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‘Windows onto other Worlds. Musical Exoticism in Iranian Cinema: Between National Imaginary and Global Circulation’

Keynote presentation for the conference ‘Exoticism in Contemporary Transnational Cinema: Music and Spectacle’

Royal Holloway, University of London, Friday, 16th June 2017

Laudan Nooshin, City, University of London

‘When the pictures were showing, the spectators were very noisy. But when the intertitles came on and he [the translator] began reading them, everyone was absolutely quiet. As soon as he finished, the spectators returned to their loud clamour, talking to the characters on the screen, whistling, catcalling, belittling each other about the plot outcome, and sometimes even arguing and fighting with each other. Every film-goer brought with him a paper bag of nuts and seeds, which he broke noisily throughout the movie.’ (Naficy 2005b) (in Naficy 2011:226)

Naficy, Hamid (2011) *A Social History of Iranian Cinema. Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897-1941*. Duke University Press.

‘... disciplining and silencing of spectators was another step in their becoming modern, for it made them, as individuals with personal desires and fears, better subjects for the cinema’s diegetic address. This had political repercussions, for as passive spectators in cinemas, they also became better passive national subjects in the political arena, becoming spectators to their own modernization and in the spectacle of power and authority that was Reza Shah’s regime.’ (2011:230)

Naficy, Hamid (2011) *A Social History of Iranian Cinema. Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897-1941*. Duke University Press.



دختر لعل

ادامین فیلم تمام نالین

موزیکال نالین

نوسط کمانی فیلم نالین

همچو کمانی کمانی

در تحت ریاضت و تربیت

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‘... the collapsed distances of globalisation and the transnational flows of media and people have transformed exoticism, which is *no longer exclusively the projection of Orientalist fantasies of the Other from one centre, the West, but which emanates from multiple localities and is multi-directional in perspective*’.

