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HAUNTED: ON THE NEW ARABIC TRANSLATION OF SARTRE'S *ANTI-SEMITE AND JEW*[*]

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Two years ago, without any apparent explanation, a little-known Egyptian scholar translated Jean-Paul Sartre's Anti-Semite and Jew *(originally published as* Réflexions sur la Question Juive, *1946) into Arabic. Widely acknowledged as an experimental and highly influential theory of anti-Semitism in the 1960s, Sartre's text had already had a profound, yet indirect, influence on an entire class of left-wing Arab intellectuals who used it in order to figure out their relationship with the colonizer; that is, with their Otherness. Though these intellectuals read* Anti-Semite and Jew *in French, it still remained one of Sartre's very few works that had never been translated into Arabic. How so? Addressing this question, this article offers a genealogy of non-translation that revisits the accumulative process by which Sartre's text acquired the status of a haunted and, hence, untranslatable text. Situated at the juncture where anti-Semitism, Zionism, and revolutionary Arab politics intersect, the text became entangled in the ethical politics of the conflict and, after the 1967 war, became associated with the collapse of the Arab revolutionary project and with Sartre's betrayal of the Arab cause. Thereafter, the work of leftist intellectuals who had drawn on Sartre to reject anti-Semitism was forgotten, and an anti-Semitic sentiment that rejects the original message of* Anti-Semite and Jew *slowly settled in. Beyond dissecting the process by which a text becomes haunted, this article also states the need for an original theorization of anti-Semitism that is culturally specific to the Arab world rather than derivative of European experience.*

In May 2016, exactly seventy years after its original date of publication, Jean-Paul Sartre's pathbreaking theory of anti-Semitism, *Anti-Semite and Jew*

[*] I wish to thank *Modern Intellectual History* coeditor Tracie Matysik for her many insightful comments and critical suggestions toward revision. At my home university, my colleagues Ben Brower, Judy Coffin, and Sabine Hake generously assisted me to articulate a more coherent vision for the problem of haunted texts. I would also like to thank Jonthan Judaken and an additional anonymous reader for demanding a more culturally specific treatment of anti-Semitisim.

(originally published as *Réflexions sur la Question Juive*, 1946), was finally translated into Arabic. "The new Arabic translation comes as a surprise," wrote an Egyptian journalist.[1] And indeed it did. Why now? And who was the intended audience for such a book? Though the audience was likely limited, the Arab press did take an interest in the publication, reminding readers that they had once had an intimate and promising relationship with Sartre, his philosophy, and his politics.[2] Indeed, Sartre was no stranger to the Arab world; in fact, he had once played a central role in its political and philosophical life. During the 1950s and 1960s Arab intellectuals instantaneously translated nearly all of his work and harnessed his philosophy to the effort of intellectual decolonization. At mid-century, anybody with even the slightest intellectual ambition had read Sartre. Voraciously translating, discussing, commenting on, and contesting almost all of Sartre's *oeuvre*, Arab intellectuals made the French philosopher, and his engagements on behalf of fellow Third Worlders, a hero.[3]

That was then. In today's Arab world, Sartre is almost unanimously remembered as the man who betrayed his Arab friends at their most needful hour: on the eve of the devastating 1967 war with Israel. Sartre being despised for being a crypto-Zionist and believed by some to be a Jew, his rich Arab legacy and the fact that Baghdad was once known as the capital of Arab existentialism were all forgotten. Gone too is the fact that a select group of Arab intellectuals had a two-way relationship with Sartre that lasted more than a decade and which was intellectually meaningful to both sides. In between these two diametrically opposed images, the hero on the one hand and the traitor on the other, stands *Anti-Semite and Jew*: a text that bears some unspecified responsibility for what passed between Sartre and his followers in the Middle East. Though the reality of this betrayal is extremely complex and largely unstudied, *Anti-Semite and Jew* became seriously entangled in this saga, and is believed by contemporary Arab intellectuals to either foresee or explain Sartre's divestment from their cause. Indeed, from their perspective, *Anti-Semite and Jew* is a suspicious text. Though quite familiar with it, for fear that it somehow justified Zionism, Arab intellectuals avoided the trouble of its translation. Occupying the ambiguous zone of being neither translated nor ignored, *Anti-Semite and Jew* confronted Arab readers with

1 Jawda ʿAbd al-Sadiq Ibrahim, "Kitab taʾamulat fi-l-masʾala al-Yahudiya li-Jan Bul Sartar," at http://elyom1.com/archives/141458, accessed 18 April 2017.

2 For the book launching and public event see "Baʿd 70 ʿaman min hajbihi," *al-Bayt Beytak*, 7 May 2016, at www.elbeitbeitak.com/69732.html, accessed 18 April 2017. "Bayna Lughatayn," radio interview with translator Dr. Hatim al-Jawahiri, 16 May 2016, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTURnXA1FQ8, accessed 18 April 2017.

3 For an in-depth treatment of this history see Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre and Decolonization* (Chicago, 2018).

deep-seated fears, taboos, and painful memories of abandonment and defeat. Put differently, it became a haunted text.

In order to understand how *Anti-Semite and Jew* acquired this haunted status, I offer to break this process down into its elementary parts and consider them historically. Reconstructing the genealogy of non-translation exposes multiple layers of right reading, un-reading, misreading and partial reading that have left their decades-long mark on the text and its reception. Such an undertaking reveals the act of non-translation not as a coincidence but as an active cultural interplay between significant historical actors whose impact is otherwise difficult to discern and pin down. With this in mind, the main question at stake here is not why *Anti-Semite and Jew* was not translated for seventy years, but rather *how* it went untranslated and, once translated, how the current translation reckons with its haunted legacy as a strong signifier of betrayal and defeat. Given the fact that Sartre's betrayal was experienced not as an ad hoc political move, but as a devastating philosophical retreat from an anticolonial and revolutionary position, coming to terms with these questions and figuring out the transferential relation to the text and its context is culturally revealing.

Indeed, this is the chief reason for which the new Arabic translation of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* is of interest to us. That is, it matters not because of the translation and the technicalities of translation per se, but because of what it tells us about the act of translation in the difficult context of the history of anti-Semitism and the Arab–Israeli conflict.

