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# Vernacular Modernism, Film Culture, and Moroccan Short Film and Documentary

Peter Limbrick

Moroccan cinema, when it is present at all in anglophone film discourses, most often appears through the lens of national film history. Underpinned by postcolonial theory's emphasis on concepts of resistant nationalisms, critical discourse on Moroccan cinema tends to view it in terms of a struggle for the emergence of a coherent national practice in the wake of colonialism. This essay takes a different tack, foregrounding cinematic and artistic discourses of modernism as they emerged in Morocco after independence. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to the reformulation of the way that cinema in Morocco and across the Arab world is conceived of in relation to Europe and the United States, long understood as the centers of modernity and modernism. Understanding the nature of modernist experimentation in this period allows us to appreciate the ways that modernity in the Moroccan context is not simply reducible to a phenomenon imposed by colonialism, be it the French or Spanish imperialism of geopolitical practice or the imperialism of the imaginary sustained by European or American cinemas which, along with Egypt, historically dominated Moroccan screens. While French colonialism radically affected Moroccan society and left not only the technology of cinema but also an institutional production infrastructure in the form of the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM), the modernism of Moroccan culture during the postcolonial period relied upon the active embrace of ideas and aesthetics within an international (not only French) modernist realm. While nationalist film discourses have tended to obscure the fact, this essay shows that such internationalism was manifest at multiple levels and in varying contexts: in the film text itself and its aesthetic characteristics; in the film culture of the

moment, including the critical discourse around cinema, the *ciné-club* movement, and the development of film festivals; and in the broader artistic and literary scene of the time.

That the debates and interventions that took shape in these contexts reveal a strong interest in fostering a postcolonial national culture to recuperate what was suppressed or lost under the Protectorate should not prevent us from measuring the considerable distance between the interest in Moroccan culture and histories evinced by artists and intellectuals of this moment and the official nationalism of the era, a nationalism that often turned violently against those very same actors. Tracing the connections between the experimental film production of the 1960s and 1970s, much of it emerging around the margins of the CCM's program, and the film and artistic culture of that same moment, this paper argues that Moroccan cinematic modernism was a transnational phenomenon whose circuits of influence did not obey the expected France-Morocco or even Europe-Morocco axis. To understand the place of these films in a transnational modernist avant-garde is to refute the idea that modernism is either, at best, an imitation of artistic movements proper to Europe or America or, at worst, an example of a colonial legacy that should be replaced with something more authentically popular, indigenous, and national. Further, it is to argue that film discourses on cinematic modernism and the avant-garde are impoverished to the extent that they do not take account of practices such as those in Morocco and across the global South, practices that are equally a response to the effects of a global capitalist modernity, as Keya Ganguly has recently argued with respect to Satyajit Ray's cinema.<sup>1</sup> Rather than seeing such practices in Morocco as constituting something "other" to the main event of European modernism, I argue that they be understood as important examples of a modernism without borders. To reinsert these films into a transnational framework of modernism is also to prize them out of cinema discourses whose borders are hermetically Moroccan, Arab, or "Middle Eastern and North African" to instead allow them voice as radically transcultural texts that respond in particular and historically situated ways to a situation of global reach.

That is to say, as Mohamed Elshahed has proposed with respect to Egyptian modernist architecture, the histories of cinema and film culture I will engage here do not respond to "neat narratives such as parallel, other, or imported modernisms."<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, that there was indeed a modernism in Morocco, North Africa, and the wider Arab cinematic world in which these films participate, one sustained by experiments with image and sound that circulated via festivals, journals, radio, and traveling film prints. In that sense, we have to reject the reductive nationalist position (sometimes still upheld in critical and popular discourses both within and outside Morocco as a suspicion of "intellectual" or "francophile" cinema)<sup>3</sup> that such modernism is simply a mimicking of European

or American modernisms. But more locally, the film culture I will trace here gained its particular purchase on the politics of its moment through its creative and critical engagement of Moroccan popular traditions and languages while avoiding the Orientalism and folklorism that had typified colonial responses to those phenomena. The history of this engagement complicates any simplistic narrative of colonial mimicry and demonstrates the flexibility of a locally inflected modernism as a response to a wider geopolitical formation. Such a modernism affirms the call that Taha Hussein would make in defiance of Egyptian nationalists of the 1940s and '50s, when he argued for Egyptians to modernize by incorporating, not superficially performing, practices current to Europe. Hussein justified such a position by addressing a much longer history of exchange between Europe and Egypt, one in which Europe itself had made its advances only by dint of Arab discovery and science: "As a matter of fact, the Europeans borrowed the methods that prevailed in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages. They did then just what we are doing now. It is essentially a matter of time."<sup>4</sup>

Beginning with the recognition that cinema itself is, as Miriam Hansen points out, "part of the historical formation of modernity,"<sup>5</sup> we can endeavor to decenter the predominant nationalist approach to cinema in Morocco during this period while recalibrating existing discourses on cinematic modernism. While my argument focuses on documentary and short film production, the experimentation that was conducted in that domain also helps contextualize the achievements of features like *Wechma/Traces* (Hamid Benani, MA, 1970), *El Chergui: ou, le silence violent/The East Wind* (Moumen Smihi, MA, 1975), or *Assarab/Mirage* (Ahmed Bouanani, MA, 1979), which, I would argue, partook of the same mode of expression. While even filmmakers themselves tended to speak of the short film as merely a rite of passage toward the feature, this essay reinserts the *courts métrages* into Moroccan film history to interrogate their place within a wider cultural practice that was politically modernist and exhibited a critical relationship to the project of nationalism. Indeed, it is such a diversity of production, rooted in local questions and concerns yet consciously seeking outside influences, politically radical in its anticolonialism yet able to simultaneously appropriate, critique, and repurpose colonial imagery, utilizing the short form by necessity but making of it a vehicle for experimentation and radical energy, that marks the modernism of Moroccan cinema during the period of the 1960s and 1970s.

The modernist vein of Moroccan cinematic expression in the 1960s and 1970s emerged from the post-independence production of the CCM. Founded in 1944 during the years of the French protectorate (1912–1956), the CCM was initially concerned with the production of actuality films around Morocco. These ethnographic films, a seldom viewed and under-theorized archive in their own right, eventually became the basis for Ahmed Bouanani's film *Mémoire 14/Memory*

14 (MA, 1971), discussed further below. They have usually been overlooked by Moroccan critics and certainly by filmmakers, who have preferred the temporality of the postcolonial break to that of the long or imbricated history; Bouanani, on the other hand, recognized their importance as part of the visual record of the country during the protectorate years.

In the years following independence, the CCM, effectively as an arm of the *makhzen* or Moroccan state, began producing short documentary films; Essafi argues that most were under the tight supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>6</sup> The CCM was also charged with making documentary *films de commande* at the behest of other government offices, such as the offices of tourism, rail, and agriculture, and for particular regional offices. These ranged in subject matter and style but most were intended for educational purposes, presenting issues about urban and agricultural modernization and histories of the diverse regions of Morocco. In addition, they were tied closely to the government's film caravan program, which developed in the period 1956–1970 as an initiative to educate and entertain Moroccans in regions without access to theaters or beyond reach of radio or the press.<sup>7</sup> The traveling caravans included projection facilities in 16mm and 35mm, and programs were often accompanied by a supplementary commentary.<sup>8</sup> These documentaries responded to the modernization program of the post-independence government by demonstrating the benefits of modernization: women freed from drudgery by machines, men shown to be reorganizing their labor into more efficient practices, agriculture reconfigured by the cultivation of new crops, like beets.<sup>9</sup> As such, the documentaries were intrinsically *modern* in the manner in which they responded to a moment of Moroccan modernization, ushered in through the legacy of colonialism and the needs of a post-independence state, yet they were not all *modernist* in the sense of developing an avant-garde; as we shall see, that tendency was pursued in some of the works that follow.

