarly, in *Ni juif ni grec,* he wrote that "I think that so-called racial anti-Semitism, insofar as it is a form of racism, is as atypical as possible. Without going into the details of this difficult subject, I would say, to illustrate the idea, that the Jews were 'demonized' rather than 'bestialized.' A psychoanalyst might speak of 'bad fathers' and 'younger brothers,' respectively."[60]

Although he often repeated this claim, he never fully fleshed out either the consequences or the precise logic that allowed for making such distinctions. What's more, as Elisabeth Weber points out in her interview with him, there are many sites in his work where he brings sources that also compare Jews to animals.[61] A final text illustrates this instability. In *The Aryan Myth* (1974), Poliakov adopts the long view and sketches out various European myths of origins and how they were ultimately taken up by the Nazi genocidal project. If *The History of Anti-Semitism* is what Europe had to say about the Jews, *The Aryan Myth* elaborates on what Europe says about itself. The book tracks the rise of origin myths and how the affirmation of common descent was used to fan national sentiments. It purports to offer a "depth psychology" of the history of Western society and to "demythologize" its ideologies. He writes, *"it begins to look as if, through shame or fear of being racist, the*

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[59] Léon Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la haine: Le III° Reich et les Juifs* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2014), 263.

[60] Poliakov, *Ni juif ni grec*, 1978, 9.

[61] Elizabeth Weber, *Questioning Judaism: Interviews by Elizabeth Weber* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 94.

West will not admit to having been so at any time."[62] A large part of Poliakov's project was to illustrate this long history of racial ideas and superiority and to contest the notion that they are one-off or aberrant features of Western society. However, the question of race, anti-Semitism, and the relation between them is tricky to discern in the text. This is partly a result of Poliakov's style, which consists of accumulating examples—his breadth is in many ways unparalleled—but without entirely arguing or demonstrating the precise relation between them. For instance, the early part of the text considers debates about French and Germanic origins that were used to claim prestige and nobility. Poliakov has no issue discussing these as arguments regarding racial superiority, but the connection between the Gothic myth or Frankish elitism and Nazi ideology remains obscure. Are these direct precursors whose differences only mark subtle shifts in the constant evolution of the Aryan myth? Or are they different enough to merely be grouped under a more general heading of origin myths? Moreover, how do these myths track the evolution of racism or anti-Semitism? Poliakov never fully fleshes out these relationships. Even while his texts shed light on the deep history of racial and anti-Semitic ideas, they often leave readers with more questions than answers.

Though he paid close attention to the development of racial ideas, the relationship between them was not always as clear. This leaves us with two potential readings. We might argue that Poliakov saw racism and anti-Semitism as two interlocking discourses which should be studied together but whose differences should not be collapsed. It was important for him to understand each of the doctrines that underwrote race and anti-Semitism and how they led respectively to different forms of oppression. In this sense, the biological and the diabolical might be seen as two racializing regimes. Their ultimate purpose, however, as Poliakov stated clearly, was maintaining

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[62] Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (London: Sussex University Press, 1974), 5.

White supremacy: "Almost every [racial classification] involved value judgments that benefited the white race."[63] However, one might also read Poliakov as creating a boundary, delimiting the study of racism from that of anti-Semitism and suggesting that the two are different enough to be studied separately. In this reading, rather than interlocking discourses, anti-Semitism's diabolical and temporal characteristics render it a discourse apart from racism.

Poliakov stood at the center of a conversation about the relationship between race/racism and anti-Semitism. His research and ability to unite diverse scholars and writers set the stage for how these discourses should be studied and analyzed. Yet, the instability of this relationship remained, and ultimately, the second version of his work proved most enduring, and the boundaries between anti-Semitism and racism continued to solidify.

THE NEW ANTI-SEMITIC REGIME

At the turn of the century, a new political context reignited questions of anti-Semitism and its relation to racism. In the early 2000s, a marked increase in anti-Semitic incidents elicited an outcry among Jewish and non-Jewish leaders. Though initially coinciding with the Second Intifada, the attacks were not directly linked to Israel-Palestine, and their purview became a heated subject of discussion. The wave of incidents drew outrage across the French community and from Israeli commentators and supporters.[64] The Israeli government encouraged French Jews to immigrate to Israel, and in January 2002, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs described France as the most anti-Semitic Western country. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) went so far as to call on Hollywood actors to boycott the 2002 Cannes film festival. Emerging after the postcolonial

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[63] Poliakov, "Racisme et antisémitisme," 1977, 17.

[64] There have been many other attempts to understand the wave of violence, for a historical contextualization, see Paul A. Silverstein, "The Context of Antisemitism and Islamophobia in France," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 1 (2008): 1–26.

evolution of race, this moment was marked by the split between racism and anti-Semitism. Although they were nominally still grouped together, writers, NGOs, and government reports all insisted on the necessity of analyzing them separately.

Classifying and tallying what constitutes an anti-Semitic incident is extremely difficult due to the fluidity of determining intent and because the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is often entirely collapsed.[65] In 1990, the Gayssot law reaffirmed that "all discrimination based on belonging or non-belonging to an ethnicity, nation, race, or religion is forbidden." The law also mandated the *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme* (CNCDH) to submit a report to the government each year that tallied and analyzed racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic incidents. The raw numbers from the report were collected by the police and *gendarmie* and ultimately published in a volume entitled *Lutte contre racisme et la xénophobie* on March 21, the date the UN designated as the "International day for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination." In 1992, the tallied numbers did not differentiate anti-Semitism from anti-Zionism and listed them together without distinction. In the 1996 report and later, it began recording these numbers simply under the heading "violence antisémite," though the description speaks of both anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Later reports describe the purported difficulty of differentiating between the two, still without separating them.