AN ORIGINAL THEORY

Written and published with great urgency at the close of World War II, *Anti-Semite and Jew* was an experimental work, a kind of a laboratory in which Sartre explored anti-Semitism as a relational human condition. In it, Sartre presented to the world a tentative theory of anti-Semitism. The text was by no means perfect, but it nevertheless had tremendous influence on Jews and non-Jews alike, not least an entire class of black francophone intellectuals.[4] Conceiving of anti-Semitism as a process of reciprocal conditioning that shapes both the anti-Semite and the Jew, Sartre explains that the anti-Semite hates so he can transfer his own fear of freedom to a "subhuman" or an "Other" against whom he defines his existence. This stance, in turn, shapes the ontological conditions that make

4 For a critique of *Anti-Semite and Jew* see Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The Jew in Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive*: An Exercise in Historical Reading," in Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, eds., *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 201–18.

the Jew a Jew. Indeed, for Sartre, rather than being an owner of specific and fixed Jewish characteristics, "The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew."[5]

Sartre is famously clear about his outlook:

> For us, man is defined first of all as being "in situation." That means that he forms a synthetic whole with his situation—biological, economic, political, cultural, *etc.* He cannot be distinguished from his situation, for it forms him and decides his possibilities; but inversely, it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it. To be in a situation, as we see it is to *choose oneself* in a situation . . . *What men have in common is not a "nature" but a condition, that is, an ensemble of limits and restrictions.*[6]

In addition to inaugurating an existential approach to human difference, an innovation that was destined to have a critical influence on those who tried to capture the experiences of colonized subjects, *Anti-Semite and Jew* had quite a lot to say about a proposed "universality" of the Jews as both partners and benefactors of a socialist revolution. In fact, it would be fair to say that Sartre wanted to see Jews as people who are committed to universal emancipation. Touched by residual Enlightenment–universalism, Sartre straightforwardly declared, "The universal is Jewish."[7] Indeed, at various points, *Anti-Semite and Jew* associates universalism with the Jews, for instance when it states that "The rationalism of Jews is passion—the passion for the universal."[8] This association is not free of problems, as Jonathan Judaken and others have noted, as it often invokes anti-Semitic stereotypes, particularly when slipping into "submitting the Jews to a 'sacrificial logic' whereby their martyrdom is the price for achieving universal revolution."[9] According to Judaken, "Sartre's text, which bears witness to this Jewish martyrdom, figuratively attempts redemption from culpability by agreeing to 'fight for the Jews, no more and no less than for ourselves.'"[10] And from this identificatory position, as Kirsteen Anderson has argued, the road to ethical reparations is rather short.[11]

Indeed, it is the question of ethical reparations for the Jews, specifically for Zionists at the expense of Palestinians, that haunted Sartre's Arab interlocutors.

5 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York, 1948), 49.

6 Ibid., 42, my emphasis.

7 Ibid., 16.

8 Ibid., 80.

9 Julian Bourg, review of Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual, H-Ideas, H-Net Reviews*, Nov. 2010, at www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=31252.

10 Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 142.

11 Kirsteen Anderson, "Sartre and Jewishness: From Identificatory Violence to Ethical Reparation," in David Gascoigne, ed., *Violent Histories: Violence, Culture and Identity in France from Surrealism to the Néo-polar* (Oxford, 2007), 61–78.

Though external to *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre made several gestures in other texts that were in support of the formation of the state of Israel. And while he offers no direct theorization of Zionism as, for instance, a solution to the inauthenticity of the Jews, Sartre condemned the British and supported the Zionist aspiration for a state. At some point, he even defended in court the would-be philosopher Robert Misrahi who was indicted for concealing weapons for the Zionist Stern Gang.[12] How this background and Sartre's May 1948 talk about "Arab mercenaries" feeds into his theorization of anti-Semitism and of Zionism as a possible solution to it is intellectually unclear. That is, it is a question mark that, despite Sartre's support for the Arabs in the 1956 Suez War and later, has nonetheless the potential for haunting his Arab readers. Indeed, what these readers needed with relation to Zionism was not ambiguity but a Sartrean exclamation mark!

THE TRANSLATOR TAKES ON THE TEXT, THE CONTEXT, AND THE AUTHOR

In the past—that is, from the late 1940s to the present—all of Sartre's translations into Arabic were undertaken by professional translators who were fluent in French. The Lebanese duo Suahyl Idris and ʿAida Matraji were some of Sartre's most prolific and intellectually invested translators. So were ʿAbd al-Munʿim Hifni and Jurj Tarabishi, an extremely important intellectual in his own right. Hatim al-Jawahiri, the current translator, is of a different stripe. As a historian of Zionism, he learned of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* by sheer chance. While writing his dissertation about existentialist and Marxist trends in Zionism, al-Jawahiri came across numerous Arabic sources that associated *Anti-Semite and Jew* with what al-Jawahiri calls "Sartre's vehemently supportive position for the Zionist occupation of Palestine and his acceptance of their arguments."[13] It goes without saying that the references to *Anti-Semite and Jew* that he encountered were overwhelmingly negative. Knowing that most of Sartre's work had been translated into Arabic, al-Jawahiri could not find any Arabic translation of *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Since, according to al-Jawahiri, the French original was nowhere to be found either (though the text is available online), he translated instead the 1948 English edition of *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

The translator knew that in the current atmosphere in the Middle East, given the deepening of the Israeli occupation and the horror of the Gaza Strip, a sympathetic text about anti-Semitism could not appear on the market without a significant justification. The text carries serious baggage. Thus al-Jawahiri penned

12 Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question*, 187–92.

13 Jan-Bul Sartar, *Taʾamulat fi-l-Masʾala al-Yahudiya* (trans. Hatim al-Jawahiri) (Cairo, 2016), 13–14.

a critical introduction verging on a hundred pages and as long as the translation itself.[14] His main rationale for burdening the Arab reader of *Anti-Semite and Jew* with such an introduction is not in order to reflect on Sartre's theory of anti-Semitism but in order to find definitive answers for Sartre's alleged support for Zionism. Expecting possible resistance from the public, al-Jawahiri invites the reader to join him on a journey of discovery during which the reasons behind Sartre's betrayal will be slowly unveiled. Put plainly, *Anti-Semite and Jew* is about us.

Accordingly, al-Jawahiri's first line of argument is to emphatically reject Sartre's phenomenological take on human affairs and the possibility of approaching the Jewish Question as a situational problem. Taking serious issue with this outlook, al-Jawahiri criticized Sartre for neglecting to study the historical origins of European anti-Semitism and its causes. Had Sartre taken time to consider the formation process of collective identities, argues al-Jawahiri, he would have surely understood that the "Jewish character" is the main issue at stake. "In all likelihood," al-Jawahiri writes, "it is the Jewish character that is the cause and source for the hostile attitudes toward the Jews."[15] He continues to argue that since "Sartre does not dwell on the nature of the Jewish character even for a second," he ends up establishing a false analytical framework with weak explanatory power.[16] Furthermore, al-Jawahiri strongly disapproves of Sartre's unwillingness to reflect on the fact that the Jewish insistence on their own superiority as "the chosen people" is not unrelated to their suppression.[17] However unfortunate, argues al-Jawahiri, anti-Semitism is nothing but a response to the fixed traits of Jewish nature and the Jewish habit of self-aggrandizement.[18]

al-Jawahiri does not treat these differences as an academic issue with little relevance for everyday life. Quite the contrary, he argues that Sartre's work had serious political implications for all Arabs. He then explains that by "cutting all relations to the past and to history" the Jews appear to Sartre as perpetual victims who "should be defended and compensated."[19] This link between their status as victims and the ethical urge to compensate them politically was especially dominant in the wake of the Holocaust. This link, for al-Jawahiri, is the reason for which Palestine was given to the Zionists, as a compensation at the expense of its original Arab inhabitants. It was simply a form of ethical reparation.