The institutional structure of the CCM, tied as it was to the government, and its complete lack of competition in the realm of production, meant that the organization became the only natural place of employment for those returning from film schools overseas. Mohamed Afifi was one of the first to begin there (having been one of the first Moroccans to graduate from Paris's l'Institut des hautes études cinématographiques, IDHEC, in 1957)<sup>10</sup>, and those who followed him continued the pattern of working within the CCM, which remained the sole production institution in the country. Mohamed Abderrahmane Tazi, Ahmed Bouanani, Abdelmajid Rechiche, Mohammed Seqqat, and Abdallah Rélili all trained together at IDHEC in Paris and, on their return in 1963 and 1964, most initially found work within the CCM: as director and editor (Bouanani), cinematographer (Tazi), or director (Rechiche).<sup>11</sup> In 1966, the newly developed

Moroccan television channel began to commission content from the CCM, which also gave a boost to local production.<sup>12</sup>

While the films made after 1960 share a particular mode of production, their aesthetic differences are great. Most function according to an expository style, often with voiceover, in which the *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and soundtrack of the film are organized for legibility and clarity, stressing the importance of this or that government project or the historical aspects of a particular locale. Despite the role of some of the figures associated with the more experimental films (Afifi, Bouanani, Rechiche, or Tazi, for example), these films do not always yield to the search for an authorial signature or trace: despite their experimentation with other projects, these men also fulfilled their labor as industrial technicians within the organization. It is nonetheless important to identify how, amidst the industrial film production that was both the symptom and the recorder of Morocco's modernization projects, an aesthetic response to that moment of postcolonial modernization manifested itself in projects that developed modernist practices linked to the international avant-garde and to Moroccan history. Mohamed Afifi was the first to venture into this mode with his striking short film *De chair et d'acier/Of Flesh and Steel* (MA, 1959), an impressionistic view of the Casablanca docks at dawn. Afifi's film uses montage to reveal the movements at the port as fishing and cargo boats load and unload and markets hum with activity. The film develops a kind of mechanical ballet of movement in light and figure, in the flesh and steel of its title, and as the light changes and the activity continues, the voiceover—written by Afifi and spoken by Ahmed Guerraoui—suggests to us that “the machines always keep turning.”<sup>13</sup> The film combines location sound with spoken voiceover and drumming, creating a tension between sound and image that would continue to be developed in the short films that followed.

Afifi's film *Retour à Agadir/Return to Agadir* (MA, 1967) presents a multifaceted view of the city of Agadir, on the Moroccan coast, in the period following the devastating earthquake of 1960. The camera moves from opening shots of the sea and the coast, with diegetic sounds of crashing waves, to a series of shots of modernist buildings abstracted from their context and framed in medium or long shots. Over these, a nondiegetic bebop jazz soundtrack creates a thematic context for the images, situating them within the currents of modernist experimentation and form. We then cut abruptly to a sequence that moves through the ruins of the town in the wake of the earthquake in a series of long, panning takes with sound over: car horns, children playing—the sonic landscape of a city superimposed on shots that are, by contrast, almost devoid of people. As this impossibly lively soundtrack continues, the panning camera reveals only destruction and empty, ruined buildings, some soldiers walking through it or surveying the damage. As

the camera pauses to frame a gramophone lying broken in the rubble, we hear a crackly snippet of a French popular song, “*C’était bien (le petit bal perdu)*,” made famous by Bourvil and here sung by Juliette Gréco, who recorded the song in 1961. The lyrics tell of a ballroom left in ruins after the second world war, its name forgotten, and the lovers who tried to dance there in the rubble. The film continues in this manner, superimposing voices and noise over a roaming camera. After a few minutes we begin to penetrate the ruined and empty domestic interiors, and the sound mix takes us from spoken voices to popular Arabic music to babies crying. What appears to be documentary footage of a crowd saluting a royal visit (probably that of Mohammed V in the days following the quake) is followed by more ruins, this time with a children’s song over it. The last two minutes of the film return to the contemporary, the brutalist concrete forms of new building and, with jazz over, the dance of angular and square forms, from concrete joists and bracing to the rectilinear forms of new steel gates and frames. The closing title, “*fin*,” comes abruptly over one such shot, its calligraphy in the blocky, modern, Moroccan style that was also utilized by the journal *Souffles* in its covers.<sup>14</sup>

*De chair et d’acier* and *Retour à Agadir* demonstrate a loosening of the documentary style that was developed in the other short films in the CCM’s main program. Rather than a pedagogical or informational exposition, these two films embody an essayistic mode that attempts to present through association and juxtaposition. As Afifi described it:

*Retour à Agadir* is not a documentary, much less a tourist film. If I had to “relate” it, I would say that it concerns the brief spell of a memory, presented in the form of a statue in several movements. If that doesn’t seem clear, I would add that the stanzas that make up *Retour à Agadir* constitute a closed work.<sup>15</sup>

While this assessment suggests a formally closed structure, it is one that nonetheless remains open at the level of meaning. The impression Afifi relates of “composing” a film in musical and sculptural form (the reference to a statue is all the more appropriate given the film’s emphasis on literal built and concrete forms) suggests a logic that ties the film to other essayistic experiments across the documentary form. Indeed, the essayistic approach of these two films and others we shall examine is reminiscent of the tradition begun by Dziga Vertov who, as Steven Feld notes, while he “insisted on filming improvised life (no actors, no scripts, no costumes) to seize reality . . . stressed and resorted to extensive montage and metaphoric juxtapositions to ‘decipher’ reality, that is, to elaborate it from the ‘crumbs’ of the footage.”<sup>16</sup> Such an address to the spectator leaves meaning open: while it adopts a mournful or contemplative tone in returning to the ruins, the film is neither wholly celebratory nor wholly antagonistic to the modernism of



Figure 1. Simoh (Abdesslam Slakini) in Paris. Frame enlargement from *Si Moh, pas de chance/Simoh, the Unlucky Man* (Moumen Smihi, FR, 1971).

the architecture and built environment that follow it. Too energetic to signify only contempt, but too shocking and abstracted to offer solace, the film's approach to Agadir shares the dichotomous perspective on modernity that haunts so many of modernism's aesthetic projects.<sup>17</sup>

Given that Affi's films stepped outside of the dominant documentary mode of the CCM by turning to a freer and more international, avant-garde, aesthetic style, it is instructive that we look to another work forged in such a transnational vein. Moumen Smihi's film *Si Moh, pas de chance/Simoh, the Unlucky Man* (FR, 1971) was completed shortly after its director graduated from IDHEC. Shot in Paris with nonprofessional actors, possessing only the most basic scenario, the film unfolds as an analysis of the situation of a Moroccan immigrant, Simoh (Abdesslam Slakini), adrift in the streets of Paris, a city here stripped of its charm and rendered strange and overwhelming by the cinematography and mise-en-scène. The character of Simoh ("Si" being an honorific term, akin to "Mister," in Moroccan Arabic) is "*si Moh*," *if Moh*, a man with no luck; a man who exists and no longer exists, invisible to others except in his capacity to menace or disturb them. In one scene, for example, Simoh meets a woman and her child who stare





Figure 2. Simoh in a montage of still frames. Frame enlargement from *Si Moh, pas de chance/Simoh, the Unlucky Man* (Moumen Smihi, FR, 1971).

at him in disbelief, curiosity, and, perhaps, fear, in a scene strikingly reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's in *Black Skin, White Mask*: "Dirty Nigger!' Or simply, 'Look, a Negro!' . . . I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects."<sup>18</sup> Refusing to create or reveal a depth of character, Smihi's film pushes us toward an analysis of figure and context more than toward identification. The goal, it would appear, is an analysis of the totality of the *mise-en-scène* and the human being placed within it.

