

Breaking Barriers and Forging Solidarity: The Pan-African Legacy of Souffles-Anfas

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Introduction

In recent years, Morocco has witnessed a surge in sub-Saharan African immigration, leading to both a troubling rise in anti-black racism and an increased sense of the country's rootedness in Africa. This phenomenon is particularly felt among working-class Moroccans, who are forging more vivid and human connections with sub-Saharan migrants. The recent situation in Tunisia, where president Kais Saed has openly promoted racist rhetoric towards sub-Saharan Africans, is a stark reminder of the complexities inherent in the identity of the Maghreb region and the Arab-African binary. As such, I have been prompted to wonder about the overall place of the Maghreb, and specifically Morocco, within the larger African continent.

As Morocco moves away from its previous emphasis on a unified Arabo-Muslim identity towards a more pluralistic understanding of itself, as seen in efforts to recognize Berber culture and its recent political "Re-Africanization", new forms of solidarity and cultural identification are emerging. This shift is prompting a reevaluation of Moroccan culture and its place in the broader Pan-African cultural project. It is here that the significance of *Souffles-Anfas* magazine, which operated from 1966 to 1972 as a platform for cultural decolonization and Marxist-Lenist activism, becomes apparent.

The *Souffles-Anfas* magazine challenged the conventional notion of race-based Pan-Africanism by undertaking a project of cultural decolonization that rejected colonial conceptions of binary categorizations. By centering on class and promoting transcontinental collaboration, it emphasised the importance of solidarity among North and Sub-Saharan Africans – and beyond – who shared similar struggles against neocolonial capitalist state leaders. By seeking to promote dynamic cultural expression and liberation from homogenised and stagnant forms, *Souffles-Anfas* paved the way for a new definition of Pan-Africanism that aimed to break down the barriers of colonialism and neocolonialism that had long

divided the African peoples. This paper will first provide an overview of the historical context surrounding Souffles-Anfas, in the aftermath of Morocco's independence. Then, we will examine the origins of Souffles, its commitment to cultural decolonization, its Marxist-Lenist political activism and its novel Pan-African dimension.

Historical context

The post-independence era in Morocco, under the reigns of Mohammed V and Hassan II, was marked by significant political and social transformations. Following the end of colonialism in 1956, the country was left grappling with deep-seated class and ethnic inequalities as well as a staggering illiteracy rate of 90%.¹ These challenges exacerbated tensions between the monarchy and leftist opposition movements, eventually culminating in a period of intense repression under Hassan II's rule known as the Years of Lead. In the following section, we will detail the historical context that gave rise to Souffles magazine within this complex political landscape.

After independence, the Istiqlal party, which had led the country's independence struggle, found itself shut out from key networks of patronage, as Mohammed V's palace consolidated its power with the help of its loyal allies, particularly the colonial Makhzen. Even at that time, Hassan II, placed at the head of the newly constituted national army (Forces armées royales), played a key role in this process of reasserting royal hegemony. In light of Istiqlal's growing influence, the palace was compelled to make some concessions but always with a tight grip on the reins of power. In May 1960, after growing weary of the endless political manoeuvring, King Hassan II dismissed the government of Abdallah Ibrahim and proclaimed himself as his own Prime Minister.

In the international scene, Mohammed V embraced liberal ideals and aligned himself with Third World anti-imperialism. While he professed anticommunist views, he promoted a

¹ Susan Gilson Miller, "Framing the Nation (1930-1961)," essay, in *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 153.

policy of nonalignment in the Cold War context and forged relationships with emerging African nations.² Mohammed V also played a significant role in institutionalising Pan-Africanist ideology. The African Conference of Casablanca, in 1961, laid the foundations for the Organization of African Unity's establishment.³ Rabat was a centre of anti-imperial thought⁴, welcoming a range of left-leaning African revolutionaries, at a time when Nelson Mandela⁵ and Frantz Fanon were attending training camps in Oujda. But at home, he chose a social conservative strategy. The monarchy firmly opposed promoting broad societal interventions, leaving Moroccans to deal with high unemployment, scarce housing, inadequate schooling, understaffed health services, and a stagnant economy.