14 Ibid., 13–14.
15 Ibid., 40.
16 Ibid., 37.
17 Ibid., 40–41.
18 Ibid., 40–41.
19 Ibid., 29, 34.

Further developing this political line of thought, al-Jawahiri claims that there is an organic relation between Sartre's understanding of anti-Semitism, his construction of the figure of the oppressed Jew, and the rise of what he calls "existential Zionism" that seeks to resolve the Jewish Question by colonizing Palestine. For al-Jawahiri, Sartre's fabricated figure of the unjustly victimized Jew automatically engenders calls for compensation, thus assigning a higher ontological value to Jewish suffering. In doing so, Sartre politically prioritized the needs of Zionism and overrode those of Palestinians. This explains European support for Zionism and, ultimately, Sartre's decision to divest from the Arab project of liberation and side with Israel. Taking the argument to the next level, al-Jawahiri contends that since Sartre frames Zionism exclusively in terms of Jewish victimhood, he creates a discursive reality in which any critique of Zionism is automatically branded anti-Semitism. In so doing, he charges Sartre with turning the image of the Arab into a "counter-Jew," a development with very serious implications.[20]

Furthermore, al-Jawahiri argues that when Zionists and Arabs mobilize to violently resist oppression only the moral right of Zionists to do so is validated. This is why Sartre accepted the right of Zionists to liberate themselves from the British politically as well as existentially but denied the same right to Palestinians who resist Zionism.[21] Thus reading *Anti-Semite and Jew* from the painful standpoint of betrayal, al-Jawahiri names his introductory study "Sartre: Between Zionism and the Denial of Palestinian Existential Rights." His main research question, the one that every reader will encounter before getting to Sartre's actual text, is a foregone conclusion: "Why did Sartre support Zionism at the expense of Palestinians?"[22]

I will return to these arguments in detail below, but for now it is important to point out that al-Jawahiri positions his translation against the author, against the historical context, and against the text itself. This stance immediately establishes the status of *Anti-Semite and Jew* as a suspicious text and communicates to the reader that Sartre's work should not be allowed to speak for itself. Consequently, al-Jawahiri's translation is not an invitation to an open reading of another cultural position. Rather, right from the very beginning, it closes the interpretive horizons that every translation should potentially open. Once these horizons are closed, there is no possibility of engaging and reforming the history of the reader and his or her culture. That is, the cultural horizons close on Arab history as well. In particular, this closure erases the legacy of Arab existentialism and the actual two-way relationship that Arab thinkers cultivated with Sartre. To explain the

20 Ibid., 46.
21 Ibid., 43–6.
22 Ibid., 15.

full cultural implications of this erasure, we first need to retrieve and reconstruct the forgotten history of Arab existentialism.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARAB EXISTENTIALISM

The historical context that al-Jawahiri is ignorant of is a cluster of six interlaced intellectual developments and movements that comprised the tradition of Arab existentialism. Derived from a recent study, I will briefly explore various aspects that, taken collectively, account for the prehistory of existentialism, the history of phenomenology in Arab thought, the rise of political existentialism, anticolonial humanism and the problem of "Otherness," the Arab reception of Sartre's global ethics of universal emancipation, and the effort to apply these ethics to the case of Palestine.[23]

The impossibility of colonial enlightenment

The various strands of thought and action that comprised the cluster of Arab existentialism developed as a counterpoint to a hegemonic intellectual order which was implicit with colonialism. It was an intellectual order that was presided over by a powerful circle of men (the *udaba*) whose upbringing was rooted in the late nineteenth-century movement of cultural renewal. Known as the *nahda*, or renaissance, this movement sought to modernize Arab culture by reforming the Arabic language and by inscribing all cultural activity into the disciplinary and epistemological procedures of Western European thought. Though the achievements of this modern movement were as substantial as they were numerous, much of its output was conditioned by the conceptual framework of colonial Enlightenment. Being part of this order, *nahdawi* writers tended to accept Europe's civilizational hierarchy and within it their own inferiority and hence the dire need to measure up to higher standards of being.

The assumption that Arab being was somehow flawed was sustained by what later generations of Arab thinkers called a Cartesian philosophical order that insisted on a radical split of subject and object, body and mind, reason and belief, secularism and religion, and so on. The *nahda* was an integral part of this universe of sharp ruptures and hence right from the very beginning it had to respond to the assumption that the fixed essence of Islam was incompatible with science, rationalism, individuality, and even democracy. In that, the Cartesian core of colonial Enlightenment locked Arab subjects into a hopeless position that failed to account for their experience in the world, failed to meaningfully connect them to their own past, and therefore robbed them of the opportunity to shape an

23 The following six subsections are derived from Di-Capua, *No Exit*.

authentic future that corresponded with such past. Indeed, as evidenced by the meteoric rise of the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1930s, cultural authenticity was in strong demand. This was the intellectual universe that the post-World War II generation met, and as soon as they were professionally secure enough they took issue with the class of the *udaba*. Specifically, they blamed giants like Taha Husayn for their belief (there is no other word here) in what they called a Cartesian philosophical order.[24]

A quest for authenticity and sovereignty

As the colonial era in the Arab world slowly drew to a close, a new generation was ready to take on the arduous task of intellectual decolonization. The immediate concerns of the late 1940s were not different from those of other recently liberated societies in Africa and Asia. Everybody had to deal with the omnipresent legacy of colonialism and everyone had to answer the same question, namely what does it mean to be a person in the wake of colonialism? To be a person and to establish one's personhood required young people to claim their long-compromised freedom, institute their sovereignty and salvage their cultural heritage so that they could establish their authenticity. Defined mostly as a problem of being—that is, as an ontological challenge—the front lines of intellectual decolonization extended far beyond the winning of immediate political independence, the creation of a national army, the need to compose a national anthem and proudly fly a flag. Indeed, Arab subjectivity itself needed to be reconfigured and, like most other cultural efforts during decolonization, this mission called for a holistic intellectual approach. Those who answered the challenge came from all walks of cultural life. Thus, alongside philosophy professors, one could find the literary critic, the pundit, the novelist, the essayist, the artist, the party activist, and the schoolteacher. All had a stake in intellectual decolonization and all found different ways to contribute.

Beginning with the esoteric level, the post-World War II ontological crisis compelled young Arab philosophers to study phenomenology. The move toward phenomenology brought these young intellectuals to critique and abandon the worldview of their predecessors. Thus, in contrast with what they called a

24 See, for instance, a confrontation between the young generation and Taha Husayn on Layla Rustum's television show *Najmak al-Mufaddal*. There, Husayn is specifically asked about Descartes, which for them means colonial Enlightenment as a whole. The show is available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU-ULahGxKA, accessed 14 March 2018. For more on the generational clash with the *udaba* see Yoav Di-Capua, "The Intellectual Revolt of the 1950s and the 'Fall of the *Udabā*'," in Friederike Pannewick, Georges Khalil, and Yvonne Albers (eds.), *Commitment and Beyond: Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s* (Wiesbaden, 2015), 89–104.

predetermined Cartesian position, phenomenology was capable of exploring the full spectrum of human experience and hence elucidating the human condition under colonialism as a relational problem. The work of Martin Heidegger was particularly intriguing in this regard as it ushered in a new understanding of the postcolonial problem of inauthentic being. Inspired by the brief sojourn of Alexander Koyré in Cairo University, Arab philosophers like ʿAbd al-Rahman Badawi, Hasan Hanafi, and, later on, Amin ʿUthman invested significant intellectual efforts in crafting various syntheses between existentialism and local traditions such as Islamic mysticism.[25] The idea was to find a philosophy that would allow the new Arab subject to be both contemporary and authentic.