In this way, there are elements reminiscent of documentary, especially the observational documentary: shots that rest for a considerable duration on the large construction sites and their machines; sequences in which people move about in the streets of Paris; the environment of the *banlieues* in which Simoh and his Maghribi friends find themselves. Nevertheless, the film never ceases to remind us that it is a creative treatment of reality rather than reality itself, and in this sense it departs from the evidential elements of the short documentaries on which Smihi's Moroccan colleagues worked in the CCM. Here the soundtrack is also critical: noise and music, recorded and mixed by Gérard Delassus (who worked as Jean Rouch's sound recordist), go against the grain of the observational documentary, utilizing juxtaposition and aural dissonance to interpret and comment on the

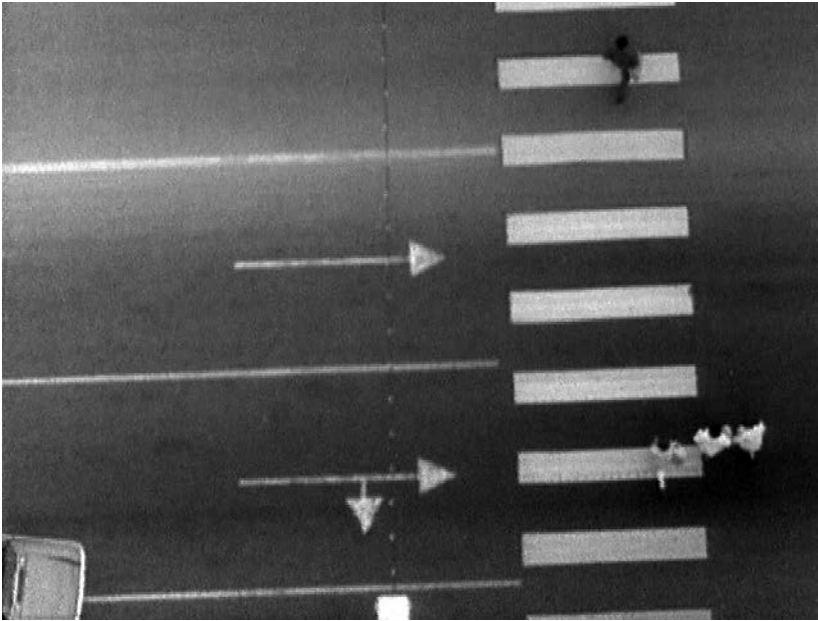


Figure 3. Casablanca estranged. Frame enlargement from *6 et 12/6 and 12* (Ahmed Bouanani, MA, 1968).

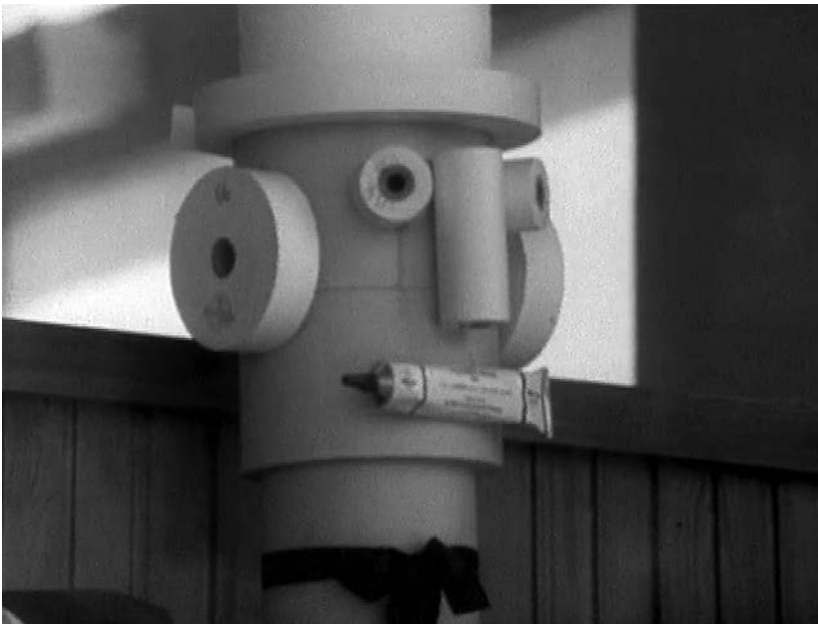


Figure 4. The modernist city. Frame enlargement from *6 et 12/6 and 12* (Ahmed Bouanani, MA, 1968).



Figure 5. The Vertovian photographer. Frame enlargement from *6 et 12/6 and 12* (Ahmed Bouanani, MA, 1968).

action. In the final few minutes of the film, in the Paris metro, montage interrupts the diegetic flow of the shots with a sequence of still images, coordinated to a slow drumbeat on the soundtrack. Ultimately, then, the work of the film exists precisely in the gap opened up between documentary and fiction, a gap that signals the film's modernism and its affinity with the experimentation also being carried out within Morocco—experimentation that was similarly fueled by new ways of approaching postcolonial legacies, capitalist modernity, and cinematic form.

Such is also the case with *6 et 12/6 and 12* (Ahmed Bouanani, 1968), a film that depicts six hours, from dawn to noon, in the life of the city of Casablanca. Like Smihi's film, which appeared shortly after it, *6 et 12* establishes a discourse that is polyvocal, internationally inflected, and radical in style. Without dialogue, narration, or narrative structure, the film's image track moves from documentary-like shots embedded in short sequences to abstracted features of the urban environment created through unusual angles and compositions. These are combined with a soundtrack of diegetic and nondiegetic noise and music, especially bebop, modal, and free jazz (the soundtrack includes music by Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, and Archie Shepp, among others), and are edited together in a method of montage organized by graphic opposition and disjuncture. During a

particularly self-reflexive, Vertovian sequence, a young photographer is shown composing images with a still camera.

His camera is oriented toward the walls of the city, which include murals of American cartoon characters, some with guns pointing directly into the camera. In direct reference to *The Man with the Movie Camera* (SU, 1929), Vertov's experimental documentary, the film thus develops the discourse of a "kino-truth" and even a reflexivity on the role of cinema, photographic images, and the place of the photographer/cinematographer.<sup>19</sup> The complexity of *6 et 12*'s response to modernity is something it shares with other city films, among them Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (DE, 1927) and Alberto Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures/Nothing but Time* (FR, 1926), which presents a day in the life of Paris. But this tradition would also include many other films within the tradition of the avant-garde, such as Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (FR, 1934) or Germaine Dulac's *The Coquille and the Clergyman* (FR, 1928). In all these cases, the city as a constitutive and defining feature of modernity is shown to place men and women within new sensorial regimes that arrive with capitalist modernity and which, crucially, are rendered in filmic practices that seem themselves to produce shock and newness. *6 et 12* thus explicitly engages a dialogue with modernist, avant-garde artistic and political choices as they took shape outside of Morocco as well as within. It positions the life of its subject city transnationally, suggesting in its mise-en-scène a history of colonial transformations of infrastructure and daily life, but also, through its radical form, an embeddedness in networks that go beyond the colonial relation and that are harnessed toward the aims of experimentation and discovery within the local, Moroccan context.