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[65] More recently, many countries and organizations, including the US, the UK, France, and Germany, adopt what's referred to as the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism. It, too, has come under heated scrutiny for the ways it links anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. For more on the definition, see , "The Working Definition of Antisemitism". For an open letter by Palestinian and Arab academics critiquing the definition, see https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/nov/29/palestinian-rights-and-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism. For an overview of others who oppose the adoption, see https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/whos-against-adopting-the-ihra-antisemitism-definition/. For an attempt at an alternative definition see the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, https://jerusalemdeclaration.org

Additionally, although racism and anti-Semitism were nominally grouped together in the CNCDH reports and other anti-racist activism, the two were primarily analyzed separately. The CNCDH tallies the numbers for racism against North Africans and anti-Semitism separately in two sections and rarely examines their relationship. Because Jews were no longer racialized in the same way, it made it possible to analyze racism and anti-Semitism separately. By and large, commentators did not consider how these intersected and fed off one another, nor how the rise in racist attacks against Muslims often coincided with those against Jews. This separation, more than just a question of research or method, also had severe political consequences. I want to argue that because these were not analyzed in conjunction with one another, it made it possible to begin projecting anti-Semitism onto Muslims.

The panic around anti-Semitic incidents prompted analysts and commentators to promote the idea that there now existed a "new antisemitism."[66] Though somewhat protean, proponents of the new antisemitism, including Emmanuel Brenner (alias for Georges Bensoussan), Raphaël Drai, Alain Finkielkraut, Pierre-André Taguieff, and Shmuel Trigano, described a new era of anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitism had historically been associated with the right, they argued that it was now primarily a feature of the left. Rather than originating with fascists, they also suggested that

[66] Already in 1968, following the war in Israel-Palestine, Jacques Givet wrote of a "néo-antisémitisme," but this was but an early precursor to this rhetoric. Jacques Givet, *La gauche contre Israël?: Essai sur le néo-antisémitisme* (Hollande: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1968).

Muslims, immigrants, and other racialized figures were now mainly responsible.[67] Finkielkraut referred unabashedly to the *banlieues* as "savage lands," and Trigano wrote of the "Ottomanization of Europe." Nicolas Weill wrote that

> The revival of both verbal and physical anti-Semitic attacks in France and Europe, since the outbreak of the 'Second Intifada' in autumn 2002, has undoubtedly brought to the fore new agents of anti-Jewish hatred, in particular aggressors hailing from the *banlieues* or from immigration, victims of racism and discrimination who embark on behaviour towards Jews of a kind they are entitled to be protected from.[68]

Not limited to critics and commentators, however, the CNCDH and other governmental reports also contributed to this perception of a new antisemitism emerging primarily from Muslim immigrants and youth in the *banlieues*. The so-called Rufin report, written by Jean-Christophe Rufin and submitted to the French government, is a case in point.[69] Published in 2004 and entitled *Chantier sur la lutte contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme,* the language of new antisemitism was already circulating widely enough that Rufin could draw on it in his report. The text picks up on this language and

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[67] See Emmanuel Brenner, ed., *Les territoires perdus de la République: Antisémitisme, racisme et sexisme et milieu scolaire* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2002); Raphaël Draï, *Sous le signe de Sion: L'antisémitisme nouveau est arrivé* (Paris: Editions Michalon, 2001); Alain Finkielkraut, *Au nom de l'autre: Réflexions sur l'antisémitisme qui vient* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003); Pierre-André Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 2004); Trigano, *La démission de la République*, 2003. For a trenchant critique of some of these figures, see Ivan Segré, *La réaction philosémite, ou, La trahison des clercs* (Clamecy, France: Éditions Lignes, 2009), published in English as Alain Badiou, Eric Hazan, and Ivan Segré, *Reflections on Anti-Semitism* (London; New York: Verso, 2013). For an overview of the new antisemitism debates, see Timothy Peace, "*Un antisémitisme nouveau?* The debate about a 'new antisemitism' in France," *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 2 (2009): 103–21.

[68] Nicolas Weill, *La République et les antisémites* (Grasset, 2004).

[69] The report is available to view here: https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/044000500.pdf Joëlle Marelli has written an in-depth critical analysis of this report and the uses of anti-Semitism. Marelli also argues forcefully against the separation of racism and anti-Semitism, and writes: "rien ne justife que l'on distingue, au point de vue de son traitement policier et judiciare, le phénomène antisémite des autres phénomènes racistes." Joëlle Marelli, "Usages et maléfices du thème de l'antisémitisme en France," in *La République mise à nu par son immigration*, ed. Nacira Guénif-Souilamas (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2006), 133–59, 136.

describes the purported "rise of a 'new' anti-Semitism which would be specific to young people of immigrant origin, particularly from the Maghreb." It also describes the advent of "new forms of radical anti-Zionism." Underlying the basic architecture of the report was Rufin's contention—which, as we'll see, was common to many of the proponents of new antisemitism—that racism and anti-Semitism should be treated apart from one another:

> Even if racism and anti-Semitism should be connected with one another, they require separate examination. Without going into the sociological and historical polemic to determine whether they can be reduced to one another, we will only observe that in today's France, the problems they refer to are very different and point toward distinct forms of struggle. We will therefore consider them successively and separately, even if there are several standard measures and proposals.

The nominal nod to their connection does not warrant treating them in the same frame or as part of a more significant phenomenon. According to the report, racism and anti-Semitism are substantially different enough to be dealt with separately. As Michèle Sibony, an activist and writer with the Union Juive Française pour la paix, wrote at the time, "the Rufin report distinguishes anti-Semitism from other forms of racism, [it] makes it an exceptional category, and gives it absolute preponderance."[70] And as Dominique Vidal underscored, "this affirmation of a racism that is somehow 'superior' to others is—need we stress this?—counterproductive."[71] This sentiment about racism and anti-Semitism, however, was not unique to the Rufin report, and like in the CNCDH reports before it, the separation of racism and anti-semitism had been building since at least the 1970s.

