



## Short Films II

Ahmed Bouanani, Abdelmajid R'chich

After the establishment of a national television broadcast channel in the 1970s, the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) shifted its production mandate to generate content for it. The same decade also marked the beginning of political repression, strong policing of artistic expression and intolerance of dissent. Bouanani and R'chich were filmmakers working at the CCM who were regarded as subversive provocateurs and rarely allowed to direct films. Crafted exclusively from film archives, *Thakirah Arba'at 'Ashar* (1971) was Bouanani's first feature, but the censors forced him to cut it down from 2 hours and 18 minutes to 24 minutes. Abdelmajid R'chich's *Al-Boraq* (1973) is a short fiction about a man who fights against the seizure of his land by powerful developers. And lastly, Bouanani's *Al-Manabe' al-Arba'a* (1977), a very low-budget fantastical adaption of a poetic fable, features his wife Naïma Saoudi, who also worked as an art director and set designer. It is his only film in colour, which convinced him that his vocation was to work in black and white.

*Rasha Salti*

# Thakirah Arba'at 'Ashar

## Mémoire 14

Ahmed Bouanani

**Production company** Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM, Rabat, Morocco). **Director** Ahmed Bouanani. **Editor** Ahmed Bouanani.

1971, black/white. 24 min. Arabic.

### An aesthetic odyssey

'There is no better project for the future for a filmmaker than take part with his limited means in the radical and systematic transformation of his society toward a world that is not disturbing.' (Ahmed Bouanani)

As the prize-winner of the Paris film school IDHEC in 1963, he came to cinema on the royal road, that of montage: via the foundation of filmic language and thus one of the elements specific to film. And if we add that Ahmed Bouanani is a poet, a scholar, a novelist and a screenwriter, one understands immediately why he became a historic figure of Moroccan cinema, a cineaste who made a name for himself as a screenwriter and director. His first long feature film, *Mirage* (1980), is a crucial example. In the face of a saturated and thematically overburdened cinema that puts the viewer under a kind of house arrest and coerces a predetermined reception attitude, Ahmed Bouanani opens the way to a plurality of kinds of access, to ambiguity and to searching. With his first short film, *Tarfaya ou la marche d'un poète* (1966), he set standards, developed the tone, blazed the trail and proclaimed the program – a program that is much influenced by an aesthetic odyssey: it portrays people who have lost their balance, confused by an encounter or magnetically drawn by a glimmer of hope or an illusion on the horizon that leads them on a path of initiation. The same is true of *Mirage*, of course, but also of films like *Adieu forain*, whose screenplay Bouanani wrote. [...]

Bouanani makes films the way he writes poems. In a talk with Nour-Eddine Saïl about the short film *Mémoire 14* (1971), he referred to his poetry: '*Mémoire 14* goes back to a poem I wrote in 1967. Some passages from the poem are used in the text that accompanies the film...' Asked about the myths he refers to, he declared, 'With the aid of anachronistic memories that are nourished by myths, I try to put together the "reality" of my characters and their world. Even if the memory – one among others – reflects the idealised image of the cultural and economic situation before colonisation, it cannot ignore or deny the reality of this society; a society ruled by feudalism, whose mask shatters under the exuberant pictorial world of a Golden Age that it invokes. Regarding a film that is rooted entirely in the real and in which every level depicts a facsimile of reality and the fantastic with a linear arrangement of the story and the events, I don't understand how one can call it a flight from reality.' He commented on the reception of the film: 'If the Moroccan viewer feels assaulted by *Mémoire 14*, then this is not due to any manoeuvres of the filmmaker, but simply because of the theme. After all, this is about the history of an

aggression – and an aggression from whose consequences we still suffer today.'

*Mémoire 14* and Bouanani's other works are part of the Golden Age of young Moroccan cinema and especially of the flourishing of the short film in the 1960s and '70s. Like other filmmakers of his generation, Bouanani has blazed a trail through the desert. As an editor and especially as a screenwriter, he has put his knowledge and ability in the service of other filmmakers; in collaboration with Daoud Oulad Syad, for example, true masterpieces have resulted.

However, his silence today resounds like a cry that tears the shroud of ingratitude.

Mohammed Bakrim

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Ahmed Bouanani was born in 1938 in Casablanca, Morocco. He studied Film at the Institut des hautes études cinématographiques (IDHEC) in Paris. He made a series of short films in the 1960s, and in 1970 co-founded the production company Sigma 3 along with Hamid Benani, Mohamed Abderrahman Tazi, and Mohamed Sekkat. In addition to directing his own films, Bouanani also worked as an editor and screenwriter for other Moroccan directors. He was also a writer and published several volumes of poetry. His one full-length film, *Al-Sarab / Le Mirage*, was made in 1979. Ahmed Bouanani died in 2011 in Demnate, Morocco.

### Films

1966: *Tarfaya Aw Masseurat Sha'er/Tarfaya ou La marche d'un poète* (20 min.). 1968: *Sitta wa Thaniat 'Ashar/Six et douze* (18 min.). 1971: *Thakirah Arba'at 'Ashar / Mémoire 14* (24 min.). 1977: *Al-Manabe' al-Arba'a/Les quatre sources* (35 min.). 1980: *Al-Sarab/Le Mirage/The Mirage* (100 min.). 1981: *Carte de visite* (30 min.). 1982: *Casablanca, bilan et perspectives* (50 min.), *Sidi Kacem ou le rameau d'Olivier* (11 min.). 1984: *L'Enfant, la torture et l'ordinateur* (15 min.), *Complexe sportif Mohammed V de Casablanca* (22 min.). 1991: *Raconte-moi Meknès* (16 min.).

# Al-Boraq

## Shining

### Abdelmajid R'chich

Written and directed by Abdelmajid R'chich. Director of photography Mohamed Sekkat. Editor Abdeslam Sefrioul.

With Mohamed Majd, Mohamed Miftah, Fouzia Alaoui, Abdeljabaar Louzir, Zahra Daoudi.

1972, black/white. 27 min. Without dialogue.

Abdelmajid R'chich was born in 1942 in Kenitra, Morocco. He graduated from the Institut des hautes études cinématographiques (IDHEC) in Paris in 1963. He began his filmmaking career as a cinematographer on several short films produced by the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) and then joined the Université libre in Brussels, where he began studying Anthropology and Art History. In the years that followed, R'chich worked as a director of photography, producer, director and technical director in Morocco. He made his first film, *Sitta wa Thaniat 'Ashar*, along with Mohamed Abderrahman Tazi and Ahmed Bouanani, in 1968. In 1987, R'chich founded the production company Puma Production.

#### Films

1968: *Sitta wa Thaniat 'Ashar* (18 min.). 1970: *Forêt* (17 min.). 1971: *Al-Boraq / Shining*. 1999: *Histoire d'une rose* (85 min.). 2005: *Ailes brisées* (90 min.).

# Al-Manabe' al-Arba'a

## Les quatre sources

### Ahmed Bouanani

Production company Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM, Rabat, Morocco). Written and directed by Ahmed Bouanani. Director of photography Mohamed Laalioui. Sound Samir Menouar.

With Kabir Benbich, Naïma Saoudi, Noufissa Doukkali, Latifa Souibli.

1977, 35 mm, colour. 35 min. Arabic.

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