Hassan II's foreign policy was a significant departure from his father's, as he firmly established himself as an ally of the West. Politically, the country settled into a pattern where authoritarianism and plural political parties coexisted. As for the economy, it experienced a significant decline marked by rising unemployment and policies that favoured the wealthy few, leading to declining living standards for the poor amidst rising prices.⁶

In the early 1960s, tensions between the monarchy and the opposition United National Popular Front (UNFP) – a more “progressive” alternative to Istiqlal – intensified. UNFP's leader, Mehdi Ben Barka, became a major archenemy of the regime due to his growing outspokenness. He encouraged Moroccans to build ties of solidarity with other recently liberated Third World nations, as he held meetings with powerful revolutionary leaders such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. He opposed Hassan II's project for a new constitution in

² Ibid, 158

³ Brahim El Guabli, “Refiguring Pan-Africanism through Algerian–Moroccan Competitive Festivals,” *Interventions* 20, no. 7 (2018): 1053–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2018.1487327>.

⁴ Paraska Tolán-Szklínik, “A Continent in Its Totality Moroccan Literary Journal Souffles Turns to Angola,” essay, in *Maghreb Noir: The Militant-Artists of North Africa and the Struggle for a Pan-African, Postcolonial Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023), 36.

⁵ “Nelson Mandela's Military Training,” Nelson Mandela Foundation, November 12, 2012, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/nelson-mandelas-military-training>.

⁶ Susan Gilson Miller, “The First Age of Hassan II: The Iron Fist (1961-1975),” essay, in *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 173

1962 and called for its boycott, stating that "the primary task of the Moroccan people is to battle this totally feudal regime."⁷

The state's response to the opposition was severe. The government arrested 5,000 UNFP militants in July 1963 after the party performed well in the parliamentary elections. The Moroccan National Students' Union, or UNEM, also became heavily politicised during this period, with its members repeatedly going out on strike between 1962 and 1965. Students demanded democracy, an end to neo-colonialism, and the limiting of the king's powers.

On March 21, 1965, a student-led protest in Casablanca escalated into a three-day-long street battle joined by thousands of workers who had been laid off during the 1964 economic recession and residents of the city's bidonvilles. This led to the king dismissing parliament, suspending the constitution of 1962, and imposing a state of emergency that lasted over five years. Later that year, on October 29, Mehdi Ben Barka, in exile at the time, was kidnapped on a Paris street and then “disappeared.”⁸

After 1965, political parties experienced a decline in their activities (in serious remission), and the avenues for political dialogue shifted to informal settings such as universities, elite salons, and amongst émigrés and students in France. The trade unions were also actively engaged in political discussions, forming alliances with the left. During this period, Marxist party Ila al-Amam emerged as the leading opposition to the king. At its head were Abraham Serfaty and Abdellatif Laâbi, central figures of the avant-gardiste literary and cultural magazine *Souffles*.

Origins

Souffles magazine – “breaths” in French – was founded in 1966 by a group of leftist Moroccan poets, artists, and intellectuals, who had all come of age during the transition from French protectorate to national sovereignty. Among its founders were Abdellatif Laâbi,

⁷ Ibid, 167

⁸ Susan Gilson Miller, “The First Age of Hassan II: The Iron Fist (1961-1975),” essay, in *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 168

Mustafa Nissabouri, Mohammad Khaïr-Eddine, Mohammed Melihi, and Mohammed Fatha, all of whom were struggling to find a platform for their avant-gardiste literary and artistic sensibility in a dissatisfying cultural landscape.⁹ The group decided to create their own platform and launched their publishing house called Atlantes in 1967, breaking the monopoly of French publishers in North Africa.¹⁰ Operated out of Abdelatif and Jocelyne Laâbi's humble apartment in Rabat, the publication was sustained by the volunteer work of its contributors. *Souffles* was first and foremost a space of conversation between friends, with a “open and non-hierarchical editorial team”.¹¹ The entirely self-funded journal was printed in Tangier and distributed in kiosks across major Moroccan cities, as well as to foreign subscribers for the symbolic sum of three dirhams.¹²

Souffles was envisioned by its founders as “a conduit for experimental art and progressive politics in Morocco and beyond”¹³, reflecting their desire to integrate the Maghreb into the revolutionary wave sweeping across Africa and the Third World. As the inaugural issue-manifesto states: “Something is afoot in Africa and the rest of the Third World. (...) *Souffles* (...) does not recognize any borders; our Maghrebi, African, European, and other friends are all invited to participate in our modest enterprise.”¹⁴ If the magazine initially centred on showcasing decolonial plastic arts, literature, cinema, theatre and poetry, it quickly imposed itself as more politically active, becoming “a flagship publication of Moroccan Marxist-Lenist movement.”¹⁵ Four years later, they established a parallel

⁹ Kenza Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 30–35.