For these reasons, one must see *6 et 12* (like *Retour à Agadir*) as offering more than a univocal kind of critique of modernity. Approaching it from the standpoint of nationalism, it would be possible to read the film only as a fiercely negative response to the conditions of modernization newly come to Casablanca, as an expression of alienation from and captivity within modern life. This is, indeed, how it seems to have been read by one contemporary critic, Zakya Daoud, in her review of the film in the journal *Lamalif*. I quote extensively here to give the flavor of the film as it is harnessed within such a perspective:

[It's about] this Casablanca of offices, streets, cars, zebra crossings, buses where a faceless crowd is packed in; and at noon, a meal gulped down, the siren of factories, and those who are unemployed and smoke in front of machines that create a deafening noise of "yeah yeah yeah" records [*"disques yé-yé,"* referring to the song "Hush" by Billy Joe Royal, heard in one scene]. But the Casablancans don't live in this Casablanca: the city, the system, erases them. What lives are objects, "things," the traffic lights, cobblestones, walls, which give us beautiful

sequences like these shots taken in an elevator which, floor after floor, raises itself above the city, or of the traffic light which is presented to us like a monstrous living beast. All that is left of the people are arms, legs, hands, scattered eyes, mouths, too; then, even if unhappily, [Majid] Rechiche compares diners in a restaurant to residents of a zoo, busy, as he sees them, with the same drudgery. And, from time to time, to show how much these Casablancans are restrained, endless signs that repeat “Stop, stop. . . .”<sup>20</sup>

Certainly Daoud’s account, while acknowledging the achievement of the film, reads it in terms of a heavy mood of pessimism and misery. Yet I propose here that by situating the film within a longer history of the modernist avant-garde within and outside of Morocco, we can see the film as instead offering a more nuanced position on modernization and the urban environment of Morocco. Indeed, interpreted thus, *6 et 12* offers more sense of the possible pleasures of the modern city than does Smihi’s *Si Moh*, where the imperial metropolis exacts a more consistently negative effect on the Maghribi migrant than does the modernized city in the colonial margins. It is in keeping with the modern city film’s set of possibilities, however, that these films refuse any singular reading and demonstrate the often dichotomous way in which modernist cinema responds to the city. Reflecting on the ways that cinema was uniquely suited to representing the “flow of life” of urban spaces, Kracauer observed that “street life in all these films is not fully determined by them. It remains an unfixable flow which carries fearful uncertainties and alluring excitements.”<sup>21</sup>

If these films showed the capacity for a cinematic urban modernism that was firmly placed within the international avant-garde yet at once responding to local particularity, other films demonstrate the development of a vernacular modernism that consciously engaged Moroccan popular traditions and practices. Foremost in this movement was Ahmed Bouanani, whose work extended well beyond the cinematic to encompass drawing, poetry, and literature. The films in which Bouanani had a prominent role capture the depth of his research and passion for local Moroccan arts and oral traditions that had been denigrated during the colonial period, some surviving beyond it and some lost. As Omar Berrada argues in a rich assessment of Bouanani’s work, that loss might be associated with an illiteracy generated by colonial history. In Bouanani’s view, writes Berrada, “one is not illiterate because one hasn’t been to school to acquire a bookish knowledge synonymous with modern culture. Rather, one becomes illiterate despite school, even because of school, when one is henceforth cut off from the ancestral capacity to read the signs of nature.”<sup>22</sup>

*Tarfaya, ou la marche d’un poète/Tarfaya, or A Poet’s Journey* (Ahmed Bouanani, MA, 1966) demonstrates the generative commingling of popular beliefs

and practices suppressed under colonialism with cinematic experimentation that created a kind of vernacular modernism within the documentary form. The film is set in the southern Moroccan region of Tarfaya and concerns a young boy who leaves his village with the aim of exploring his country's history through an apprenticeship to a great popular poet who will teach him the arts of chant, music, and poetry. Composed from musical interludes, passages of poetry, and images of the region and its particular practices, the film enacts through its own discourse the narrative of immersion and education that its protagonist seeks, and its barely sketched-in narrative frame is the *raison d'être* for extended documentary sequences on the customs, history, and culture of Tarfaya. Here, the use of an actor to play the protagonist and a staged framing narrative—a model reminiscent of the experimentation across documentary and fiction elements that characterized the work of Robert Flaherty, Jean Rouch, and others (whose work the early IDHEC cohort had encountered in Paris)<sup>23</sup>—is charged with the purpose of reorganizing the footage of daily life and custom, something Bouanani was always eager to achieve, in keeping with the interest in Moroccan oral traditions and popular practices that he maintained across his life (drawing, collecting, archiving images and tales). For example, in an essay titled “Introduction à la poésie populaire marocaine”/“Introduction to popular Moroccan poetry,” published in 1966 in the journal *Souffles* and recently reprinted in a special issue of *Nejma* devoted to Bouanani, the artist offers a thorough investigation of the histories of the popular forms of poetry and storytelling. He describes the practice of traveling singers and acrobats, usually accompanied by flute and tambourine players, and their role in anticolonial resistance; the importance of poets as historians of the various tribes, and the instruments they used to accompany their poetry; and the tradition of the *amarg*, an Amazigh (Berber) term that describes a tradition of occasional sung poetry.<sup>24</sup> In an epigraph to the article, Bouanani quotes a popular song from the Souss region: “Whoever ignores poetry does not know the path of intelligence which leads to wisdom, by degrees of science and art.”<sup>25</sup> For Bouanani, then, presenting popular Moroccan traditions in cinema was not a rearticulation of some kind of authentic local knowledge against the modern, but rather the incorporation of those existing practices, already diversified and comprising many linguistic and social encounters, of even science and art, into a vernacular modernism that might be pursued after (but never free from) the colonial experience of the Protectorate. In utilizing the term “vernacular modernism” here, I am drawing on the productive explorations of the relationship between local and everyday practices to the global experience of modernity in cinema, as pursued by Miriam Hansen and Zhang Zhen in their respective works on Shanghai cinema and, more recently, by Masha Salazkina's research on Eisenstein in Mexico.<sup>26</sup> Crucial to this work is an understanding that while “cinema arrived, and was

perceived, as part of Western technological modernity,<sup>27</sup> its practice outside Europe and the United States was, as Zhen notes, “polyvalent and resilient.”<sup>28</sup> The avant-garde practices seen in the Moroccan *courts métrages* were examples of what (in a Chinese context) Zhen refers to as “a tension-ridden process of negotiation between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, between film as a utopian ‘universal language’ on the one hand and local vernacular(s) on the other.”<sup>29</sup> In *Tarfaya* and in Bouanani’s later film *Memoire 14*, one senses the radical and political nature of his use of vernacular modernist form to enable a critique of colonialism and to produce possible knowledge for the future.

