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Paraska Tolan-Szkilnik, *Maghreb noir: The Militant-Artists of North Africa and the Struggle for a Pan-African, Postcolonial Future*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2023. Pp. 241. ISBN: 9781503634824 (cloth) – 9781503635913 (paperback) – 9781503635920 (epub).

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Maghreb Noir is the historical account of an understudied phenomenon, which is the role the Maghreb played in the development of a post-colonial Pan-Africanism, intended both as a state-led project and as a state-skeptical movement (15). The book positions itself in a very recent and thriving debate on the multifaceted identities in the Maghreb, which has emerged thanks to the climate of freedom of expression after the popular revolutions in 2011. The Maghreb, recently introduced to a new political and migratory context, is invested by a widespread identitarian quest (Pouessel 2012). Part of this debate is scholarly directed at understanding its African roots, denied and concealed during the nation-building processes. Tolan-Szkilnik speaks to this literature, aiming to target a heterogeneous audience: academics interested in race and Blackness or in ethnic minorities in the Maghreb, scholars of Black African art in North Africa, and those who are passionate about anticolonial and revolutionary African movements. One of her goals is also to reach a popular and savant audience, thanks to the unconventional choice of avoiding in-text references, using primary materials in text, and secondary sources – as well as theory - in the endnotes, making it a smooth, enjoyable reading. The main idea put forward by the author is that the Maghreb has always been "African", in spite of the official denial of its Africanness and of the general (and local) ignorance of the history of pan-Africanism in the region.

As we can see from the intriguing reading, many militant-artists, including the Lusophone Amilcar Cabral, Marcelino dos Santos, Goan Aquino de Bragança, and Mario Pinto de Andrade, got in touch with the so-called Maghreb Generation. This group consisted of a handful of poets, filmmakers, and writers based in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. This interaction took place from the 1950s to the 1970s. They gradually moved from Morocco, where they received military training, weapons, money, and legitimacy from Mohammed V, to Algeria and Tunisia after the repressive pro-West shift under Hassan II. In Morocco, the foreign and local revolutionaries gathered around the bilingual journal *Souffles-Anfas*. This journal was a platform for critical discussions on pan-Arabism, pan-Africanism, Marxism, Fanonian Tricontinentalism, poetry, and politics. At the heart of *Souffles-Anfas* was the idea that pan-Africanism needed to embrace a transnational perspective, moving away from

European and African intellectuals (resulting in the dismissal of Leopold Senghor's *négritude*). Instead, it sought to embrace the African masses, given their strong Marxist revolutionary ideology, and to explore Black diasporas and Black movements in the Americas. Chapters Three, Four, and Five revolve around the 1969 Pan-African Festival of Algier (PANAF) and the *Journées Cinématographiques de Chartage* (JCC) as the pinnacle of Maghreb's focus on sub-Saharan regions. These events, sponsored and controlled by the state, reflected the soft pan-Africanism of Maghrebi leaders and served as meeting points for these militant-artists and the vibrant anticolonial and revolutionary ideas prevalent during that period. In conclusion, Rabat, Algier, and Tunis were not just places to live; they were transnational hubs of resistance against colonialism and neocolonialism, as well as spaces for envisioning what African unity should entail. The reader gets an authentic picture of what was going on during these informal events through personal diaries (those of Algerian poet Jean Sénac and French writer René Depestre) and through an estimable collection of posters, leaflets, and writings.

The attention to the visual side of these documents (the book contains a variety of beautiful images) intertwines Visual Studies and history, investigating the public representations of pan-Africanism and Blackness in militant art and official propaganda. In doing so, it reaches its goal to make *Maghreb Noir* accessible to a larger audience, engaging with the visual cultures of that time. The choice of poetry to render anticolonial movements is obviously led by the presence of Jean Senac, Rene Depestre, Abdellatif Laabi, and the other Maghrebi and Lusophone poets gravitating around *Souffles-Anfas*, but indicates a peculiar positioning, as scholars have overlooked for a long time the role of poetry in inflaming African militants' political imagination. Another emergent theme is the gendered nature of the revolutionary struggle (Chapter Three), pointing to the patriarchal way of intending decolonization and African freedom among Maghrebi and Lusophone militants. These issues take up little space in the book, but they are important to grasp the long-run outcomes and the fluctuating support of these movements and need further inquiry. Amidst these aforementioned issues, the book's most relevant engagement with academic debates is its analysis of Blackness and its related notions: race and racism. These are crucial points of Tolan-Szkilnik's argumentation and are central to the understandings of the militants' pan-Africanist ideas.

The book speaks to recent historical literature (Lydon 2015) and anthropological literature (Pierre 2013) calling for the overcoming of the Saharan divide - a racist colonial paradigm that separates a "white" and a "Black" Africa (Lydon 2005). The circulation of Black revolutionaries and pan-African ideas demonstrates that the divide is, in fact, anything but real. However, if, so far, Blackness has been explored as an integral though juxtaposed part of whiteness/Arabness (often overlapping in the racial self-construction of Maghrebis), the case of the Maghreb Generation sheds light on different ways of conceiving Blackness - specifically, placing Arabness within Blackness. Particularly informative is the examination of the rejection of Senegalese

President Leopold Senghor's concept of *négritude*, which is considered obsolete and infantilizing, and viewed as a veiled form of neocolonialism aimed at pleasing European intellectual orientalism. The Maghreb Generation considers Blackness as a political rather than a racial issue, reconnecting it to global transnational arenas. A capacious understanding of Blackness includes Amazigh, Arab, White, and Black. This positioning has the merit of overcoming the strong emphasis on the colonial encounter as an over-exemplificatory factor: Maghrebi intellectuals become progressively more interested in the actual condition of their societies rather than in colonialism and portray Blackness as a multifaceted tapestry rather than a colonial construct.

The conclusion stresses Maghreb Noir's effort to decenter the gaze, showing how the Maghreb Generation turned away from Europe as an intellectual center to find its own way of fighting against colonialism with art but also keeping distance from Maghrebi authoritarian regimes. In the end, focusing on the Maghreb's Africanity is a way of fighting its marginalization in literature and in the academic disciplinary architecture.

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