¹⁰ Olivia C. Harrison and Teresa Villa-Ignacio, essay, in *Souffles-Anfas a Critical Anthology from the Moroccan Journal of Culture and Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 3

¹¹ *Ibid*, 38.

¹² Olivia C. Harrison and Teresa Villa-Ignacio, essay, in *Souffles-Anfas a Critical Anthology from the Moroccan Journal of Culture and Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 2.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Abdellatif Lâabi, “Prologue,” *Souffles 1: First Trimester 1966*, 3-5

¹⁵ Kenza Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 14.

Arabic-language journal, *Anfas*, which became a powerful platform for the Moroccan left, having an even more powerful political impact than *Souffles*.¹⁶

Cultural decolonization

At the heart of *Souffles*-*Anfas* was a fervent commitment to “cultural decolonization.”¹⁷ The journal sought to break away from the homogenization of culture imposed by colonial and post-colonial powers and saw cultural liberation as a crucial step towards broader political liberation. In the words of its founder, Abdellatif Laâbi, *Souffles* was born during a “transitional stage between one epoch and another,” where political and cultural struggles were intertwined¹⁸ and it was the “responsibility” of the “Third World intellectual”¹⁹ to dismantle oppression structures.

The journal's driving belief was that decolonization was far from complete, and that colonialism of the mind and culture persisted even after political independence had been achieved. In one of the earliest issues of *Souffles*, Abdelkebir Khatibi writes that “our culture is still primarily traditionalist or imitative” and that the “challenge lies in knowing how to (...) find new ways to appropriately express our reality and embody our deepest desires.” As such, the *Souffles*-*Anfas* intellectual confronted two major challenges in the Moroccan socio-cultural landscape after independence: that of a French “imperialist cultural” hegemony and of a “racialized superstructure of narrow nationalism.”²⁰ They were opposing a cultural production that catered to the whims of imperial French tastes. In his essay “Realities and Dilemmas of National Culture”, Laâbi offers an unwavering critique of the hegemony of Western culture that left native customs as “petrified contemplation of the past”²¹ while the

¹⁶ Kenza Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 285.

¹⁷ Abdellatif Laâbi, “Prologue,” *Souffles 1: First Trimester 1966*, 3-5

¹⁸ Abdellatif Laâbi, “réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (I)” *Souffles 4: Fourth Trimester 1967*, 4-12

¹⁹ “Association de Recherche Culturelle : Programme de Recherche et d’action de l’A.R.C.,” *Souffles 12: Fourth Trimester 1968*, 3-9

²⁰ Abdellatif Laâbi, “réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (I)” *Souffles 4: Fourth Trimester 1966*, 4-12

²¹ Ibid.

postcolonial oligarchies reproduced many of these colonial cultural and identity constructions.²²

Drawing on the theory of Frantz Fanon, who was an intellectual mentor of the *Souffles* team²³, Laâbi explained how the cultural liberation of the colonised intellectual was governed by a strict relationship of acculturation. The colonised did not discover their culture for themselves; rather, they showcased it to gain recognition from the oppressor's camp. This resulted in a "cultivated stagnation" where there was only one homogenous point of reference ; their culture was solely defined in relation to French culture. In "Le Gâchis", Lâabi even defines "Moroccan art" as a "European specialty."²⁴ It is a "uniformity of socio-cultural products", an "assimilation" to "the great body claimed to be universal", a homogenous binary of a dynamic Western culture and a stagnant colonised one, that both colonial and post-colonial systems – "without knowing it"²⁵ – ultimately tried to enforce.