The nature of what a vernacular modernism might be was something treated in the wider artistic and intellectual culture of Morocco in the sixties and seventies. It is particularly visible in the journal *Intégral*, founded by painter Mohamed Melehi, which was published from 1971 to 1978. Devoting itself to a range of artistic practices, including literature, poetry, painting, and cinema, *Intégral* exemplified the cultural and theoretical production that took shape in discursive terms that were at once internationalist and deeply invested in the local. The challenge felt by many of its contributors and the artists they wrote about, Pieprzak argues, was that while the international art market and European academics may have been interested in Moroccan art for its supposedly naïve or folkloric aspects, Moroccan artists themselves were attached to ideas of the modern and did not want to be caught in what they saw as a continuance of an Orientalist tradition.<sup>30</sup> Yet there is also ample evidence that many in the intellectual and artistic circle around *Intégral*, the other journals, and, indeed, the wider film culture, shared an attachment to elements of the local that might be utilized *against* the presumptions of naïveté, and that those elements might somehow escape appropriation as primitive or folkloric by having their modern affinities or qualities affirmed. Toni Maraini, an Italian art historian resident in Casablanca at that time and deeply engaged in the artistic scene, produced an article in a 1972 issue titled “Le rôle historique des arts populaires” / “The historical role of the popular arts,” in which she contrasts the kind of kitsch that is a hangover from the colonial exploitation and appropriation of Moroccan arts with the surviving everyday forms of vernacular art, such as stamping designs into bread.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Maraini’s essay is at pains to point out that the very conception of *art naïf* that was current in European discourses is the antithesis of what is found in Morocco. To persist in treating the popular as naïve, she writes, is to

make a false institution out of a phenomenon common to diverse countries and periods: we find the heart of the people, its spontaneity, its art, even though the most cursory study of popular arts reveals, to the contrary, *the long process of specialization and industrious practice in a voluntary and reflexive continuity*. That

is the opposite of a naïve spontaneity. It also reveals the plurality of structures and characters, such that we cannot *speak of a hypothetical popular art but of groupings of popular arts of a region, a country, a society, at this or that moment or circumstance* [emphasis in original].<sup>32</sup>

Maraini thus points to another aspect that filmmakers such as Bouanani, Affi, Tazi, Rechiche, or Smihi would recognize and exploit in their work: the particularity of place, region, or social structure such that a homogeneous conception of either “the local” or of “the nation” would be impossible. As Pieprzak points out, many artists recognized that official nationalism, which was pursued by the state in the post-independence moment of “Moroccanization,” could be destructive to the expression and experimentation of their projects.<sup>33</sup>

Bouanani’s later film, *Mémoire 14* (MA, 1971), further pushed the question of the local and vernacular by drawing on a filmic archive to unpack the everyday experience of living under colonialism. According to Essafi, Bouanani had long been surveilled at the CCM for supposed communist tendencies and, after 1967, was effectively prevented from directing, allowed only to work as an editor and banished to the archives.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless he used the experience in the CCM archives to his advantage. In a period of nationalist antipathy toward the archive of French colonial actuality films, Bouanani created a radical intervention by utilizing them to construct a historical memory of the violence of colonialism experienced during the first half of Morocco’s violent twentieth century (“14” of the film’s title refers to the 14th century on the Hijri/Islamic calendar) but also, finally, organizing it so as to represent a *response* to colonial aggression. As he put it in an interview with Nour-Eddine Saïl, while the colonial cinematic archive was dominated by sequences that returned constantly to the opposition between “the peasant with his plow and the colonist with his tractor,” all the while privileging the superiority and inevitability of the latter, his method was one of demystification and resistance:

The montage that I chose (and which in certain scenes reprises the famous technique of “montage of attractions” utilized by Eisenstein) permitted me to resituate these fragments into an alternative optic. . . . Technically, I invented nothing. I applied, as much as possible, the classic cinematographic research on montage led by the Soviet school of the 1920s (notably Pudovkin). As for the soundtrack, it permitted me to express what I couldn’t show directly in the text.<sup>35</sup>

In saving and repurposing this colonial found footage, Bouanani reconstituted it to signify differently, thus combining aspects of Moroccan memory



captured by the French with a method borrowed from Soviet Russia. Indeed, he deployed the same approach in his own history of Moroccan cinema, *La septième porte ou Une histoire du cinéma au Maroc de 1907 à 1986/The Seventh Door, or A History of Cinema in Morocco from 1907 to 1986*, written in longhand and so far unpublished.<sup>36</sup> In an interview about the project and his decisions on what to include, Bouanani offers a lucid reading of the filmic archive of the Protectorate years and its legacy for cinema in Morocco post-independence:

There was obviously the orientation of the Residence, its repression, but that doesn't exhaust everything that happened during that era. There were also characters, lives, personal adventures that were troubling and even, sometimes, moving. . . . I didn't want to obscure anything. I tried to show how, after independence, film production was also the product of this context and its contradictions.<sup>37</sup>

This approach to the colonial archive is thus profoundly indifferent or antagonistic to the idea of a singular cultural or national authenticity that could be counterposed to the colonial period; in this way, Bouanani rejects a post-colonial nationalism for a more complex understanding of cinema's genealogy and potential in Morocco. In his acknowledgment of the contradictions of colonialism, and the qualified embrace of its visual legacy in order to produce something new, Bouanani offers the kind of "double critique" proposed by the Moroccan sociologist and philosopher Abdelkebir Khatibi, himself a regular contributor to *Souffles* and *Intégral* and one of the first letter-writers to *Cinéma 3*. Just as Khatibi proposed a discourse "in languages," privileging neither French nor Arabo-Islamic thought as the sole response to the legacy of colonialism in Morocco (while requiring a radical decentering of each),<sup>38</sup> so Bouanani enables a method that takes account of visual, political, and cultural complexity in the fabric of the film while rejecting the ease of a singular or authentic voice. Indeed, Bouanani explicitly (and summarily) addressed this question in his own writing. Referring to the way he "opted to express himself in a foreign language [French], imposed by the Protectorate," he offered the reply, "For me, all languages are foreign."<sup>39</sup> Toni Maraini, in a recent essay, also explicates the question of language at the heart of the debates in *Souffles* and elsewhere. Noting that Laâbi had answered the question of whether to write in French or Arabic by affirming that a poet's language should be "the one he creates," Maraini represents the journal's position thus: "By encouraging translations and collaborations, *Souffles* had the great merit of not dividing literary production into Francophone and Arabophone, as creation and culture in both languages were considered (and are) a complementary historical reality rooted in common soil."<sup>40</sup>

# le cercle flamboyant

Scénario

Un inventeur du cinéma : ██████████  
ابن الهيثم / Ibn al haytham / Al hazem

IMAGES



Al-Wâsîlî - Maqâmât al-Harîrî : La naissance (39<sup>ème</sup> séance)  
Bagdad, 1237 (634 de l'hégire).



Portrait imaginaire  
d'IBN AL-HAYTHAM  
par Youssef Melehi

SON/COMMENTAIRES

L'invention du cinématographe est le produit d'un long cheminement du discours scientifique ou para-scientifique occidental qui se développe à partir de la Renaissance.

Discours. Recherches. Bricolages.

La figure de la caverne platonicienne trace déjà, on le sait, par l'allégorie, les repères de ce que sera le cinéma : l'enfermement, l'ombre et les jeux d'ombre, le retranchement du réel, l'ombre se substituant au réel.

Mais c'est avec les théories picturales du Quattrocento que se dessinent les premiers signes de ce qui se nommera dans l'Invention.

Théories de la perspective :  
la perspective pratique  
la perspectiva artificialis.

Prenant pied dans le mouvement de renaissance picturale, la caméra obscura ne se définit nettement, en tant qu'appareil (une machine) que lors du du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle occidental, correspondant à la naissance de l'optique géométrique.