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[70] Michèle Sibony, "Rapport Rufin: Le Monde à l'envers," November 2, 2004, https://www.france-palestine.org/Rapport-Rufin-Le-monde-a-l-envers.

[71] Dominique Vidal, "Quand Jean-Christophe Rufin Prône Le délit d'opinion," October 21, 2004, https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/carnet/2004-10-21-rufin.

Indeed, underlying and making possible much of the discourse of new antisemitism is precisely this disjuncture between race/racism and anti-Semitism. If Poliakov's work sat at a crossroads in thinking comparatively about the intersecting forces of anti-Semitism and racism, by the 1990s and early 2000s, this impetus had disappeared from mainstream conversation, and their separation had been literally institutionalized. One of the most explicit illustrations of this can be found in the work of Pierre-André Taguieff, whose early work on the meaning of race and racism makes particularly vivid the split that occurs in his later tirades on anti-Semitism.

PIERRE-ANDRÉ TAGUIEFF: FROM ANTIRACISM TO ISLAMOPHOBIA

As we saw earlier, Taguieff began his career in the 1970s and '80s, writing about the rise of the far right in France and the importance of reconceptualizing the form that race and racism were taking. With texts like *La Force du préjugé* (1988), *Face au racisme* (1991), *and Les Fins de l'antiracisme* (1995), he became a prominent analyst and commentator on the *Nouvelle Droite* and one of its primary theoreticians, Alain de Benoist. Even in the early days, Taguieff was not without controversy. In 1993, *Le Monde* published the famous "Appel à la vigilance," which advocated for vigilance around associating and amplifying the message of the far right.[72] Among the original signatories were Henri Atlan, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Maurice Olender, and Léon Poliakov. Though the appeal did not explicitly call out Taguieff, an accompanying article by Roger Pol-Droit referred directly to Taguieff's involvement with Benoist and the "confusion" it caused.[73] Before the appeal, however, Taguieff's main contribution, as noted above, was to argue that new forms of

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[72] *Le Monde,* July 07, 1993. For reflections on the appeal, see Maurice Olender, *Singulier pluriel: conversations*, ed. Christine Marcandier (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2020) 91-106

[73] Some of the controversy centered around whether or not Taguieff had given permission for his essays to be published in a collection in Italy with those of Benoist; he maintains he did not. These initial articles were followed by more on July 27, including one by Taguieff, Benoist, Pol-Droit, and Vidal-Naquet.

"differentialist racism" had emerged based on cultural traits rather than the classical biological underpinning of race. Additionally, Taguieff, who was involved in the '70s in many of the classic antiracist organizations such as MRAP and LDH, suggested that antiracism, in general, had failed to address the evolution of racism and had become, at best, mere reactionaries to the new discourse of race, and at worse, themselves responsible for the very construction of cultural racism in the first place. "Discourses of racizing intention," he wrote, "and militant antiracist discourses meet in using the same language games, in taking recourse to the same foundational evidence, and in aiming for the realization of the same values."[74] He wrote of a convergence between racism and antiracism, or racism and its doubles.

Today, however, he is perhaps best known as a tendentious and reactionary conservative figure, yet someone whose work on contemporary anti-Semitism has nevertheless had an outsized influence on current debates. Beginning in 2002, he published a series of books, including *La Nouvelle Judéophobie* (2002), *Prêcheurs de haine: Traversée de la judéophobie planétaire* (2004), and *La Judéophobie des Modernes: Des Lumières au Jihad* (2008), whose premise was to articulate a new form of anti-Semitism that he called Judeophobia.[75] He became the president of SOS Racisme's Observatoire de l'antisémitisme and, in 1991, was appointed as an analyst for the CNCDH.

Taguieff first published on the "new Judeophobia" in 1989, in an essay for *Les Temps Modernes* titled "La nouvelle judéophobie: antisionisme, antiracisme, anti-impérialisme." However, although this earlier work begins to articulate some of the fundamental features that appeared in his later texts (like the collapse of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism), his main targets and objects of

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[74] Taguieff, *The Force of Prejudice*, 2001, 7.

[75] The English title, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe,* does not capture this shift to Judeophobia that is clearly marked in the French. Taguieff's work has been subject to a minute and detailed critique by Ivan Segré, who argues that he entirely fails to distinguish between forms of anti-Zionism. See Segré, *La réaction philosémite, ou, La trahison des clercs*. Chapter Three.

analysis were the far-right negationist and revisionist authors such as Robert Faurisson and the *Nouvelle Droite*. Taguieff argued that negationists articulated their arguments through an anti-imperialist and anti-racist framework that saw Zionism as a colonialist and racist state. This strange conjunction of the far right and its anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist language marked, for Taguieff, the emergence of a "new Judeophobia." Beginning in 2002, his books adapt this same framework and merely change the primary characters. Instead of Faurisson and Holocaust deniers who are responsible, it is the rise of Islamism and the left. In his later work, he links his descriptions of the new Judeophobia as an "exterminatory anti-Zionism" to the rise of "Islamism" and other Third Word, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-American conglomerates.

