



حلاق درب الفقراء

## Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'

### The Barber of the Poor District

**Mohamed Reggab**

**Director** Mohamed Reggab. **Screenplay** Youssef Fadel. **Director of photography** Mohamed Reggab. **Editor** Mohamed Reggab. **With** Mohamed Habachi, Khadija Khammouli.

1982, 35 mm, colour. 110 min. Arabic.

Miloud is a barber in Darb el-Soltane, an old proletarian neighborhood in Casablanca, who struggles to maintain a semblance of dignity. Life has dealt his friend Hmida hard knocks. A countryside boy who moved to the city after his father repudiated him, he turned to petty larceny to survive, for which he served a sentence in prison. Hmida is jobless yet boisterous, while Miloud is skittish and disheartened by his friend's objectionable activities. When a wealthy entrepreneur who wields power in the neighborhood manages to evict the barber and his wife from the shop to build a centre for Koranic instruction, Hmida incites his friend to fight back. Deemed one of Moroccan cinema's underrated masterpieces, *Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'* is infused with disarming realist grit. Adapted from a play by Youssef Fadel, a celebrated playwright, novelist and screenwriter who hailed from Darb el-Soltane and was imprisoned for his play „The War“, the film was Mohamed Reggab's only narrative feature. He incurred so much debt to finance the production that he even spent time in prison.

*Rasha Salti*

## The district of the poor, a social microcosm

*Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'* is a very rich, complex work. It describes the poor in their relationships to each other, to money, to power, to politics and to religion [...]. With his new work, Reggab adds to national film one of its noblest sources of inspiration: folk literature.

*Mohamed Boualem, Almaghreb Culturel, 18 October 1982*

Like his last film, *Les Cendres du clos*, *Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'* is set in Casablanca. The events depicted in the film are based on facts. Unlike many filmmakers who address themes from history, Mohamed Reggab is primarily interested in present-day Morocco and its people. His new film could be regarded as a sequel to *Les Cendres du clos*. It too, is about people, rural people who have come to Casablanca for different reasons, with great hopes and expectations that are cruelly dashed.

*Alaa Eddine Mohcine, Al-Watan al-arabi, 26 November 1982*

*Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'* depicts life in a district where friendships and interpersonal relations develop quickly. This social microcosm has its own face, shaped by memories and common experiences. Everyone knows everyone else; everyone knows what's going on with the others, because of the narrow space in which they all live. In this district, young and old meet in cafés and barbershops and devote themselves to their favourite games (cards, checkers, etc.) to kill time, exchange gossip and jointly forget their misery. The district's inhabitants are connected with each other in a way that makes everything they do an open secret for the neighbourhood.

*Map, L'Opinion, Rabat, 4 July 1983*

*Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'*, produced by Reggab and Akouri, is a film that draws its material from life, from the life of the people caught in their daily lives in one of Casablanca's most densely populated quarters.

The contradictions; the dirty conflicts of interest (in the person of Jelloul, one of the richest men in the quarter); the moral conflict in which the protagonist of the film, the barber Miloud (Mohamed El Habachi), finds himself; the desperate situation of someone who has fallen into bad ways who, when cornered, commits a crime (Houmane) – all of this comprises the social panorama of a community that [...], at the end of the film, falls apart.

*Author unknown, Al-Watan al-arabi, London, 2 July 1983*

Mohamed Reggab was born in 1942 in Safi, Morocco. He studied at the École nationale supérieure Louis-Lumière in Paris and at the Russian film school WGIK in Moscow before studying Psychology at the Université libre in Brussels. He then began making documentaries and teaching at the Institut supérieure de journalisme in Rabat, Morocco. In 1976, he worked on the collective project *Ramâd al-zariba / Les Cendres du clos*. He made his first and only full-length film, *Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara'*, in 1982. Mohamed Reggab died in Paris in 1990.

## Films

1966: *Information et la télévision*. 1969: *Histoire en verre* (60 min.).

1972: *La Séquestration* (60 min.). 1976: *Les Cendres du clos* (90 min.).

1982: *Hallaq Darb al-Fuqara' / The Barber of the Poor District*.