Figure 6. "Le cercle flamboyant." First page of Moumen Smihi's essay on Ibn Al-Haytham (Alhazen). *Intégral*, March/April, 1974.

One can find further evidence of such heterogeneous thought on the relations between cinema, the West, and the Maghrib in the intriguing essay by Moumen Smihi published in the March/April 1974 issue of *Intégral*. Titled “Le cercle flamboyant”/“The blazing circle,” the essay brilliantly traces the developments in optical theories begun by Ibn Al-Haytham (known in many Western sources as Alhazen) that ultimately led to the invention of cinema.<sup>41</sup> As can be seen from the image reproduced here (which was accompanied on a facing page by Ibn Al-Haytham’s drawing of the optical system), Smihi conceived of the essay as a film with its own mode of montage, whose scenario here consists of two columns. To the left, a column named “Images” is devoted to images like that of the Arab animator Al Wasiti’s famous rendering of Al Hariri’s *Maqamat* or, in subsequent pages, to text that operates like an image (“Croquis imaginaires ou Calligraphies des noms”/“Imaginary sketches or calligraphy of names”). To the right, another column is titled “Son/Commentaires” / “Sound/Commentary” and contains theoretical and historical material about the development of optics. The description of this scenario is titled “Un inventeur du cinéma:”/“An inventor of cinema:,” but with a name erased. Then, after it, the name of Ibn al Haytham, the Arab philosopher and geometer, is given in Arabic and then in two different transliterations. To the upper right, another image provides an “imaginary portrait” of Ibn Al-Haytham drawn by Youssef Melehi. Smihi’s essay thus begins, on the first page shown here, to chronicle the development of cinema as deriving from eighteenth century advances in optics, utilizing a decentered frame in which we must apprehend multiple languages and “shots” in juxtaposition. Yet the subsequent pages, as they draw together images of various proto-cinematic devices and psychoanalytic readings of the development of the subject, demonstrate that many of the advances in Western optics that led to theories of perspective and, ultimately, to cinema, derived from Al-Haytham’s revolutionary work on the way light travels, and on his understanding of the camera obscura. Placing Al-Haytham within the Islamic scientific tradition and situating that tradition on an equal footing with that of the “Occident” or West, Smihi’s essay declares, “Islam: scientific knowledge. Heterogeneous thought: the meeting and fusion of plural discourses.”<sup>42</sup> The orthography of the essay, its textual experimentation, use of Arabic and French, and method of montage together constitute another intervention into the role of cinema within a situation of “double critique.” In concert, too, with Taha Hussein’s mobilization of European, Arab, and Islamic philosophy and arts referred to earlier, Smihi here conjoins Western and Islamic traditions to provide a fuller account of the role of cinema in a postcolonial and multilingual space.

Tracing the articulation of such a modernism across the wider cultural sphere, we see further evidence in other journals of the way in which film culture

was embedded in wider debates and concerns and how it was characterized by a negotiation of the local and transnational. The short-lived film journal *Cinéma 3*, edited by Nour-Eddine Saïl, saw just four issues in 1970 but evinced a keen and pedagogical regard for cinematic models wherever they might be found. While the journal never avoided Europe, it turned as enthusiastically to Cuban cinema as it did to Jean Rouch and devoted as much attention to the festival in Vina del Mar (Chile) as to one in Leipzig (the latter saved from total failure, in Saïl's opinion, by Santiago Álvarez's film *79 Springs* [CU, 1969]).<sup>43</sup> *Cinéma 3* devoted articles to Algerian cinema, to Youssef Chahine and Egyptian cinema, to histories of filmmaking in Palestine, to festivals across the Arab world, and to sub-Saharan African cinema. Across its few issues it made a call for the importance of *ciné-clubs* in the development of an international film culture in Morocco and reported on a variety of meetings and symposia devoted to their institution and continuation. One sees evidence of its transnational modernism in every issue, as it touted, for example, in its first: "You will find in the next issue: an interview with Lakhdar-Hamina; Roland Barthes; the Leipzig festival—and that's not all."<sup>44</sup> Issue two promised, for the following number, "an interview with Youssef Chahine; 'Arab cinema' by Tahar Cheria, the Cannes film festival, Brazilian cinema, etc."<sup>45</sup>

The journal *Souffles* took up an even broader scope than *Cinéma 3*, creating an intellectual forum for Moroccan artists and writers between 1966 and 1972. Eventually shut down in 1972 with the arrest and torture of its founder, Abellatif Laâbi, the journal remains (along with *Intégral*) one of the most important traces of Moroccan experiments with political modernism in the post-independence period. As Kenza Sefrioui has also recently shown, *Souffles* offered a modernist perspective that, while developing a strong argument for the local and national, nonetheless became radically internationalist in its scope. Having noted its interest in addressing local histories, Sefrioui writes:

[I]t was out of the question for [*Souffles*] to return to a period before colonization: it did not have the nostalgia of a golden age. Nor was it a question of enclosing itself within borders. It sought to reinvest in the cultural field and to forge there a new creative expression that would be at once contemporary and anchored in the continuity of cultural tradition. . . . Faced with a re-traditionalization of society which elevated archaisms in order to struggle against progressive ideas and establish an authoritarian power, *Souffles* made the choice of modernity.<sup>46</sup>

Such an internationalism managed to connect the journal's francophone discourse to a local setting in which debates around the proper role of cinema were played out in vibrant and sometimes contested terms. The journal's second

issue of 1966 included a roundtable coordinated by editor Abdellatif Laâbi that included Tazi, Bouanani, and three other filmmakers: Abdallah Zerouali, Idriss Karim, and Mohammed Sekkat. Rejecting the dominant aesthetic of the CCM documentaries produced to that point, Bouanani responds sharply to a suggestion by Tazi that cinema in Morocco should be primarily a means of information (as pursued by the traveling cinema caravans) by first saying that, to his mind, cinema in Morocco is currently a form of propaganda, and then further emphasizing, “For information, there’s the press.”<sup>47</sup> Later, he adds, “there is no message to transmit in a film. The film should help create awareness of certain things that are treated in a film.” One such issue, for Bouanani, is the ongoing relationship between modernity and oral tradition developed elsewhere in his work and in the wider modernist culture, as we have seen, and by which he hoped filmmakers could someday exploit in the form of the epic: “I spoke of the ‘epic’ [*épopée*] in Morocco because that has a direct rapport with oral tradition. The Moroccan tradition uses epic extensively. You only have to look at our folklore. The storyteller, in the *halqa*, when he recounts something, has first of all the goal of entertaining and it’s his only goal: to entertain the public.”<sup>48</sup> Bouanani reached the question of the epic after suggesting that there could be a Moroccan western, something to which his panelists objected strenuously. Yet his suggestion marks his ability to think always outside the question of nationality to a more generalized question about form and narrative. The epic, he argued, did not have to be seen as only a genre of conquest but also one that was appropriate to a particular national or cultural experience; Eisenstein, he argued, developed this form, too, in positing a hero that was collective rather than an individual. For Moroccans, he argued, it remained to find an analogous form that might trace a history of Morocco across time.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, another thread to the conception of cinema and modernity in Morocco that was fostered in journals like *Souffles* and *Lamalif* was the question of spectator and audience, a question that, we have seen, was germane to a film like *6 et 12* with its challenge to a new kind of perception of the modern Moroccan city. In the *Souffles* roundtable, the participants return several times to the fact that Moroccan audiences are interested primarily in entertainment and that it is only in the *ciné-clubs* that one could find ready spectators who were interested in a film for qualities other than entertainment.<sup>50</sup> A similar view is expressed in an article that appeared in *Lamalif* in 1966, titled “Il faut apprendre à voir”/“We must learn to see,” by Jean Ciochetti. *Lamalif*, which began publishing in 1966 and continued until the late 1980s, also featured articles devoted to cinema in the Maghrib and the Arab countries in addition to its main areas of concern, Moroccan politics and literature. While it was usually preoccupied with nationalist politics beyond the arts, the journal nonetheless formed an important part of the culture around the short films and documentaries of the sixties and seventies. Its coverage of cinema