It is crucial for Taguieff that he positions himself as an inheritor of Poliakov, lending a sense of legitimacy and respectability to his work. He wrote the preface to an updated version of Poliakov's *La causalité diabolique* and dedicated his text *La Couleur et le Sang: Doctrines racistes à la française* (1998) to Poliakov. However, though Taguieff was similarly enmeshed within the discourses of racism and anti-Semitism, his approach differs markedly from Poliakov's. If Poliakov's work offered an opening regarding racism and anti-Semitism, Taguieff, for the most part, closes this down. In his readings of Poliakov, Taguieff often picks up on something Poliakov says and entirely rewrites it to fit his own approach. For instance, in the preface to *La causalité diabolique,* after explaining Poliakov's notion of the diabolical and how it functions as an enemy-creating machine that demonizes the other, he swiftly turns this onto those who criticize Israel—though it's not at all apparent that Poliakov had anything of the sort in mind. He also uses that moment as an opportunity to dismiss Islamism and neo-leftism, grouping all of these under the heading of the

diabolical and grand conspiracy theories.[76] It is a not-so-subtle shift that exploits elements of Poliakov's work and rearticulates them on new terrain, thus gathering Poliakov into his own ideological project.

Though there are many differences between the two figures, Taguieff's trajectory marks the final separation in the evolution of race and anti-Semitism. In *La nouvelle Judéophobie,* the sharp distinction between race/racism and anti-Semitism is immediately evident. In the introduction, he writes explicitly that:

> If I prefer to use the epithet "anti-Jewish" or "Judeophobic" rather than "anti-Semitic," this is because the terms "anti-Semite" and "anti-Semitism" (which presuppose an old theory of race and particularly a racialist distinction between "Semitic" and "Aryan/Indo-European") today strike us as ill-suited for a fruitful conceptualization of the anti-Jewish phenomena now observable in the world. Post-Nazi Judeophobia is grounded not upon the vulgar racialist theories of the late nineteenth century, with their myth of a "race war" between two imaginary constructs, "Semites" and "Aryans," but upon a set of cultural and political elements quite different from those characterizing the anti-Semitism of the Dreyfus Affair or the state racism of the National Socialists.[77]

In a certain light, there is a continuity between his earlier work on differentialist or cultural racism and his understanding of anti-Semitism. In both instances, he is trying to determine how these discourses have morphed in the postwar period. Yet his arguments also entirely disconnect anti-Semitism from the broader arena of racism and Islamophobia. "The premise of this book," he writes, "is that, after a period of calm, anti-Jewish imagery again came under the sway of ideological

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[76] See Léon Poliakov, *La Causalité diabolique: Essai sur l'origine des persécutions*, vol. 1 and 2 (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2006) XXVI-XXVIII.

[77] Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck*, 2004 11. Jonathan Judaken seems to concur with Taguieff in this regard. He writes that "the new Judaeophobia, unlike antisemitism, is not premised on the Aryan myth or biological racism, white supremacy or ultra-populist ethnonationalism. Indeed, it is often explicitly articulated in terms of an antiracist agenda." Jonathan Judaken, "So What's New? Rethinking the 'New Antisemitism' in a Global Age," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4-5 (2008-9): 531–60 536

fanaticism, only this time not on an *ethnic-racial* basis but on a distinctive *religious* basis involving improper or distorted references to Islam."[78] By "religious basis," Taguieff has in mind the rise of "Islamism" which he thinks undergirds the entire network of a new global Judeophobia. Combined with anti-Americanism, Third-Worldism, and anti-Zionism, these constitute a "new vulgate" of contemporary anti-Semitic discourse. The disjunction between racism and anti-Semitism allows for disconnecting anti-Semitism from other forms of racist discrimination.

RACIAL REGIMES OF ANTI-SEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

The weaponization of anti-Semitism in recent decades has transformed much of the discourse around it into a bludgeon to defend against critiques of Israel and as a tool that poorly masks recalcitrant Islamophobic rhetoric. As Vincent Geisser notes in his excellent discussion of the new antisemitism,

> The proponents of the "new Judeophobia" thesis are less concerned with analyzing the ideological, cultural, and religious provinces of anti-Semitism than with unrolling a scenario of the Islamization of France before our eyes and adjoining to this certain Islamophobic registers of far-right discourse. As proof, the Jewish victims of racist acts are almost entirely absent from their remarks. At the same time, the "young Arab-Muslims" are omnipresent, as if the fundamental problem was not in itself anti-Semitism but the "Islamic danger" which hangs over our country. Anti-Semitism has become a pretext for discussing another object: Islam and its "rogue" forms (Islamism and fundamentalism).[79]

Not only has this set back a more rigorous analysis of anti-Semitism and the ways it is linked to other racist regimes, but it has also obscured the relationship between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Made into interminable opposites, what is lost in this rendering is how Republican

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[78] Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck*, 2004, 10, my emphasis.

[79] Vincent Geisser, *La nouvelle islamophobie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), 84.

racism continues to produce and excrete "others"—which both Jews and Arabs have been subject to.

However, despite the critical work of narrating these histories together, what is lost in much of this rhetoric are the *different* ways these two discourses operate in contemporary French politics and culture. Though Jews and Arabs are still not deemed a legitimate part of the body politic, I argue that their exclusions follow inverse logic. Consider what Houria Bouteldja, addressing herself directly to "you, the Jews," writes: "You are both familiar and strange to me. Familiar because of your insoluble non-whiteness within anti-Semitic whiteness, but strange because you are whitened, integrated into a superior echelon of the racial hierarchy."[80]

Hannah Arendt famously argued that emancipation was what gave rise to racial anti-Semitism. When legal barriers ceased to isolate Jews and assimilation rose, racial thinking attempted to make visible those differences that had disappeared with emancipation. It thus began a new era of racial anti-Semitism.[81] In this account, the erasure of difference through emancipation gave rise to racial anti-Semitism and a new era of control. In some ways, the post-WWII moment mimics this earlier era of emancipation. Both periods were watershed moments for discourses of democracy and human rights, at the center of which was the Jewish Question. In the postwar moment, the attempted eradication of race, the global opposition to anti-Semitism, and the centrality of the Holocaust all led to the inclusion of Jews within the Western imaginary—that Judeo-Christian

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[80] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 67.