At least initially, the forging of a new Arab subjectivity was conceived of as a project of reclaiming a lost heritage and establishing cultural sovereignty separate from Europe. It makes sense, therefore, that, as a form of identitarian self-sufficiency, a radical postcolonial emphasis on sovereignty would automatically exclude the presence of the Other. In fact, neither the Otherness of the Arab vis-à-vis the colonizer nor the relation between the new Arab subject and other minority groups posed themselves as pressing intellectual problems. This inevitable postcolonial posture precluded any urgent interest in Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*, whose importance as a theoretical gateway to the problem of Otherness was not yet apparent.

Missing out on collective Otherness

During the late 1940s a collaboration between francophone black intellectuals and Sartre resulted in the articulation of "collective Otherness" as a human condition that surpasses the insular realities of the individual and exposes the larger cultural and political structures that condition it. Residing in Paris since the 1930s, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and several other poets and writers pioneered the *négritude* movement, a literary, poetical, philosophical, and political collective that posed three very simple questions: "Who am I? Who are we? What are we in this white world?"[26] To answer these questions was to figure out what we nowadays call postcolonial subjectivity.

After years of intellectual preparation, in November 1947 *négritude* intellectuals published the first issue of *Présence africaine*. Functioning as a makeshift laboratory for intellectual decolonization, it experimented with black ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics. It was also political—that is, very creative in voicing

25 Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit*, chap. 2; and Kata Moser, "La réception arabe de Heidegger," *Bulletin heideggérien*, 5 (2015), 4–16.

26 Aimé Césaire, *Nègre je suis nègre je resterai: Entretiens avec Françoise Vergès* (Paris, 2005), 23.

the concerns of colonized people on the verge of liberation. Naturally, race, colonialism, freedom, and self-affirmation were prominent on their agenda. Their emphasis on the "who are we?" in a world that left no room for blackness paired perfectly well with the concerns of Richard Wright, who also resided in Paris and explored a similar condition with regard to the problem of being black in America. Heavily involved in meaningful collaborative work, they read Sartre and he read them.

Thus Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* was in serious debt to Richard Wright, who by depicting black ontology in America introduced Sartre to new aspects of collective Otherness.[27] Though inspiring, the various engagements with the "who are we?" question were something that Sartre needed to theorize more fully. Thanks to his collaborators, he began to understand race as a complex relational web.[28] "Black Orpheus", his 1948 preface to an anthology of *négritude* poets, was a major step in this direction. In addition to introducing the movement to the French public and positioning it as the ontological negation of colonial racism, he also aligned their concerns with those of his existentialist emphasis on individual freedom (some he say colonized them).[29]

From the perspective of Sartre's *oeuvre*, *Anti-Semite and Jew* and "Black Orpheus" marked a gradual transition toward situating minorities in new collective terms. This is why the late 1940s saw how hitherto disconnected themes such as critique of colonialism, construction of racial differences, an analysis of culture (historiography), a theory of literary engagement, an acknowledgment of collective Otherness and the ontological uniqueness of other subjectivities come together to present decolonization as a major cultural enterprise.[30] By the mid-1950s, new works by Fanon, Césaire and Albert Memmi added to this corpus and exposed the process by which epistemic racism dehumanized groups, rendered them subhuman, and pushed them into a hopeless zone of nonbeing where they were routinely suppressed, tortured, and violated. Slowly but surely a stable conceptualization of the process by which collective Others were rendered subhuman had emerged. Though predicated on the immediate experience of Jews, blacks, and women (as in Beauvoir's *Second Sex*), that opening into the ontologically, aesthetically, and epistemologically distinctive world of colonized

27 Robert Young, *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism* (London, 2006), Preface, xiv.

28 Margaret Simons, *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism* (Lanham, MD, 2001), chap. 11.

29 Following Fanon, however, Souleymane Bachir Diagne argues that Sartre's introduction narrowed the meaning of the movement and forever tied it to his own work. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Négritude," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/index.html#note-4, accessed 14 March 2018.

30 Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects: Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York, 2010), 32.

people and minorities as collective Others was highly relevant to Arab people as well.

However, for a variety of reasons that had to do with more immediate political concerns of physical liberation and the liquidation of existing elites, the Arab intelligentsia did not engage this body of work. Instead, they were busy converting Sartre's work on existential freedom to fight for political freedom and collective sovereignty. Seeking to theorize a new form of postcolonial politics that would facilitate and accelerate some aspects of decolonization, the Lebanese literary critic Suhayl Idris mined Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* for its notion of committed intellectual work. Though he was not the first to notice the utility of commitment and translate it into Arabic as *iltizam*, he did become its chief popularizer. Via his cultural magazine *al-Adab*, Idris spread the gospel of committed intellectual work for the sake of direct and immediate political change.

In contrast with the established intellectual guard, Suhayl Idris and his colleagues vehemently argued that decolonization necessitated the politicization of culture as the only method of exposing its continuous submission to European epistemology, establishing cultural sovereignty and fighting for freedom. Spreading rapidly, since the mid-1950s *iltizam* had become the battle cry of a new generation who boldly charged the established class of intellectuals with complacency toward colonial culture. Marginalizing much of Sartre's actual philosophy, such as *Being and Nothingness* (published in 1943 but translated into Arabic only in 1966), for most of the 1950s, Arab intellectuals engaged Sartre's work primarily from the political angle of commitment. Concomitantly, because no theorization of colonialism tantamount to that which had occurred among black francophone thinkers occurred in the Middle East, the foundational texts of anticolonial humanism remained largely unknown, and so did Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

Universal passage

The effort to articulate a universal Arab position that transcended the physical space of the Middle East, but was still organically connected to it, rested on both thought and action. The thought revolved around the big ideas of the 1960s, such as systemic racism, neocolonialism, settler colonialism, Otherness, subhuman existence, human dignity, and the search for global justice. The action was that of liberation struggles in Algeria, Congo, Vietnam, and elsewhere in the Third World. These experiences popularized and idealized the basic need to resist oppression by all possible means, including violence. Fascination with the liberating properties of guerilla warfare and, most immediately, an emerging commitment to liberate Palestine followed suit. Arab thinkers who subscribed

to these ideas and put them to work in Arabic were at home in the corridors of state power and often held official positions. They theorized the specificity of the Arab condition, called for internal revolution and demanded that the pan-Arab state ideologically intervene on behalf of global causes.