In light of this context, *Souffles* was envisioned as a "a transnational enterprise open to contributors from around the globe", and especially the "Third-World."²⁶ This vision was strongly inspired by the ideas of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and the Pan-African quarterly *Présence Africaine*, which one of the founders, Mohammed Khair-Eddine, had written for during his time in Paris. The founders of *Souffles* were determined to create a postcolonial modernity that embraced creative adaptations of concepts²⁷, new terminologies, and a critical reevaluation of the past. As Abdellah Stouky warns, that did not mean an idealisation of

²² Marion von Osten, "Aesthetics of Decolonization – the Magazine *Souffles* (1966–1972)," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 70, no. 4 (2016)

²³ Kenza Sefrioui, "« Encore Un Qui a Tout Dit ! ». Le Groupe de 'Souffles', Lecteur Des 'Damnés de La Terre' de Frantz Fanon," *Politique Africaine* 143, no. 3 (2016)

²⁴ Abdellatif Laâbi, "le gâchis," *Souffles* 7–8: *Third and Fourth Trimesters* 1967, 1–14

²⁵ Abdellatif Lâabi, "réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (I) " *Souffles* 4: *Fourth Trimester* 1967, 4-12

²⁶ Abdellatif Lâabi, "réalités et dilemmes de la culture nationale (II) " *Souffles* 6: *Second Trimester* 1966, 29-35

²⁷ Marion von Osten, "Aesthetics of Decolonization – the Magazine *Souffles* (1966–1972)," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 70, no. 4 (2016)

precolonial tradition as “reactionaries advocate.”²⁸ Rather, they sought to find what was alive and relevant within tradition, using it as a matrix for modernity, reclaiming popular culture as a lived experience intimately tied to the body of the artist.²⁹ As a multidisciplinary platform without “frontiers”³⁰, *Souffles* embraced the dynamic nature of culture and the power of hybridity and fusion in order to fully embody “the entirety of identities”³¹ of the pluralist Moroccan culture. This comes as a direct challenge to a long legacy of colonial processes of divisive conceptual binaries, based for instance on the “belief that Arabs and Berbers were each distinguished by an essential otherness.”³²

Souffles: Challenging the State and Embracing Marxist-Leninist Ideology

Souffles underwent a gradual shift in political activism accelerated in 1970, ultimately becoming a de facto mouthpiece for Marxist-Leninist ideology in Morocco. The magazine denounced the complicity between the Moroccan bourgeoisie and imperialist power, arguing that the 'bourgeois' were reinforcing structures of inequalities of colonial times through capitalism.

Although the subjects of the publication were originally cultural in nature, the manner and tone in which they are addressed have consistently positioned the journal as an active participant in the political debates of its time.³³ For instance an issue dedicated to the cultural congress in Havana³⁴ features politically engaged essays by prominent figures of communist activism such as Angolan Mario de Andrade and Haitian René Depestre. Abdellah Stouky

²⁸ Abdellah Stouky, “l'intellectuel du tiers-monde et l'édification nationale” *Souffles 4: Fourth Trimester 1966*, 2020, 13–18

²⁹ KENZA Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 32

³⁰ Abdellatif Lâabi, “prologue” *Souffles 1: First Trimester 1966*, 2020, 3-5

³¹ “association de recherche culturelle : programme de recherche et d'action de l'A.R.C.” *Souffles 12: Fourth Trimester 1968*, 3-9

³² Susan Gilson Miller, “The First Age of Hassan II: The Iron Fist (1961-1975),” essay, in *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 125

³³ KENZA Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 104

³⁴ “congrès culturel de la havane et procès de la négritude”, *Souffles 9: First Trimester 1968*,” *Souffles-Anfas*.

had even already started elaborating more clearly on the collaboration between “the bourgeois”, who want to “get their hands on the wealth of the former colonisers” and “international imperialism.”³⁵

Abdellah Serfaty's arrival to Souffles in 1968 further fueled this shift towards political activism.³⁶ Serfaty, a dynamic mining engineer, had joined the Communist Party during his studies at the prestigious Ecole des Mines in Paris. Upon his return to Morocco, he became a leading figure in the wave of strikes by miners and workers, which ultimately led to his dismissal from his Ministry post. It was during this period that he met Abdellatif Lâabi, and together they formed the Marxist-Leninist movement Ila al-Amam (Forward), as an alternative to the ossified Moroccan Communist Party.³⁷

In 1969, a special issue was devoted to the Palestinian Revolution, in the wake of the catastrophic Arab defeat of 1967, which marked a “decisive turning point”³⁸ in the history of Souffles.³⁹ The prologue announces “a new direction for the magazine”, dedicated “not only to the construction of a new national culture but also to (...) the reflection on the ways of transformation of our society”. This new political opening urges its readers to mobilise in the political field, as it hopes to be “a call to action.”⁴⁰ This announces a significant shift in the direction, content and aesthetics of the magazine. *Souffles*’ poetry section shrank in favour of new political rubrics: “Ideological Action”, “Arab Nation”, “Workers’ Struggles”, etc. The dark sun that was on the cover of every issue got replaced by photojournalist and political campaign posters. As such, the journal started targeting modern political issues in a more

³⁵ Abdellah Stouky, “l’intellectuel du tiers-monde et l’édification nationale” *Souffles 4: Fourth Trimester 1966*, 2020, 13–18

³⁶ Susan Susan, “Abraham Serfaty: Moroccan Jew and Conscious Pariah,” *Hespéris-Tamuda* 113, no. 138 (2016).