[81] Incidentally, Poliakov makes a somewhat similar argument. He writes that "The great social and political phenomena of the nineteenth century—the rise of nationalism and racism—might have been partly due to Western man's hidden need to erect new partitions and new hierarchies after the disappearance of the old hierarchical barriers… The anguish of no longer being differentiated from the Jew, of intermingling with him… in a standardized world, from which God is beginning to disappear and where many Christians feel themselves adrift, would therefore be a deep-seated and specific factor in modern anti-Semitism." Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Volume 3: From Voltaire to Wagner*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 290

civilization—not dissimilar to what happened with emancipation. This did not mean the end of anti-Semitism, but it did usher in a new era of Jewish inclusion and integration where blatant and institutionalized anti-Semitism became anathema. However, it differed from the post-emancipation rise of racial thinking in one crucial way. Rather than continue to be excluded under a different form, *inclusion* has acceded as the dominant regime governing the West's relation to Jews. The discourse of anti-Semitism, rather than changing shape but carrying on its discrimination against Jews, has been rewired to facilitate discrimination against others.

In this sense, I suggest that the racial regime governing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia follows from Patrick Wolfe's arguments about the diverse ways that race operates.[82] Rather than argue that these function in the same ways or that racism generally has continued apace while merely shifting its target from Jews to Arabs, it is necessary to understand the specific ways each of these racial regimes operate. Wolfe argues that racism against Native Americans and Black people took inverse forms. In the White settler imagination, Native Americans could be assimilated, incorporated, educated in colonial boarding schools, and married to White families. Black people, however, were subject to the one-drop rule and forcefully excluded and separated to maintain the labor force. These are two different operations of race. It is essential, Wolfe suggests, to see how they work together to maintain White supremacy while also attending to the different ways they function in doing so. I want to make a parallel argument regarding anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and postcolonial racism. These all form a matrix of oppression that serve to entrench White supremacy and the legitimacy of the Republic, yet they manifest very differently. If it is true, and I think it is, that anti-Semitism and Islamophobia must be analyzed within the same racial frame, this should not

[82] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2016).

lead to a complete collapse of their different functions and operations but should instead elicit a productive discussion of the different regimes of racial rule. Islamophobia and anti-Semitism share a similar history of exclusion, but today they are governed by different racial regimes. Because the very discourse of anti-Semitism, in its ongoing management of ideas, policies, and affective relations, regulates and legitimates Islamophobia, the new discourse of anti-Semitism has itself become a tool for managing populations. It includes Jews by continually excluding others.

Conclusion:
Beyond Entanglement

The impetus for this dissertation was to take stock of the current position of the Jew and to offer a theoretically informed history that accounts for its trajectory during the latter half of the twentieth century. I argued that although for much of Western history, the Jew was a figure of difference, something over and against which the West defined itself, in our contemporary moment, this position has shifted. The Jew is no longer associated with exclusion on a national, racial, political, or even cultural level. By taking a historical-intellectual approach, I tracked this development through major figures such as Albert Memmi, and in relation to key events and debates, such as the Algerian War, the aftermath of the 1967 war in Israel/Palestine, debates over immigration, the rise of the Muslim Question, and the relationship between racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. By addressing how Jewish writers and thinkers responded to these events and debates, I illustrated the gradual integration of the Jew into Europe and its separation from other figures and regimes of oppression. I want to conclude by raising the stakes one step further to think beyond these historical trajectories and toward a series of responses to the predicament of the Jew in contemporary politics, especially in how we think about anti-Semitism.

"Anti-Semitism requires rethinking," Jonathan Judaken tells us.[1] Indeed, despite the plethora of attention devoted to the subject, we seem to be only marginally closer to grasping anti-Semitism's theoretical contours, defining its provenance, historicizing it, placing it in conversation with other forms of racism, and indeed, at updating our analyses for the contemporary moment. Anti-Semitism remains "under-theorized." More than a decade before Judaken, Gil Anidjar also wrote of the

[1] Judaken, "Rethinking Anti-Semitism," 2018, 1122.

perplexities of anti-Semitism. He describes how the postwar period has been marked by an increasingly global and well-organized *opposition* to anti-Semitism, which he somewhat ironically calls the War on Anti-Semitism. Governments, academics, media, nonprofits, and intellectuals have all united in opposition to anti-Semitism. Yet what is confounding about this, Anidjar suggests, is that we do not yet have any serious reflection on the nature of this struggle or its very object. "But has anti-Semitism been understood?" he asks, "can we already claim, after decades of intensive studying, learning, thinking, legislating on and combating anti-Semitism that it is now better or even sufficiently known? More importantly, has anti-Semitism been refuted?"[2] What makes this War even stranger is that it is mainly being conducted in and by the West—that is, the very place where anti-Semitism was born and flourished now organizes the most extensive war against it. How are we to understand this? Or, as Anidjar puts it, "is it after all the case that the anti-anti-Semitic West is no longer anti-Semitic? Is its concern with the anti-Semitism of others the sign of a change of heart or a change of policy? What continuities, if any, can be found between the history of anti-Semitism and the current struggle against it?"[3]

These questions about the contemporary nature of anti-Semitism place us within the distinct topology of the postwar landscape and the transformations undergone by the position of the Jew and its relation to the Western world. By tracking these evolutions, this dissertation has given us a critical purchase to address the contemporary landscape. After having surveyed the structures, tensions, and debates that have shaped the postcolonial Jewish Question, we are now in a distinct position to consider its consequences. One productive path for accomplishing this has been to address the various exploitative and manipulative uses of anti-Semitism that pervade contemporary

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[2] Gil Anidjar, "When Killers Become Victims: Anti-Semitism and Its Critics," *Cosmopolis: A Review of Cosmopolitics* 3 (2007): 4.