This shift brought Arab intellectuals to think of racism and consider themselves as collective Others of colonialism and imperialism. Considering themselves part of the "global South," they finally engaged the canonical texts of the 1950s and familiarized themselves with Senghor, who, like Kwame Nkrumah, also visited Cairo and circulated parallel ideas (the latter even marrying an Egyptian woman). They translated Fanon and sanctified Sartre's hotheaded introduction to *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he idealized and romanticized the liberating power of anticolonial violence. By the mid-1960s, Sartre had already become an "Arab philosopher," so to speak. His philosophy, plays, novels, and political tracts and global activism were translated, circulated, performed, and discussed in all major Arab cities. One can call this tradition Arab existentialism. The fact that Sartre identified with the global charge against neocolonialism, the injustices of the Cold War, and the need to decolonize not only land but also minds turned him into an undisputed Arab hero. As the progressive Egyptian writer Ahmad ʿAbbas Salih put it in a public letter to Sartre,

> Your influence in this region is deeper and wider than that of any other writer. We have known you for a long time, and from the first contact with your ideas ... their appeal grew deeper until our publishing houses were working daily to translate and print your work ... You are the only Western writer that all Arab newspapers follow closely.[31]

By fully recognizing the postcolonial Arab plight, developing a conceptual language to address it and leading the global political battle, Sartre marked a path toward full emancipation and a safe transition into a new realm of being where recently decolonized Arabs would emerge as liberated universal citizens. In the long run, this certainty allowed intellectuals to harness Sartre's thought for the sake of postcolonial emancipation. By the mid-1960s the promise of existential liberation was associated with universalism and what they called the making of "the New Arab Man." While being an Arab citizen, this new revolutionary subject successfully resolved the postcolonial issues of authenticity, freedom, and sovereignty and emerged as an emancipated universal being.

The fact that Arab thought owed so much to Sartre, however, did not mean that Arab intellectuals were uncritical in their assessment of his engagements. Indeed, though supporting his position on all the major Third World battles of

31 Ahmad ʿAbbas Salih, "Risala ila Sartar," *Al-Katib*, March 1967, 25. On Salih's life see obituary in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*: http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=9896&article=366494#.VT_oVZNQB_A, accessed 28 April 2015.

the time, they were troubled by the fact that one small issue remained quite vague, namely his position on Palestine. Much to the surprise of Arab intellectuals, when confronting the problem of Palestine the French philosopher did not seem to share with them the same diagnosis and spirit of commitment that characterized his engagements elsewhere.

Palestinian thinker Fayiz Sayigh was the first to tackle this issue. Drawing on the emerging notion of "settler colonialism" he argued that "The Zionist settler-state of Israel is characterized chiefly by three features: (1) its racial complexion and racist conduct pattern; (2) its addiction to violence; and (3) its expansionist stance."[32] Taking this logic one step forward he synthesized Kwame Nkrumah's concept of neocolonialism with the *négritude* reading of racism and applied it Zionism. Because the provenance of this line of thinking has some of its most important origins with Sartre, he and many others expected him to embrace this connection. Could it be that the terms of analysis and political mobilization that were valid in Rhodesia, Algeria, Congo, Cuba, and Vietnam were entirely irrelevant to Palestine? How to explain this historical anomaly, Sayigh asked. Why, he asked, should the "separate existence" of Jews in Palestine override that of Palestinians? What was the ethical basis for this form of discrimination? What kind of philosophy justified it?[33]

Though famously unfinished, the object of Sartre's global ethics was support for the liberation of recently colonized people so they could emerge as universal subjects. As such, and just like any ethical system, in order to be politically viable it needed to be applied uniformly and consistently across the board regardless of the different political circumstances it encountered. The questions that thinkers like Fayiz began to pose raised the concern that these ethics were applied selectively and, as a result, could not support both Jewish and Arab passage into universality. Could it be that Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* had something to do with this ethically uneven approach? Sooner or later they would ask Sartre to directly address this issue, but the suspicion that his text is somewhat related to it was passively there.

Figuring out Jews from Zionists

In 1965, after years in which Sartre's Egyptian interlocutors pleaded with him to visit the country, he finally agreed but with one small, yet significant, caveat. Rather than visiting only Egypt he would also travel to the Palestinian refugee camps in the Gaza Strip as well as to Israel. The decision to visit the region was part of *Les temps modernes*'s broader initiative to figure out, so to speak, the

32 Ibid., 21.

33 Fayiz Sayigh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut, Sept. 1965), 1.

Arab–Israeli conflict. Sartre and his circle envisioned an intellectual process in which both Israelis and Arabs would collaborate on the publication of a special issue of *Les Temps* dedicated to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Claude Lanzmann, the executive manager of *Les Temps*, was entrusted with the arduous task of producing the special issue as well as the actual visit. Simone de Beauvoir was intimately involved as well. Lanzmann collaborated on this project with Egyptian journalist ʿAli al-Samman and Israeli political operative Simcha Flapan. Both were asked to commission and edit articles from their respective groups. An old acquaintance of Sartre, Egyptian journalist Lutfi al-Khuli, was also involved. They worked on this project for two years before Sartre was ready to make concrete plans. Finally, in February 1967, and not before declaring an official position of "absence" with regard to who is right and wrong in the conflict, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Lanzmann landed in Cairo.

As plans for the visit were under way, the local Arab media rehearsed Sartre's existentialism and complimented his global engagements. A stream of review articles and commentaries followed. Sartre's canon, mostly already translated into Arabic, was intensely discussed. From an Egyptian standpoint, the visit, which included a long session with Egypt's president Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser, was designed to showcase Egypt's socialist credentials as a successful postcolonial polity. If the European left struggled to implement socialism in their home countries, the argument went, they were welcome to learn from Egypt.

The sojourn in the Gaza Strip and the visit to Israel were the least successful parts of the trip. Palestinian refugees wanted to hear an unequivocal declaration about their right to return, and Israelis were dismayed by Sartre's skepticism toward Zionism, especially its militaristic character. Lanzmann felt that Sartre showed a clear pro-Arab and anti-Israeli bent. Being a staunch supporter of Zionism, he left the tour in protest. For a variety of reasons, de Beauvoir took Lanzmann's side, but nonetheless decided to stay on.

It was in the context of this visit that Arab intellectuals were reminded of the one missing translation, that of *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Writing in the daily *al-Baʿth*, the central mouthpiece of the Syrian state, one critic summarized Sartre's argument:

> The innovation in Sartre's study of the Jews is that he presents the Jewish Question as a problem of those who oppress the Jews more than that of the Jews themselves. The anti-Semite is a fearful person who projects the problems of the world, as well as his own troubles, onto the Jews. From that standpoint Sartre analyzes the relationship between the Jew and the anti-Semite but also between that of the black person and those that hate him, the worker and the capitalist and between woman and man.[34]

34 "Marks wa Sartar wa al-masʾala al-yahudiya," *al-Baʿth*, 2 April 1967, 3.