sometimes took the form of wide-ranging accounts of production and style, as in the long article by editor Zakya Daoud, "Le cinéma marocain à la recherche du temps perdu"/"Moroccan Cinema: Remembrance of Things Past" (1969), which provided a generally negative opinion of many of the features made to that point, including many of the CCM's short documentaries, which she found "badly directed, with insipid dialogue, badly-done editing, style-less cinematography."<sup>51</sup> But in essays like Ciochetti's, a concern with developing the audience as much as the industry of production became important. The clubs, said Ciochetti, had the possibility and responsibility of training viewers beyond the apprehension of films as simply consumable items and instead teaching them to see and to speak about cinema.<sup>52</sup> To do so, Ciochetti argued, was to place Moroccans in the orbit of wider cinematic cultures and national discourses of belonging; doing so also helped resist the tendency of some viewers to approach a film only through the lens of their own ideologies and dogmatic principles.<sup>53</sup>

A Moroccan federation of *ciné-clubs* had been established by French residents in Morocco in 1958 and began as a project for the continued diffusion of French culture and language; in that sense, the federation was a continuance of the colonial mission of France. Yet while French films did indeed make up part of the docket of screenings, partly due to the availability of prints by way of the circuit in France, the organization of the clubs shifted over the following decade and, by the end of the 1960s, the federation's president, Abdelhaq Alami, was able to recount in *Lamalif* the results of a congress of the federation in Casablanca that aimed to train young cinephiles and others in every aspect of programming, distribution, projection, and criticism, "as well as an appreciation of African and Maghribi cinema." The congress screened works by Eisenstein, Hitchcock, Lang, Truffaut, Louis Malle, Jean Cocteau, and more, all of which "had been chosen to offer a broadened and more complete cinematic culture and thus to deepen the cinematographic language of future facilitators and organizers of *ciné-clubs*." Moreover, the federation hoped to diversify membership of the then thirteen clubs, to participate in a European meeting of the International Federation of Ciné-clubs, and to establish a federation of clubs across North Africa (capitalizing on their strength in other Maghrib countries, such as Tunisia, which already by then had more than a hundred) for the exchange of films and ideas.<sup>54</sup> Carter recounts, however, that by 1973, the federation had been reorganized as the Fédération Nationale des Ciné-Clubs Marocains (FNCCM), and that its numerous clubs were even more oriented toward Third Cinema, reflecting exchanges like the one at the Third World Filmmakers Meeting in Algiers in 1973.<sup>55</sup> The federation continued to pursue a course that championed connections between African cinemas (not only North African) that actively sought out international collaborations and that tried to foster a relationship between them and the development of Moroccan

cinema, for which it agitated as a cinema within this movement. In a section called “Maghrib Information” that ran across issues 2 and 3 of *Cinéma 3*, the editors reveal the extent of the clubs’ activities. For example, the section reported on the forum for *ciné-club* organizers held in Meknes in March 1970, which screened, among other films, *6 et 12*, *Tarfaya*, *Retour à Agadir*, and *Le vent des aures/The Winds of the Aures* (Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina, DZ, 1966), as well as *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, FR, 1966), *Pierrot le fou* (Jean-Luc Godard, FR, 1965), and *Zéro de conduite* (Jean Vigo, FR, 1933). It undertook an account of the structure and function of the International Federation of Ciné-clubs on the Helsinki conference at which Morocco was present, and then on the activities and screening program of the Tunisian *ciné-club* federation, including the third Carthage Cinema Days conference, the week of Egyptian cinema in Tunis, and the release of Abdellatif Ben Ammar’s first feature (*Un si simple histoire/Such a Simple Story* [DZ, 1970]). Issue 3 continued to muster interest for the upcoming congress of the international federation of clubs in Casablanca in October 1970, promoting the Hungarian, Indian, Irish, Czech, Swedish, Hungarian, Canadian, and Moroccan films to be screened there and promising others from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Cuba, Poland, Senegal, and Belgium. Thus the *ciné-clubs* emerge, in close conjunction with *Cinéma 3* and the other journals, as important evidence of the way that the film culture of Morocco during this period proved itself part of an international circuit, but saw its key affinities not with France or Europe (as a reductive critique of modernism as colonial imposition might expect) but with its sibling cinemas in Africa, the Arab world, and Latin America. Moreover, returning to Ciochetti’s invective, to bring Moroccan viewers into that circuit was to educate them not only into a diverse cinephilia but into an artistic, transnational solidarity.

Such solidarity was also fostered in film festivals, many of them tied firmly to the discourses on art and cinema promulgated in the journals and clubs. Major festivals occurred in Tangier (1968), Rabat (1969), and then, beginning in 1977, at Khouribga, a mining town whose *ciné-club* started the Rencontres Cinématographiques with government and FNCCM support.<sup>56</sup> The Khouribga festival, in particular, was important due to its focus on African and Third cinema. Moreover, there is evidence in Moroccan journals and in related archival work by other scholars and curators of Maghribi, Arab, and Latin American cinemas of the importance of international festivals for the exchange of ideas that in turn nourished the Moroccan scene through its insertion in wider, transnational networks. Tarek Elhaik, for example, has explored the tricontinentalist traces that reveal the connections between Latin American, Italian, and Maghribi cinemas during the period 1959–1975, “when Rome, Salvador de Bahia, and Algiers were the film-theoretical epicenter . . . of an internationalist visual and film culture that connected . . . Latin American and Maghrebi political filmmakers.”<sup>57</sup>

Affirming the transnational modernism of Moroccan film culture in the sixties and seventies, then, does not erase the nationalist currents that circulated around film, literature, criticism, and the arts during this time. As this essay hopes to show, however, while the official state nationalism was expressed in hegemonic and singular constructions of national identity, the critical engagement with the national pursued in the artistic and intellectual realm was both suspicious of and, at times, profoundly injured by the application of that state imperative. Filmmakers in this period developed a vernacular modernism that embraced the local while translating and adopting practices from elsewhere; whether in conversation with cinema from Algeria, Senegal, Brazil, the Soviet Union, the US, or France, their films shaped particular and partial responses to the particularities of Morocco in its post-independence moment. To interrogate this work complicates how we narrativize the history of cinema in Morocco. But more importantly, it integrates the critical, creative practice of these films within dynamic transnational practices of modernism that far exceed Eurocentric understandings of the modern.

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## NOTES

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1. Keya Ganguly, *Cinema, Emergence, and the Films of Satyajit Ray* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).