[3] Anidjar, "When Killers Become Victims," 2007, 8.

politics. For example, Alana Lentin and David Theo Goldberg argue that the public performance of anti-Semitism could obscure other forms of structural racism and absolve the need to address it.[4] Enzo Traverso has demonstrated how the Holocaust has become a civil religion, which, paradoxically, detracts from other sites of colonial and racial violence.[5] The discourse of "new antisemitism," as we saw in Chapter 5, has been particularly problematic for how it traffics in Islamophobic rhetoric and entrenches an opposition between Jews and Muslims.[6] And certainly, with regard to Israel-Palestine, one can multiply the examples of the ways anti-Semitism and its purported link to anti-Zionism have enabled Israel's continued occupation—the widespread institutionalization of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism being only the latest example.

Beyond these important critiques of the abuses of the discourse around anti-Semitism, I want to pose a slightly different question: What would constitute an effective response to this predicament? If we grant that the position of the Jew has changed and that anti-Semitism has now become embroiled in international and state politics, what strategic, material, and philosophical position might we adopt in response?

Elad Lapidot's work offers one possible direction in which to take this. Lapidot is also keenly aware of the "disfigured" nature of anti-anti-Semitism and the Jew's newfound position as a "friend" of the West.[7] He amplifies Anidjar's misgiving with the contemporary discourse around anti-Semitism and argues that the opposition to anti-Semitism, or anti-anti-Semitism, has effectively

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[4] Lentin, *Why Race Still Matters*; Theo Goldberg, "Racial Europeanization."

[5] Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*.

[6] Monika Bobako, "The Palestinian Knot: The 'New Anti-Semitism,' Islamophobia and the Question of Postcolonial Europe," *Theory, Culture &Amp; Society* 35, no. 3 (2018): 99–120; Brian Klug, "Interrogating 'New Anti-Semitism'," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 468–82; Peace, "*Un antisémitisme nouveau?* The debate about a 'new antisemitism' in France."

[7] Elad Lapidot, "Disfigured Friends," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2020): 109.

removed Jews as a subject of thought. For those who oppose anti-Semitism, he argues, the problem is not anti-Semitism per se, i.e., the hatred of Jews, but that anti-Semites claim to *know* something about Jews, that Jews might be subjects of knowledge. Anti-anti-Semitism refuses to grant any knowledge of and about Jews. Even the supposed opposition to anti-Semitism, Lapidot argues, falls into the same anti-Semitic tropes, for it denies the very object it purports to protect, that is, the Jew. In response, he suggests that what we need to counter this anti-anti-Semitism is to develop a positive vision of modern Jewish thought, to reinvigorate the specificities of thinking qua Jew. "Anti-anti-anti-Semitism," he writes, "is accordingly an introduction to Jewish thought, to thinking as it has historically been deployed in and as Jewish being, to thinking as *machloykes*. Anti-anti-anti-Semitism is introduction to Talmud."[8] Lapidot's response to the disfigurement of the Jew and their position as a friend is to turn back to the subject of Jewish thought and to develop a more rigorous account of its subversive and critical potential. In other words, Lapidot attempts to reclaim a model of Jewish thought in which the being and thinking of the Jew, the Talmud, recuperates its disruptive edge. Yet Lapidot's desire to salvage Jewish thinking against Western modernity recapitulates an older model of Jew as other by furnishing Judaism with unique insight and perspective on philosophical thinking. It seeks to restore, in other words, what is a decidedly anachronistic form of modern Jewish thought. This was, in some ways, the same project that motivated Levinas, Trigano, and the *Colloque*. They were also confronted with a shifting political landscape and sought to reclaim forms of Jewish alterity. Yet as we saw, this was often done by paradoxically placing Jews in relation to the West over and against other minorities and regimes of oppression. Even if one manages to avoid the many pitfalls of those discourses, this response still fails to contend with the radically different form and function of the postcolonial Jewish Question. It refuses to abandon an

[8] Elad Lapidot, *Jews Out of the Question: A Critique of Anti-Anti-Semitism* (SUNY Press, 2020), 18.

essentialist understanding of the Jew as a subversive figure outside the dominant Western philosophical tradition.

Interestingly, this desire to reclaim an alternative political position for the Jew informs various approaches. In an entirely different idiom, though with a similar trajectory, Santiago Slabodsky bids us to recognize the possibilities of a "decolonial Judaism."[9] Though this might seem closer to where I'm heading, it links up with Lapidot's aim to reclaim a model of Jewish thought, though in an inverse way. Slabodsky wonders whether Jews can resist their place within the civilized world and instead join the Global South in new affiliations of "barbaric thinking." Yet, this is precisely the question: what can it mean to refuse one's place in the civilized world? Indeed, one can critique the notion of civilization, but does denying one's privileged position and insisting on barbarism not merely recapitulate the dynamics of power and displacement that led to this in the first place? Consider, for instance, the similar attempt by figures like Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, and Judith Butler to reclaim a model of exilic or diasporic consciousness for Judaism against Israeli state sovereignty.[10] For them, diaspora offers a powerful form of Judaism that is open to other cultures, that refuses cultural, national, or racial superiority, and which is devoid of structures of domination and oppression. Apart from the fact that, as some scholars have suggested, this is a somewhat romantic and essentialist idea of diaspora, does it not also risk denying the very real forms of privilege and power that would enable this discourse in the first place? As Gil Hochberg and Shri Alon write, "exilic consciousness inevitably maintains a vestige of universal privilege, a freedom not to belong reminiscent of traditional cosmopolitan detachment rather than a 'disaggregated identity [that] disrupts the very categories of identity.' An insistence on Jewish

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[9] Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism*.