³⁷ Issandr El Amrani, “In the Beginning There Was Souffles,” Bidoun, December 3, 2009.

³⁸ Hassan Banaddi, “action idéologique” *Souffles 16-17: Fourth Trimester 1969*, 4

³⁹ Kenza Sefrioui, “La Revue Souffles (1966-1973): Quand Culture Rime Avec Politique.” *Revue Interculturel/Francophonie*, (Lecce, Alliance Française, n°16)

⁴⁰ Abdellatif Lâabi, “prologue” *Souffles 1: First Trimester 1966*, 3-5

upfront and explicit manner, from education reforms⁴¹ and miners' strikes⁴² to the status of the Western Sahara⁴³, becoming a "de facto mouthpiece"⁴⁴ for Ila al-Amam. The creation of *Anfas*, *Souffles*' Arabic version, attracted a much larger readership, thirsty for material on Marxism and the liberation movements in the world.

In a time marked by human rights abuses and political turmoil in Morocco – the 'years of lead' –, *Souffles* committed itself to the exploration of the connections between imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism. The magazine was unafraid to make explicit demands, and its 20-21st issues "for a popular education", is a striking example of this. *Souffles* explicitly called out the Moroccan state for its handling of education, presenting numerical data on the evolution of education since colonial times and demanding change.⁴⁵ Increasingly, writers for *Souffles* began using pseudonyms or not signing their work. Majic Rechiche's observation that "the *Souffles* group campaigned to restore the fundamentals of democracy"⁴⁶ speaks to the magazine's unapologetic and critical tone.

The magazine denounced the Moroccan bourgeoisie and political elite as a "relay of imperialism"⁴⁷ whose "spirit was (...) shaped by French circles."⁴⁸ *Souffles* almost acted as a spokesperson for the proletariat. In an article for "Worker Struggles", Serfaty discusses the "growing role" of the "Moroccan working class" "in shaping the country's destiny."⁴⁹ He confidently asserted that they will know how to "take into account the lessons of the international history of the workers' movement" and "Lenin's teachings." The revolutionary

⁴¹ "DOSSIER POUR UN ENSEIGNEMENT DU PEUPLE", *Souffles* 20-21: *First Trimester* 1971, 4-20

⁴² Ahmed Tariq, "le combat des mineurs de khouribga" *Souffles* 22: *Second Trimester* 1971, 9-11

⁴³ Olivia C. Harrison, essay, in *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 21.

⁴⁵ "l'enseignement au Maroc depuis l'indépendance", *Souffles* 20-21: *First Trimester* 1971, 4-11

⁴⁶ Kenza Sefrioui, essay, in *La Revue Souffles: 1966-1973: Espoirs de Révolution Culturelle Au Maroc* (Casablanca: Sirocco, 2013), 112

⁴⁷ "association de recherche culturelle : programme de recherche et d'action de l'A.R.C." *Souffles* 12: *Fourth Trimester* 1968, 3-9

⁴⁸ Abraham Serfaty, "obscurantisme néo-colonial et acrobaties bourgeoise", *Souffles* 20-21: *First Trimester* 1971, 17-19

⁴⁹ Abraham Serfaty, "1er mai et centenaire de Lénine", *Souffles* 18: *March–April* 1970, 7-8

tone of the article is almost a call to action, echoing the way the "Russian proletariat" took "the lead of the Russian people" and "became the first in history to uproot capitalist exploitation."

Souffles eventually gained a central role among the revolutionary student movements, with Laabi and Serfaty emerging as its intellectual leaders. The magazine served as a "a manifesto for a young and diffuse political movement",⁵⁰ evidently of great threat to the monarchy. The government did not take kindly to this growing influence, and in 1972, Laâbi and Serfaty were arrested, brutally tortured, and given life sentences, putting an abrupt end to the publication.