Though Sartre's phenomenological perspective and its relevance for decolonization was properly understood, the critic immediately rejected it in favor of Marx's "successful" study of the Jewish Question. According to al-Jawahiri, in that old study Marx sought to uncover the "objective" religious essence of the Jewish character as the main cause for the misfortune of the Jews. Thus, he summarized, "The difference between Sartre and Marx is that while the former views the Jewish Question as a relational problem between the 'I' and the 'Other', the latter, explores the socioeconomic system of the Jews."[35]

Another writer, a Syrian, was not so much interested in philosophy as in practical affairs, namely advising fellow Arabs on how to deal with what appeared to be Sartre's ethical ambiguity toward the cause of Palestine. He argued that "Sartre's involvement in contemporary affairs is vis-à-vis oneself but also toward others," and for that reason, he had a deep "identification with Jews as the victims of the Nazis." At the same time, the anonymous writer maintained that though the Holocaust had brought Sartre to search for a solution to the Jewish Question, he "always distanced himself from the claims of Zionism to represent all Jewish victims." Indeed, as Sartre told one of the many students who approached him in Egypt, "I cannot hide my support for the Arabs who suffered from colonialism. However, I also identify with the Jews who were suppressed for a very long time by Europeans." Given Sartre's admittedly perplexed position, "the role of Arab writers," the article advised, "is to differentiate between Zionism and Judaism and between the Palestinian problem and the Jewish problem in Europe ... Arab writers also need to insist on the racist nature of Zionism and its connection to colonialism and capitalism. [Viewed from this perspective], the Palestinian problem would appear as the struggle of a people for liberation and independence."[36] This was nice practical advice in the spirit of ʿAli al-Samman, Fayiz Sayigh, and Lutfi al-Khuli, who, like the Syrian writer, saw in Sartre's cautious involvement "simply a first step in positioning the Palestinian problem globally."[37]

All of these urgent interventions with regard to "major disagreements with Sartre about how to understand the Jewish Question" were reasonable and measured but they did little by way of interrogating Sartre's ethical difficulty in siding with the Arabs.[38] Indeed, a long list of questions was waiting to be addressed: given Sartre's notion of the Other, why wouldn't he treat the Otherness of Jews and Palestinians equally? What happens in complex historical situations such as the one in Palestine, when Europe's Other creates for itself a

35 Ibid.

36 A.A., "Sartar wa-l-qadiya al-Filastiniyya," *al-Thawra*, 28 Feb. 1967, 3.

37 Ibid.

38 "Marks wa Sartar."

Palestinian Other? Is there a hierarchy of Otherness in which one Other deserves more recognition than another? What kind of ethics can serve as a political compass for navigating this conflict humanely and consistently? How does Sartre's philosophy assist in making sense of this terrain, and telling right from wrong?

Lutfi al-Khuli and ʿAli al-Samman had no answers to these questions but, in their capacity as chief organizers of Sartre's tour in Egypt and contributors to the special issue, they took a principled position against anti-Semitism. In fact, they had done so years beforehand. In his role as leader of the Arab student union in France, al-Samman was very clear about the necessity for any member of his union to reject anti-Semitism as well as Zionism. However unpopular this position proved to be with fellow rank-and-file members, he courageously stuck to it. Figuring out the so-called "Jewish character" and its responsibility for anti-Semitism was never on the Arab organizers' agenda. Just like Fayiz Sayigh they focused on the construction of Palestinian Otherness and the critique of Zionism as a racist system of differentiation. They asked Sartre, on whose ethical engagements they relied, to do the same.

Other intellectuals agreed with this strategy. Indeed, as Sartre's ideas about neocolonialism and racism began to be liberally applied to Israel, there was an expectation that Sartre would understand that "the existence of Israel is not an integral part of the Jewish problem and hence not a solution to it."[39] A Syrian pundit expected Sartre to realize that, return to his revolutionary roots, and draw the obvious conclusions that justified the Palestinian right to armed struggle: "Sartre is undecided about the usage of armed struggle as a way of settling the problem of Palestine ... The joint struggle of Palestinians and Arabs to remove what is known as Israel, is predicated on all the elements of a revolutionary position, especially in its Sartrean sense."[40]

Blaming Sartre for not being Sartrean and for turning his back on the corpus of thought and ethics that justified Fanon-style liberation violence emerged as the new line of argumentation in the struggle to win the philosopher to the Arab side.[41] His Arab interlocutors continued to ask why he didn't understand that "the Arab struggle in Palestine is an existential act ... the only act to justify Palestinian existence ... and assure its freedom."[42] Thereafter, for Arab thinkers, Sartre's stand on Palestine gradually emerged as the ultimate litmus test for his global ethics as a whole and, by implication, for his progressive

39 Muʾnis ʿAbd al-Salam, "Qissa ʿan al-shaʿb al-yahudi wa-l-shabaka," *Al-Baʿth*, 19 March 1967, 8.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.

revolutionary position. Put differently, for Sartre's Arab supporters, if the global ethics of universal liberation didn't apply to Palestine, they were not valid anywhere.

Sartre's colossal betrayal

Following Sartre's visit and toward the time of the expected publication of the special issue with his introduction, both Arabs and Israelis were anxious to see how their respective political and moral claims would resonate with Sartre. Would Zionism be condemned as Algerian-style settler colonialism? Would he frame Israel in racial and neocolonial terms? Would Sartre recognize the objective achievements of Arab socialism as universal human progress and a model for European socialists to emulate? Would he embrace Zionism as a solution for all Jews? Would he place the Otherness of Palestinians on the same moral plane as that of Zionists? Would he justify Palestinian anticolonial violence as he had done in other cases? Much was at stake for both sides, as Sartre's moral authority famously influenced much of the French and the European left.

In late May 1967 as Sartre was toiling over the introduction and as *Les Temps* was getting ready to launch the special issue, the Middle East moved toward war. Nasser, who two months earlier had told Sartre that war with Israel was undesirable, took a series of unilateral military decisions which indicated that he had had a change of heart. With full military mobilization on both sides, the prevalent sense in French public opinion was that Israel might not survive the war. Talk about a second Holocaust was so common that French Jews took to the street and gathered for the largest demonstration in their history. The newly founded Comité de solidarité français avec Israël (French Solidarity Committee with Israel) and Lanzmann's passionate public engagement on behalf of Israel placed Sartre under immense pressure. As dozens of intellectuals working in France such as de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, Arthur Koestler, Pablo Picasso, Vladimir Jankélévitch, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, the young Jean-François Lyotard, and many others were ready to sign a public declaration that condemned the Arabs for instigating aggression, Sartre refused to commit. But finally, after a brief meeting with Lanzmann, he reluctantly added his signature.