[10] Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile Within Sovereignty," *Theory and Criticism* 3 (1993): 23–55; Boyarin and Boyarin, "Diaspora"; Butler, *Parting Ways*.

deterritoriality no longer represents the same threatening menace as the wandering 'barbarians' of contemporary times: Muslims, Arabs, Africans, fundamentalists, migrant workers, and, most urgently, refugees. Nor does it necessarily present a model for solidarity with the displaced, as it risks emerging as a position of luxury cushioned by international intellectual frameworks and communities, indifferent to actual forms of material investment in place. As we face one of the biggest refugee crises in history, it may seem obscene to speak of exile as an ideal."[11] The reclamation of the diaspora, exile, or barbarism seems to rest on an untenable notion of what constitutes a challenge to contemporary hegemony as well as who can make such claims.

We might instead look toward a different trajectory, elaborated under the heading of what Gil Anidjar once referred to as the "Semitic perspective." The Semite was a philological, scientific, and racial category developed most prominently by Ernest Renan for describing the opposing features of Semitic and Aryan languages and people. The Semite comprised both Jews and Arabs and has thus served as a key site for investigating the co-constitution of anti-Semitism and Orientalism.[12] Based on this, Anidjar argues that today the War on Anti-Semitism has forgotten this history and has lost sight of the Semite. Anti-Semitism has been transformed into being only against Jews and has obscured the shared history of the Jew and the Arab.[13] Managing and dividing Jews and Arabs has been a central feature of modern Western control from the colonial period through today. Whether in Israel/Palestine, France, or the US, this constitutes, Anidjar argues, one of the "main

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[11] Gil Hochberg and Shir Alon, "Review Essay — Decolonizing Judaism: Barbarism and the Return to Nativism," *Boundary 2* 44, no. 4 (2017): 188–89; for other critiques of this model, see Julie E Cooper, "A Diasporic Critique of Diasporism," *Political Theory* 43, no. 1 (2015): 80–110.

[12] On the centrality of the Semite for thinking about race and religion, see especially Anidjar, *Semites*, 2008; Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, 2003; Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*; Topolski, "The Race-Religion Constellation";

[13] Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab*, 2003.

foci of modern technologies of control." But if today the Semite seems like a relic of the past, how does the management of Jews and Arabs play out in contemporary politics? Anidjar suggests that paradoxically, the very War on Anti-Semitism partakes in and perpetuates the separation of Jews and Arabs, religion and politics, religion and secularism. The War on Anti-Semitism, in his account, turns out to be the continuation of a Christian theological-political history of managing Jews and Arabs, whether as collapsed figures in the Semite or divided ones in the War on Anti-Semitism.

Anidjar's account clarifies that, despite appearances, the contemporary logic that has led to this moment has not shifted from its original motives. "To uphold the division between Jew and Arab, between Jew and Muslim," he writes, "is to reproduce the origins of racism and of anti-Semitism at once. It is to maintain a singular political tradition, to uphold the division of sectarianism and nationalism, between religion and secularism, religion and politics — a hypocritical division that serves a Christian-dominated hegemony, a Christian view of 'religion.' It is to maintain the division between Holocaust and colonialism, the spread of democracy and capitalism and missionary activity, and so forth… To uphold these divisions is to serve the power and interests of those who… showed selective concern for the enslaved and the oppressed; those who… seek to 'tame' populations by making them into convenient enemies, turning them against each other, and more dangerously, against their own selves. To uphold these divisions is one of the main effects, intended or not, of WAS."[14] The division between Jews and Arabs, between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, continues to operate under a Christian and racial logic of division and separation that upholds Western supremacy.

Yet to some degree, the question remains as to what constitutes an adequate response. Gil Hochberg has taken this Semitic perspective one step further. She calls for re-investing in the notion

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[14] Anidjar, "When Killers Become Victims," 2007, 19.

of Semitism as a playful deconstruction of the current divisions between Jews and Arabs and between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. For Hochberg, despite, or indeed because of, this historical provenance, Semitism offers a category through which one can re-invest in that shared memory and call attention to its European history. "What would it mean for us today," she asks,

> to reject the shortsighted thinking and violent historical forgetting involved in the vilification of the Muslim and the de-Semitization of the Jew? What would it mean for us to seriously re-think and question the alignment between "Judeo" and "Christian," and to thus oppose the current separation and growing hostility between Jews and Arabs/Muslims, whose affinity was once marked by the term "Semite?" How can we return to the present against such displacements, and, perhaps more specifically, against the misleading absorption of the Jew (and the historical "Jewish difference" to use Jonathan Boyarin's term) into the story of the Christian West, and in opposition to the Muslim/Arab, who alone is rendered "Semitic?" One way to approach this, I propose, is to re-invest in "Semitism" as an alternative memory, or rather a "re-memory" to borrow Toni Morrison's term (Beloved 1987): a re-memory with which to punctuate the present, itself subjected to the myth of "a clash of civilizations"… I suggest that what is needed is a playful rejuvenation of a particular discursive history, a European discursive history to be sure, and one that has long been responsible for positioning both Jews and Muslims alike as "Other" and "lesser" to Western-European-Christian civilization.[15]

According to this, Semitism offers a playful banner for Jews and Arabs to gather under. It provides a means to resist the logic of the "Judeo-Christian," to refuse the separation of Jews and Arabs, and to reinvest in a future informed by a shared sense of exclusion and othering. Houria Bouteldja suggests something similar in her critique of state Philo-Semitism, which is nothing but a mask that obscures the fact that *"we [Jews and the Indigenous] have this in common that we do not make up the legitimate bodies of the nation."*[16] Bouteldja thus appeals to Jews to join in her political struggle: "You are losing your historical friends. You are still in the ghetto. Why don't we get out of there together?"[17] This gesture

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[15] Hochberg, "'Remembering Semitism' or 'on the Prospect of Re-Membering the Semites'," 2016, 199.