A new Fanonian-inspired definition of Pan-Africanism and tensions with *Négritude*

Souffles' political activism shift also translated into the strengthening of its transnational solidarities with the network it had already established in the "Maghreb, the Arab world, in Africa and Latin America."⁵¹ Disenchanted with their post-independence lives, the *Souffles* team looked beyond their national borders for inspiration in their struggle against authoritarianism, forging links with movements such as the American Black Panther Party, the Palestinian cause, the Castro regime, Egyptian communists, Chinese Maoists, and radical African and Latin American movements. *Souffles* welcomed all those who sought a third way between the former colonial powers and the new postcolonial states.

These "transcolonial"⁵² and "tricontinental"⁵³ solidarity movements gave rise to a cultural movement that sought to transcend colonial and post-colonial boundaries of culture and race. *Souffles* indeed saw itself as "both Arabist and keen to promote Berber culture; both Moroccan and Maghrebi; both pan-Africanist and pan-Arabist."⁵⁴ Specifically, the

⁵⁰ Issandr El Amrani, "In the Beginning There Was *Souffles*," Bidoun, December 3, 2009.

⁵¹ "souffles : au lecteur" *Souffles 5: Third Trimester 1969*, 1-2

⁵² Olivia C. Harrison, *Transcolonial Maghreb: Imagining Palestine in the Era of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

⁵³ Andy Stafford, "Tricontinentalism in Recent Moroccan Intellectual History: The Case of *Souffles*," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2009): 218–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14794010903069060>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

magazine radically transformed the project of Pan-Africanism into a “multilingual, multiracial, militant-artistic project.”⁵⁵ In an issue dedicated to the African continent, the cases of Tchad and Eritrea were highlighted for their “Arab and African character” to demonstrate how “imperialism wanted to separate Africa in two” and how today’s “bourgeois nationalist still try to oppose them.”⁵⁶ The article challenges these binaries by asking “Is Chad north or south of the Sahara? Arab white or African black? Is Eritrea part of black Africa or the Arab world?” Ultimately, the article urges for their transcendence and the construction of “a new world.” This echoes *Souffles*’ commitment to decolonizing culture and rejecting the homogenization imposed by colonial powers and subconsciously perpetuated by post-colonial governments.

Amidst the cultural homogenization campaigns of Hassan II’s “retraditionalization” and the spiritual essentialism of Négritude, *Souffles* rejected both movements, opting instead for a dynamic and multidimensional definition of African identity. Inspired greatly by Fanon’s work, *Souffles* drew on his philosophy to challenge and go beyond Négritude.

The concept of Négritude – “blackness” in English – was a literary and ideological movement led by Aimé Césaire, Léon Gontran and Léopold Sédar Senghor. Senghor defines it as “the ensemble of values of black civilization,”⁵⁷ as “diametrically opposed to the traditional philosophy of Europe.”⁵⁸ This revolutionary movement promised the affirmation of a ‘black identity’, discovery of a ‘black soul’, and the consciousness of race.

Although Frantz Fanon acknowledged the historical importance of Négritude and how it awakened political consciousness among West Indians, he criticised the movement’s

⁵⁵ Paraska Tolan-Szkilnik, “A Continent in Its Totality Moroccan Literary Journal *Souffles* Turns to Angola,” essay, in *Maghreb Noir: The Militant-Artists of North Africa and the Struggle for a Pan-African, Postcolonial Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023), 4

⁵⁶ “Afrique un seul et même combat”, *Souffles* 19: 1970

⁵⁷ Léopold Sédar Senghor, essay, in *Ce Que Je Crois: Négritude, Francité et Civilisation de l’universel* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1988), 137.

⁵⁸ Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, “Léopold Sédar Senghor Négritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century,” *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, 2015, 39–47.

language as essentialist and totalizing, which he believed stifled “individual expression.”⁵⁹

While he recognized the value of reconnecting to black history, he rejected the idea of a "mythical past"⁶⁰ which he thought perpetuated a form of exoticism that hindered genuine decolonization efforts. To Fanon, the culture Négritude sought to reclaim was a "mummified" collection of "characteristics," "curiosities," and exotic objects.⁶¹

Frantz Fanon's influence on the making of *Souffles* is evident through the magazine's commitment to cultural decolonization and rejection of Western Manichean structures.⁶² As such, the magazine was also very critical of Négritude, which they judged as outdated from a revolutionary standpoint. Throughout the pages of *Souffles*, Fanon's spirit is palpable, as the magazine offered a novel definition of Pan-Africanism centred on class and common struggle against imperialism, rather than a common racial identity.