2. Mohamed Elshahed, "Egypt Builds: A Reevaluation of the History of Modernism," in *Sweet Sixties: Specters and Spirits of a Parallel Avant-Garde*, ed. Georg Schölhammer and Ruben Arevshatyan (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 149.
3. See Limbrick, "Moumen Smihi's Tanjawi/Tangérois/Tangerian Cinema," *Third Text* 26, no. 4 (2012): 443–54.
4. Taha Hussein, *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, trans. Sidney Glazer (New York: Octagon, 1975), 13. For an excellent discussion of the question of modernity in Arab intellectual contexts, see Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
5. Miriam Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007 [2000]), 335.
6. For a thorough treatment of the *makhzen* across modern Moroccan history, see Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the production of the CCM films, see Moulay Driss Jaïdi, *Vision(s) de la société marocaine à travers le court métrage* (Rabat: Al Majal, 1994), and Ali Essafi, "La medersa Bouanania li cinéma al maghribia," *Nejma* 9 (2014): 56. A slightly different version of this essay, translated into English, with short extracts of writing by Bouanani, is published as "Missing Ahmed Bouanani," in Schölhammer and Arevshatyan, *Sweet Sixties*, 170–79.
7. Jaïdi, *Vision(s)*, 18.
8. *Ibid.*, 18. See also Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 128–29.
9. *Ibid.*, 61, 73.
10. Kevin Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca: M.A. Tazi and the Adventure of Moroccan Cinema* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004), 378.
11. Bouanani returned in 1963 and worked with the Institut National des Arts et Traditions Populaires before joining the CCM. In practice the roles these three played were diverse, and it has been a matter of some debate how each is credited on the work that they were involved in. Here I credit Bouanani as director of *6 et 12* (discussed below) following the attribution of recent screenings of his films on Moroccan television and the historical material presented by Touda Bouanani and Ali Essafi. Ultimately, the question of who directed the film does not alter my argument about it. See Marie-Pierre Bouthier's essay on Bouanani, "Le cinéaste de la mémoire marocaine," *Zamane* (Nov 2013): 96–97; Tazi and Rechiche's letter to the editor in the following issue, "L'histoire d'un court métrage," *Zamane* (December 2013): 97; and Touda Bouanani's response in "Polémique autour d'un film," *Zamane* (January 2014): 81. The issue surfaces again in the special issue of *Nejma* devoted to Bouanani, in particular, Essafi, "La medersa Bouanania," 56–57.
12. Essafi credits this development for the production of *Tarfaya, ou la marche d'un poète/Tarfaya, or A Poet's Journey* (1966). Essafi, "La medersa Bouanania," 55.
13. "Les machines tournent toujours." Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from French

- are mine.
14. For examples of the stunning covers of *Souffles*, many done by Mohamed Melehi, see Toni Maraini, "Black Sun of Renewal," in Schölhammer and Arevshatyan, *Sweet Sixties*, 150–57. The journal may also be accessed from the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, <http://bnm.bnrm.ma:86/ListeVol.aspx?IDC=3>. Accessed January 19, 2015.
  15. "Filmographie court métrage, 1947–2009." Centre Cinématographique Marocain.
  16. Steven Feld, "Editor's Introduction," in Jean Rouch, *Ciné-ethnography*, ed. Steven Feld (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.
  17. See Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988 [1982]).
  18. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967), 109.
  19. M.H. Tazi suggested to Kevin Dwyer that he and his colleagues at IDHEC were formed by figures like film theorist and critic Jean Mitry, who exposed them to the documentary work of Robert Flaherty, Dziga Vertov, Chris Marker, Joris Ivens, and Jean Rouch. Kevin Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca*, 85.
  20. Zakya Daoud, "Casa de 6 à 12 de Majid Rechiche," *Lamalif* 30 (May-June 1969): 45. Daoud here attributes the film's direction to Rechiche, as indicated in the credits. See n. 12, above.
  21. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 [1960]), 73.
  22. Omar Berrada, "Le monteur réticent (Ahmed Bouanani dans les labyrinthes de la mémoire)," *Nejma* 9 (2014): 26.
  23. Kevin Dwyer, *Beyond Casablanca*, 85.
  24. Ahmed Bouanani, "Introduction à la poésie populaire marocaine," *Nejma*, no. 9 (2014): 165–77.
  25. *Ibid.*, 165.
  26. Miriam Hansen, "Falling Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism," *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2000): 10–22, [www.jstor.org/stable/1213797](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1213797), accessed January 10, 2015; Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema 1896–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Masha Salazkina, *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
  27. Hansen, "Falling Women," 13.
  28. Zhen, 21.
  29. *Ibid.*, 21.
  30. Katarzyna Pieprzak, *Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 104–6.
  31. Toni Maraini, "Le rôle historique des arts populaires," *Intégral* (March 1972): 6–10.
  32. *Ibid.*, 8.
  33. Pieprzak, 106. On some of the precise forms of that repression, see Kenza Sefrioui, *La revue Souffles 1966–73: Espoirs de révolution culturelle au Maroc/The Journal Souffles 1966-73: Hopes of Cultural Revolution in Morocco* (Casablanca: Editions du Sirocco, 2013) and Miller,

- A History of Modern Morocco.*
34. Essafi, "La medersa Bouanania," 56.
  35. Ahmed Bouanani, "J'ai choisi la voie du mythe," interview with Nour-Eddine Saïl, *Cinémaction* 14 (1981): 225.
  36. Bouanani's daughter, Touda Bouanani, a video artist in her own right, has spurred a number of initiatives toward the preservation and circulation of his work; it is likely that publication will eventually result from this work.
  37. "Ahmed Bouanani, mémorialiste d'un cinéma sans mémoire," interview by Mohammed Jibril, *Visions Magazine* (January 1991): 25.
  38. Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Maghreb Pluriel* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1983), 63. A slightly different English version of this particular essay, "Double critique," is available as "Double Criticism: The Decolonization of Arab Sociology," in *Contemporary North Africa: Issues of Development and Integration*, ed. Halim Barakat (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1985), 9–19.
  39. The full quote continues: "They resemble—pardon the metaphor—wild mustangs that must be tamed. I leave it to you to imagine the rodeo." *Nejma* 19 (2014): 9.
  40. Maraini, "Black Sun of Renewal," 154.
  41. Moumen Smihi, "Le cercle flamboyant," *Intégral* 8 (1974): 39–43.
  42. *Ibid.*, 42.
  43. Nour-Eddine Saïl, "Leipzig 69," *Cinéma* 3, no. 2 (June 1970): 68.
  44. *Cinéma* 3, no. 1 (1970): 53.
  45. *Cinéma* 3, no. 2 (1970): 65.
  46. Sefrioui, *La revue Souffles*, 25. See also the section on "Revaluing popular culture," 168–81.
  47. "Débat," *Souffles* 2 (1966): 28, <http://bnm.bnrm.ma:86/pdf.aspx?IDc=713>. Accessed February 28, 2014.
  48. *Ibid.*, 31.
  49. *Ibid.*, 30–31.
  50. *Ibid.*, 32.
  51. Zakya Daoud, "Le cinéma marocain à la recherche du temps perdu," *Lamalif* 31 (1969): 12.
  52. Jean Ciochetti, "Il faut apprendre à voir," *Lamalif* 7 (1966): 42.
  53. *Ibid.*, 40.
  54. "Les projets de la Fédération Marocaine des Ciné-Clubs," *Lamalif* 30 (1969): 46. See also Carter, 60–61.
  55. Carter, 123–24.
  56. Carter, 130. See pages 130–35 for her discussion of festivals generally.
  57. Tarek Elhaik, "A Bloc of Sensations in Lieu of Geography: Rome-Algiers-Salvador de Bahia (1959–75)," in Schölhammer and Arevshatyan, *Sweet Sixties*, 236. In the same volume, see Rasha Salti, "Speculative Revisions of Film History: A Curator's Notes," 81–91.