On 30 May *Le Monde* published the following statement:

> The undersigned French intellectuals believe that they have shown that they are friends of the Arab peoples and opponents of American imperialism. Without adopting all the policies of the Israeli leaders, we affirm that the state of Israel is now proving a clear desire for peace and calm. It is incomprehensible, whatever the moves of the great powers, that part of public opinion considers as self-evident Israel's identification with an imperialist and aggressive camp, and the Arabs with a socialist and pacifist camp; that it forgets at the same time that Israel is the only country whose very existence is in question; that every day

threatening proclamations are coming from the Arab leaders. Under these circumstances, we call upon democratic public opinion in France vigorously to refrain:

1. That Israel's security and sovereignty, obviously including free passage in international waters, is a necessary condition and starting point for peace.
2. That this peace is possible and must be assured and affirmed by direct negotiations between sovereign states in the mutual interest of the people concerned.[43]

Arab intellectuals, and especially those who worked on the forthcoming special issue and who were part of Sartre's tour, were caught entirely unprepared. Suhayl Idris in Beirut and Lutfi al-Khuli in Cairo, to name just two, were immediately outraged by this act of betrayal. So were many of the others, some of whom burned his books in Algeria and banned them in Iraq, whose capital was known at the time as an existentialist hub. Every newspaper and radio station condemned him. Five days later, as the special issue made its way to the stores, the Israeli army preemptively struck. From an Arab perspective, Sartre's introduction did not clarify anything and its commitment to a "position of absence" in face of the conflict added insult to injury as, by the end of the day, Arab armies were in shambles. Admitting a humiliating defeat, three days later a shell-shocked Nasser appeared on television and announced his resignation. For Arab intellectuals, the shocking defeat in the war became forever associated with Sartre's betrayal. If the Arab liberation project of the 1950s and 1960s had promised universal emancipation, the war spelled the failure of this noble effort. Though after the war Lutfi al-Khuli met Sartre for a serious dialog in which Sartre took a decidedly apologetic and pro-Arab position, his reputation in the region was so tarnished that no one else bothered to engage. In future years, even his public support for Palestinian military operations, such as the massacre of the Israeli Olympic delegation to Munich in 1972, would not assist in rehabilitating his name. For the rest of his life, he continued to zigzag between the two causes, without impressing either of the belligerent sides.

A CONFUSING LEGACY

This legacy of Arab existentialism bequeathed to the post-1967 generation an intellectual heritage that would demand of them the recognition of the many ways in which Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* was already an integral part of their process of thinking—that is, of the many ways in which Arab thought was already universally invested. For instance, given the potential of existentialism to illuminate the human condition under colonialism, Arab

43 *Le Monde*, 30 May 1967, 4. *Le Monde*, 1 June 1967, 3. *New Outlook* also published the statement: *New Outlook*, June 1967, 1.

thought developed a serious interest in phenomenology and believed that it could positively inform a postcolonial project of liberation. At the heart of this philosophy was the need to replace the fixed nature of the subject with a more situational and relational understanding of being. This idea of "being in situation" has its subconscious intellectual origins in Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* and its rearticulation by black francophone intellectuals. These francophone intellectuals understood that Sartre had usefully described both Jewish oppression and the desire for emancipation. This became an important spur to their own work and was later internalized by Middle Eastern intellectuals who used it as a basis for the Arab claim for Otherness vis-à-vis colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism. Indeed, the idea of framing Zionism in pure racial terms has its intellectual origins in the same francophone milieu that applied Sartre's insights on anti-Semitism to race. Here too the influence of *Anti-Semite and Jew* is very significant.

Since Sartre's Arab interlocutors dominated the cultural sphere and enjoyed unmitigated access to those in power, it goes without saying that they also sought to translate their insights about Zionism and Judaism into an official outlook. In particular, they asked those in power to differentiate between Zionism and Judaism and were not at all apologetic about publicly opposing all manifestations of anti-Semitism. At the same time, they conceptualized Zionism as a violent, discriminatory, and racialized system and saw no contradiction in mobilizing fully against both anti-Semitism and Zionism. Given the fact that both Arabs and Zionists invented new revolutionary subjectivities and made competing claims for recognizing the universality of these revolutionary projects, this was not an easy task.

Indeed, since the late 1950s, Arab intellectuals had deployed Sartre's existentialist philosophy on behalf of the promise of ontological revolution. The centerpiece of this project was the invention of new Arab subjectivity (or the "New Arab Man"). This new persona was now locked in a zero-sum game with the so-called "New Zionist Man." Even though he did not think that this conflict was resolvable, by venturing into its politics, Sartre was pushed to choose between the New Zionist Man (the rehabilitated victim and the Other of Europe) and the New Arab Man (the new victim and the Other of colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism). Which one of these archetypes could be considered the model for universal emancipation and which kind of ethics could be summoned to justify this model?

Sartre was unable to resolve the hierarchy of Otherness between Jews as victims of Europe and Palestinians as victims of Europe's victims. As a result, he was also unable to articulate global ethics of liberation that would apply equally around the world. Drawing attention to the inconsistences and ambiguities in Sartre's thought, his ethics appeared to be suspiciously selective. Against this

impasse, some Arab intellectuals who read *Anti-Semite and Jew* and understood its importance in articulating the notion of Otherness began associating the text with Sartre's ambiguous position on Palestine. Thereafter, the text was treated suspiciously, a position that undoubtedly discouraged its translation. Sartre's hesitant support for Israel on the eve of the 1967 war could only give credence to this suspicion.

It therefore becomes clear that what started in the late 1940s as a straightforward engagement with the liberating potential of existential phenomenology had become by the 1960s entangled with competing claims for universality. Both revolutionary Arabs and Zionists saw their collective cultural and political projects as a model worthy of exclusive European acknowledgment. In that regard, Sartre's Arab interlocutors and the many Arabs who associated their cultural pursuits with existentialism and with his global politics had to reckon with two critical issues that can be traced back to Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

The main issue that weighed heavily on the shoulders of Arab thinkers was the highly unpleasant fact that, to a large degree, the intellectual origins of the Arab claim for Otherness, and hence the ethical justification for their liberation project, are indirectly based on *Anti-Semite and Jew*. What were the cultural and even political implications of the fact that the ontological foundations of the postcolonial Other rested on the tragedy of the Holocaust and were therefore forever imbedded in the specific trauma of the Jewish subject and its dialectical relationship with Europeans (and now with Arabs as well)? Is Otherness a universal condition or is it a particularly Jewish, or by extension Zionist, condition? Do these historical links have any ethical meaning when applied to the Middle East? Is it a problem that the self-perception of the Arab subject as an Other is based on a text that theorizes the historical condition of its ontological adversary?

Sartre's Arab interlocutors understood perfectly well the difficulties they were facing. Functioning in a Parisian intellectual environment in which the Holocaust was increasingly recognized as a formidable moral paradigm, they wanted to avoid any easy association between the Jews who suffered from anti-Semitism and the political prospects of Zionism.[44] Distinguishing between Zionism and Judaism allowed Arab intellectuals to reduce Zionism to a minor diversion from Jewish history and therefore a movement that cannot represent all Jews. If Zionism presented itself as a solution for European anti-Semitism and as a model for universal emancipation, then these Arab thinkers insisted that you can reject

44 See, for instance, Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham, MA, 2005); and Joan Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, 2004).

both Zionism and anti-Semitism without jeopardizing your ethical standing and your claim for universal emancipation. Theorized by the Arab left, this strategy was key to the Middle Eastern project of liberation. The only thing it lacked was an ethical certification by the French philosopher and his circle, a fact that would later come to define this entire legacy in profoundly negative terms and, eventually, to haunt the future Arab translator of *Anti-Semite and Jew*.