Souffles considered Négritude to be trapped in the second stage of Fanon's reasoning on the evolution of the colonised intellectual – see Cultural Decolonization section – ; one of essentialism and self-exotization. For example, Abdellah Stouky review of the 1966 World Festival of N- Arts in Dakar, criticises the festival's objectification of African culture for the European enthusiasm for “primitive arts.”⁶³ Stouky ultimately questions the significance of race in revolutionary ideologies by asking “What does the concept of négritude, the ideological foundation of this festival, still mean in 1966? Are we still in the stage of racializing thought?” René Depestre's furthered these arguments, recognizing Négritude as a "legitimate revolt" but denouncing its colonial-like essentialist nature that "trap Blacks in their blackness and Whites in their whiteness."⁶⁴ Depestre described Négritude as a "Black

⁵⁹ Frantz Fanon, essay, in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Grove, 2004), 27.

⁶⁰ Frantz Fanon and Constance Farrington, essay, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 178.

⁶¹ Frantz Fanon, essay, in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Grove, 2004), 45

⁶² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 236

⁶³ Abdellah Stouky, “le festival de dakar”, *Souffles 2: Second Trimester 1966*, 7-8

⁶⁴ René Depestre, “les aventures de la négritude”, *Souffles 9: First Trimester 1968*, 42-46

Zionism" that was "one of the pillars that supports neocolonialism", closely echoing Fanon's criticisms of the movement.

Ultimately, class is at the centre of his argument, as the local Haitian context of the Duvalier dictatorship leads him to argue that "Black bourgeoisie" made Négritude their "ideological weapon" to justify their oppression of the proletariat. To him, true revolutionary transformation requires the transcendence of racial essentialism. He sees this process embodied in Cuba, where "Négritude is becoming one with the socialist revolution", challenging the divisive binary of Black and White, and advancing "a real process of decolonization."

Depestre's argument illustrates Souffles' overall willingness to redefine Pan-Africanism, by offering a class-based alternative to what they perceived as Négritude's essentialism and neo-coloniality. To them, Senghor's Négritude conflicted with the ideas of class-based liberation. Stouky states "The N- no longer exists. The African has taken his place," arguing that "questions of race are but a superstructure (...) concealing an economic reality."⁶⁵ Overall, centering race in the revolutionary movement was too constrictive for Souffles' mission's to build solidarities against the same structure of capitalist neo-colonial oppression. The Maghreb's unique position between the Middle East and Africa provided a fertile ground for Souffles to defy conventional notions of racial solidarity and to elaborate new forms of identification. As such, Souffles strongly emphasises the unity of Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa in "One and the Same Battle," as demonstrated in powerful cartoons⁶⁶ by Siné and Jamal Bellakhdar displayed in its 19th issue dedicated to African liberation movements. These drawings depict the continued oppression of both Africans and Arabs by white capitalists, emphasising the necessity of joint efforts to defeat neocolonialism.

⁶⁵ Abdellah Stouky, "le festival de dakar", *Souffles 2: Second Trimester 1966*, 7-8

⁶⁶ "Afrique un seul et même combat", *Souffles 19: 1970*, 18, 76.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the legacy of *Souffles-Anfas* is of increasing significance as Morocco continues to shift towards a more pluralistic understanding of itself. *Souffles-Anfas* represented a historic moment of rupture and revolt against established norms and practices in aesthetics, politics, and cultural production. The movement's challenge to the hegemonic structures and essentialist binaries that arose in colonial times was both bold and transformative. Through political solidarities and a nuanced understanding of the complex position of Morocco and North Africa as a place that naturally transcends boundaries, *Souffles-Anfas* carved out a unique space for itself in the African continent and the Third World.

In light of our world's ever increasing political extremism and essentialism, the spirit of *Souffles-Anfas* offers a profound invitation to constantly challenge and reassess our thought processes. By recognizing the subtle intricacies of colonialism of the mind, we can dismantle it and unlock new forms of solidarities and liberation, beyond the limitations imposed by oppressive systems that aim to keep us under control. The spirit of *Souffles-Anfas* urges us to cultivate a constantly evolving, dynamically nuanced understanding of ourselves, our cultures, and the world.

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