

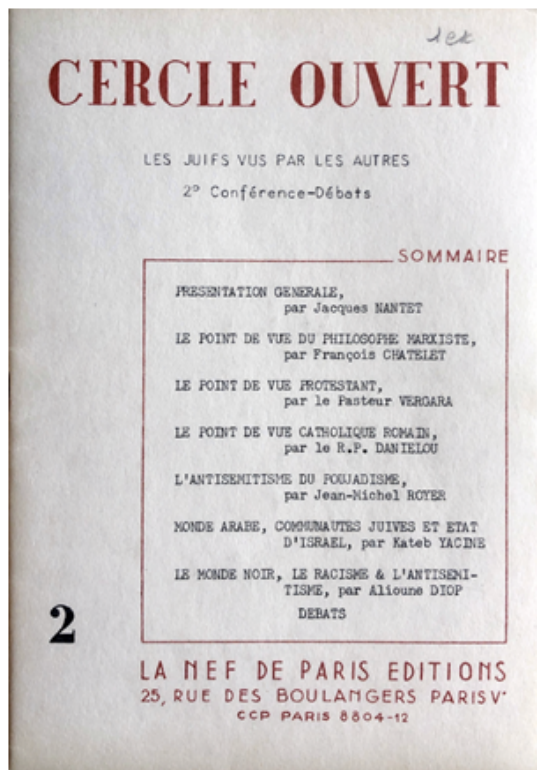
ARCHIVAL STUDY IMPETUS & OBJECTIVES

My dissertation, *After Colonizer and Colonized: Algerian Jews and the Legacies of North African Literature in French*, reconceptualizes the place of Jews and Jewishness in the field of French-language North African literature from its mid-twentieth century inception until the present day. Through historicized close reading of both canonical and little-known novels, I explore the various ways in which Algerian writers of Muslim origin have incorporated Jews and Jewishness into their cultural productions, notwithstanding political, popular, and academic discourses that promote a monolithic vision of the nation's purported cultural and religious homogeneity.

The dissertation's second chapter interrogates how Kateb Yacine's début novel *Nedjma* (1956) inscribes Jews into the history of the nation of Algeria through a complex allegorical operation. Thanks to the generous support of the NeMLA Summer Research Fellowship, I was able to investigate Kateb's views on Jews and Jewishness by traveling to the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, which houses Kateb's archives and a research library devoted to his life and work.

“Profondément enracinés en Algérie” Kateb Yacine on Algerian Jews

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ARCHIVAL ACTIVITIES & FINDINGS

At the IMEC, I accessed a broad swathe of Kateb's published and unpublished texts, as well as several press dossiers that included hundreds of articles and interviews with and about him and his work. Notable findings include text of several interviews in which Kateb discusses a Jewish cousin of his with whom he was in love, and who served as the inspiration for the eponymous character in *Nedjma*; a recording of Kateb's daughter discussing her Berber Jewish mother's relationship with her father; and most notably, the text of a short intervention that Kateb gave in November 1956 as part of a scholarly debate on the topic of “Les Juifs vus par les autres” which was organized by the collective *Cercle ouvert*.

In Kateb's piece, entitled “Monde arabe, communauté juive, et état d'Israël [Arab world, Jewish community, and state of Israel],” he situates Algerian Jews firmly within North African history and the Algerian cultural landscape, claiming that Algerian Jews “parlent naturellement la langue arabe et les dialectes berbères [speak the Arabic language and Berber dialects, of course];” “sont profondément enracinés en Algérie [have deep roots in Algeria];” and know that Algeria “c'est leur seule vraie patrie [is their only true homeland].”

These findings are crucial to the argument I make in the second chapter of my dissertation. In this chapter, I argue that Kateb writes Jews into the world of the colonized in late colonial Algeria, both on the level of day to day lived experience and in a more symbolic capacity. As such, I interrogate both the representations of minor Jewish characters in the novels and the figure of Nedjma herself, a daughter born to a French Jewish woman and a North African Muslim man, and who is often said to be an allegory for the nation of Algeria.