CONCLUSION

The process by which *Anti-Semite and Jew* became a haunted text reveals quite a lot about the form, function, and utility of translation both before and after the 1967 war. Situated at the junction where the universal and the particular intersect, Sartre's book created something of a cultural stress test for the politics of translation. Given the fact that in the Arab world universalism is still often associated with colonialism's effort to destroy an inner cultural domain, the translator is asked to navigate through an intersection that is piled with sharp debris. Indeed, the number of obstacles that al-Jawahiri needed to reckon with is quite daunting. At the heart of it is the relationship between colonialism, Jews, Zionists, and Arabs. It is a painful history that is often difficult to retrieve and come to terms with. It is one which is rife with silences and taboos.

Arab intellectuals noticed *Anti-Semite and Jew* only in the early 1960s when, along with Sartre's entire corpus of anticolonial humanism and works by Fanon and others, it became politically relevant. While a decade earlier it did not yet mean much, once noticed that its readers had to consider it in the context of the overall calculus of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Understanding that the situation was delicate and that the idea of separating Zionism from Judaism was only in its infancy, their solution was to read and debate *Anti-Semite and Jew* but not yet to translate it. Then came the war and the text acquired a new meaning in which the Zionist and the Jew are one and the same. Associated with the defeat, *Anti-Semite and Jew* was relegated to a cryptic zone of non-translation.

Such zones are collective creations whose configuration dissociates, veils or vaults up a problem that culture has not yet found a way to address safely. The goal of translators is to recognize this configuration and figure out the transferential relationship with the text. This is done by pushing through with a countervailing project that can safely dismantle, expose, and circumvent the haunted properties of the text. Such an effort demands nuanced peripheral reading into seemingly unrelated areas. Alas, al-Jawahiri fails to read Arab history, and cannot see *Anti-Semite and Jew* for what it is, namely an experimental theory of anti-Semitism. By misreading the text as a manual for betrayal, al-Jawahiri and the media enshrine and amplify the haunted status of the text as well as their position as helpless victims. Leaving its destructive transferential impact

unacknowledged, its readers are forced to subject their recent past to amnesia and relive their victimization with no recourse in sight.[45]

Amnesia is indeed constitutive of haunted texts. How does the rich intellectual legacy of the 1960s inform al-Jawahiri's translation? It does not. And how does the history of Arab existentialism enlighten the reception of his book by Arab critics? It does not. Clearly, the strategy of separating Zionism from Judaism and resisting anti-Semitism is entirely unknown to al-Jawahiri and his reviewers. It is as if this episode in Arab thought never existed. How did this rich intellectual legacy become forgotten? How come this public record became so hidden and inaccessible? How did the legacy of Arab leftists, who criticized anti-Semitism when they saw it and had a good strategy for dealing with it over and against their criticisms of Zionism, never metabolize into mainstream Arab thought? Though there are no easy answers to these questions, the place to look for them is in the uncharted territory of post-1967 Arab thought and culture.

To date we do not have yet a fine-grained comprehensive analysis of the culture of defeat that characterized the region in the wake of the war. We know that the war abruptly brought to an end one of the most significant projects of decolonization anywhere in the postcolonial world. We know that the ontological project of forging a new Arab subjectivity was in ruins and that the shock was so total that the war proved itself impossible to digest. That is, it became almost impossible to verbalize, symbolize, and reflect in a fashion that would make it known and hence bearable. To date, it has no official archive. We also know about the consequential rise of state authoritarianism and the quashing of the individual, about the intensity and viciousness of intercommunal violence, about a massive turn toward religiosity, and about the blind fundamentalist drive to forge a new Muslim subject as a replacement for the frail secular one that was defeated in war. We also know about the deepening of the Palestinian plight and about the Egyptian betrayal of their cause by signing a separate peace deal with Israel. We know that levels of violence—all kinds of violence—rose so sharply that all forms of Otherness became difficult to reckon with.

Most importantly, in the field of culture, we know that the fine balance between localism and universalism was violated. As the revered leftist historian and jurist

45 Muhamamd al-Hamamsi, "Taʾamulat fi-l-masʾala al-Yahudiya … Jan-Bul Sartar," 25 March 2016, at www.albayan.ae/books/from-arab-library/2016-03-25-1.2602650, accessed 18 April 2017. Islam Anwar, "Taʾamulat fi-l-masʾala al-Yahudiya li-Jan-Bul Sartar bi-l-ʿArabiyya," *al-Ray*, 18 May 2016, 18, also available online at www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/culture/2016/05/18/680433/nr/egypt. "Sartar, faylasuf al-hurriyya al-muadi li-huquq al-Filastini," *al-Khalij*, 23 Feb. 2016, at www.alkhaleej.ae/alkhaleej/page/075402c3-b75f-4739-a472-306a1ad3a469, accessed 18 April 2017. Jawda ʿAbd al-Sadiq Ibrahim, "Kitab Taʾamulat fi-l-masʾala."

Tarik al-Bishri put it in the Egyptian context, collective well-being was contingent on a balance between that which comes from the outside (*al-wafid*) and that which is local and passes down through the generations (*al-mawruth*).[46] As someone who moved from socialism to Islamism, al-Bishri knew quite a lot about such cultural balances. Against this background, and in a fashion that is not yet entirely clear, a new form of Islamic judeophobia settled in the region. This force was, and still is, largely unchecked. Among other things, it can be seen as a simple symptom of the post-1967 difficulty in striking a balance between the universal and the particular.

Beyond the general complex politics of translation and the give-and-take of moving a text from one cultural milieu to another, the case of *Anti-Semite and Jew* reveals the intricate ways in which the Arab world was, and still is, entangled with anti-Semitism. Clearly, the legacy and history of anti-Semitism in the Arab world is infused with cultural specificity that is quite difficult to decode. In fact, we currently lack a comprehensive framework for the analysis of this phenomenon. Studies and reports that point out the ubiquity of anti-Semitic representations in the Arab world might record some of its outrageous manifestations but they are not likely to explain them. That is because the existing theorization of anti-Semitism is so European in its provenance that it is of little value for understanding the workings of anti-Semitism in the Arab world.

If anything, the story of al-Jawahiri's translation calls for a specifically Arab theory of anti-Semitism, one that will take into consideration its recent origins as a post-World War II phenomenon, as well as its entanglement in the competing project of state building and decolonization between Arabs and Zionists. We need a relational theory that can organize the Arab sense that Zionism vacillated between ownership of Judaism and its rejection, and that Jews worldwide were also of a double mind about Zionism. The failed efforts of Lutfi al-Khuli and his peers to resist anti-Semitism, for instance, should be assessed within such a context. Most importantly, such new theorization should account for the post-1967 cultural mutations such as the virulent rise of Islamic-based anti-Semitism. This ubiquitous phenomenon represents a divestment from a universal cultural domain in which the memory of the Holocaust forms a hegemonic moral paradigm whose rejection is nothing less than a symbolic rejection of the universal as such. Overall, al-Jawahiri's failure to produce a work that is historically true to the Arab past calls attention not only to the general topic of haunted texts but also to how anti-Semitism, the specific subject matter of this translation, is in dire need of new Middle Eastern theorization.

46 Anthony Gorman, *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt: Contesting the Nation* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 133–4.