[16] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 68.

[17] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 72.

is undoubtedly one of solidarity and a powerful one at that. As Bouteldja suggests, by joining together and forging a common struggle, one might see nothing less than "the deconstruction of the racial and republican pact that is at the foundation of the French nation."[18]

And yet, this account of the shared histories and potentialities of Jews and Arabs also positions the Jew on the outside, on the margins, caught between their desire for inclusion and their continued exclusion from the legitimate body of the nation. In other words, even here, the Jew continues to be, or at the very least has the possibility of joining in the struggles of the oppressed, *qua outsider*. Reactivating Semitic affiliations presumes a parallel or equality between Jews and Arabs, a sense that both continue to be excluded and marginalized from the national imagination. Yet is this, in fact, the case?

Consider, by analogy, a set of debates in the wake of the George Floyd protests in the US in 2020. For many White American Jews, the history of anti-Semitism proved a powerful impetus for creating solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and understanding the structures of anti-Black oppression and domination. Scholars such as Ethan Katz and Deborah Lipstadt, the Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism, argued that "anti-Jewish and anti-Black hatreds are not only parallel but often interconnected. Though it is too often ignored, both anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism lie at the core of White supremacist ideology."[19] They articulated a vision that outlined a shared history of oppression and commonality and allowed Jews to see themselves in the movement for Black Lives. Jews had "skin in the game," as some put it. However, there was also a different approach. In an article for the progressive magazine *Jewish Currents,* Ben

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[18] Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, 68.

[19] Ethan B Katz and Deborah Lipstadt, "Far More Unites Black and Jewish Americans Than Divides Them," July 18, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/18/opinions/black-celebrities-anti-semitism-anti-racism-katz-lipstadt/index.html.

Ratskoff argued against this tendency to create analogies between Jews and Black people. "To build solidarity in this moment," he wrote, "white Jews should resist the impulse to highlight similarities between histories of antisemitism and anti-Blackness."[20] Rather than jump to comparisons or parallels between anti-Blackness and anti-Semitism, Jews should investigate their proximity to White Supremacist institutions instead. He underscored, for example, how mainstream Jewish institutions have historically aligned themselves with the police and enjoyed support from the very institutional structures that are harming Black people. He brings as an analogy bell hooks, who critiqued many second-wave feminists and argued that by "bonding as 'victims,' white women's liberationists were not required to assume responsibility for confronting the complexity of their own experience… Identifying as 'victims,' they could abdicate responsibility for their role in the maintenance and perpetuation of sexism, racism, and classism." The same is true for the White Jewish community in the US, Ratskoff suggests. Claiming the role of the victim might not be the most helpful thing to do or the most powerful way of building solidarity.

Akin to this second view, I remain unsure whether one can go back, whether it is possible, at this juncture in time and place, to refuse the assimilatory gesture and insist that Jews are still outsiders. Though that may have once been possible, and indeed I have tried to demonstrate moments where such possibilities appeared, to insist on that position today seems to me anachronistic. Moreover, one of the larger points I've tried to make is that this attempt to go back, to reclaim that status of outsider and victim, is mired in all sorts of political and philosophical problematics. Whether we are dealing with Israel/Palestine, with the so-called "new antisemitism," or with Islamophobia, the desire to claim the status of the victim often plays right into the very discourses of power it purports to resist.

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[20] Ben Ratskoff, "Against Analogy," June 09, 2020, https://jewishcurrents.org/against-analogy.

We are thus caught in something of a double-bind: On the one hand, with Anidjar and others, we must recognize and critique the ways that the inclusion of Jews into Europe and the creation of a "Judeo-Christian civilization" follows a historical and racial logic that is part and parcel of a long history of managing and controlling Jews and Arabs. Yet, at the same time, what would it mean to recognize that despite this, Jews occupy a very different position than they once did? That whatever the logic, there is something anachronistic about insisting on Jewish exclusion today. Indeed that insisting on it and claiming the position of the victim can and has led to a deeper obfuscation of Jews' actual and material relations to power. I am interested, together with Hochberg, Anidjar, and Bouteldja, in deconstructing the racial regimes of European division and exclusion. But I also wonder to what degree this insistence on the Jew as other—even an other who is situated within and tied to a network of "other others"—might reify a position that is in many ways no longer the case.

I do not mean to affirm the inclusion of Jews, to suggest that there is anything like a Judeo-Christian civilization, or that this narrative has been constructed and perpetuated by and for the West. And at the same time, I wonder whether we need to recognize a changed political, material, and epistemic space under which the Jewish Question operates. Jewish *inclusion* within Western modernity has become a fundamental feature of the management and relationship with Jews. While concomitantly, the *exclusion* of Arabs has dominated political discussions on the right and left. Instead of insisting on Jewish exclusion, what might it mean to contend with the paradigms of Jewish inclusion and to think from that place? What are the politics of position, the obfuscations, and the historical misrepresentations that Jewish inclusion has affected? And how can we counter that without needing to reclaim the status of the victim? What if, instead of highlighting the entanglements of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, we think beyond their similarities and attend to

the different mechanisms by which these regimes are governed today?[21] This line of thinking requires a careful analysis that resists the forced inclusion of Jews and the creation of a Judeo-Christian civilization that necessarily excludes Arabs and Muslims while at the same time recognizing that Jews are *not* excluded from national life in the same ways that Arabs and Muslims are, that anti-Semitism does not constitute a fundamental feature of Western governance in the ways that Islamophobia and racism continue to do. It would require, in other words, developing a postcolonial Jewish politics.

[21] Cf. Katz, "An Imperial Entanglement," 2018.

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