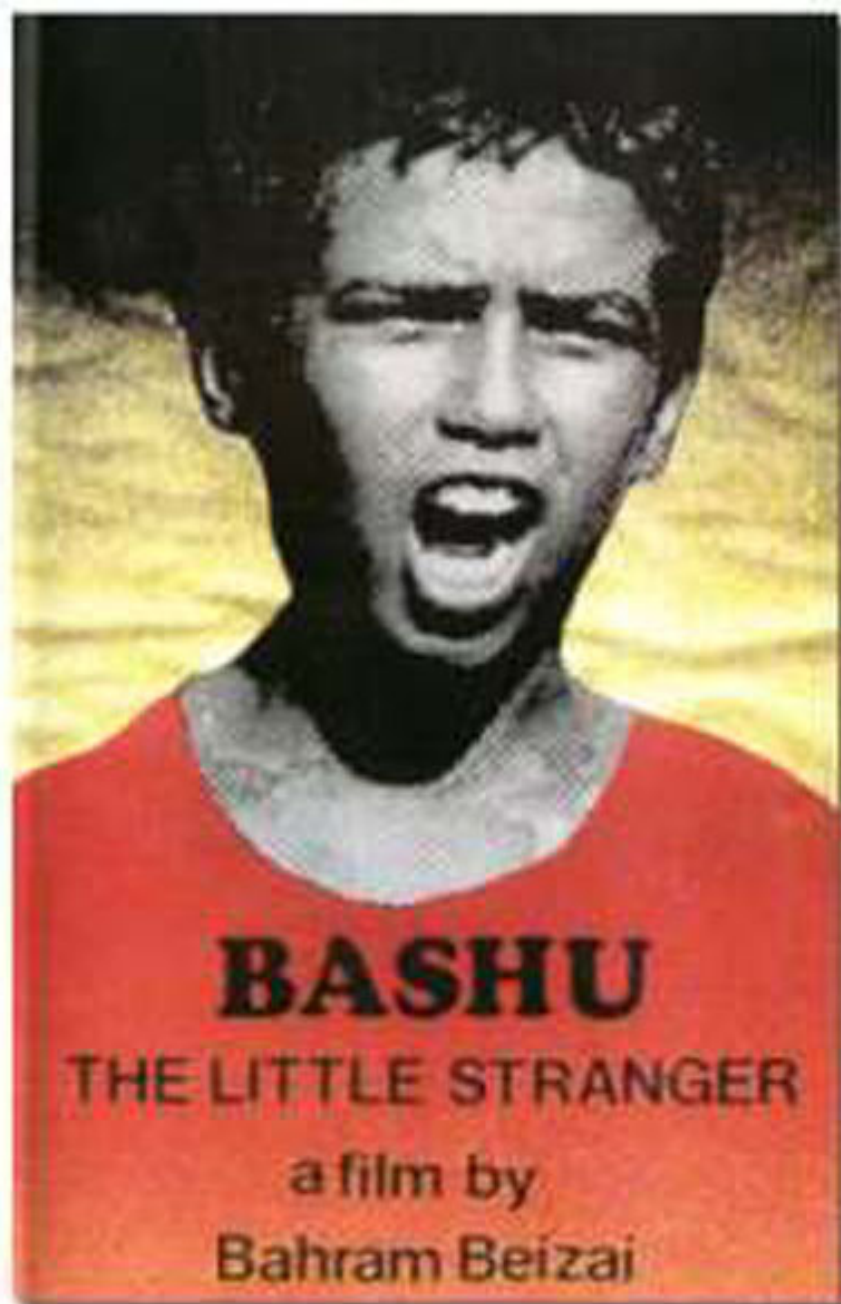
در تحت ریاست

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‘... the site of the national ... [it] inscribed not only the national language, Persian, but also national dances, music, rhythm, and poetry – all of them intimate means of constructing personal and national identities.’ (2011:236)

‘Made defensive by Western movies’ othering representations and by their own sense of inferiority toward the West and hungry for empowering self-representations, Iranians were satisfied, indeed, jubilant ... critic after critic commented on the importance not only of self-representation but also of a positivist national projection, even if – or particularly if – these representations and projections exceeded reality or were Orientalist’. (2011:239)

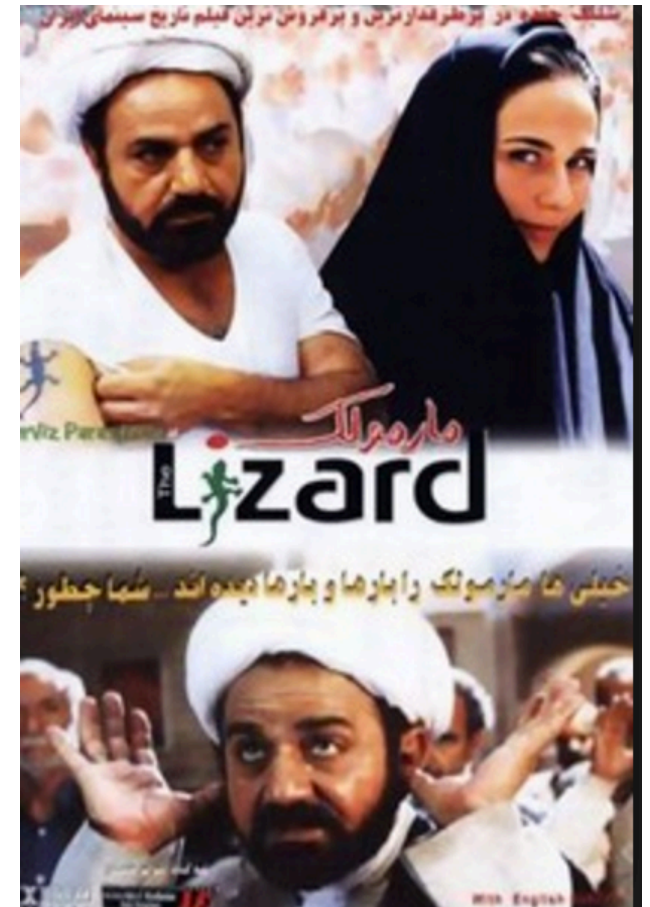
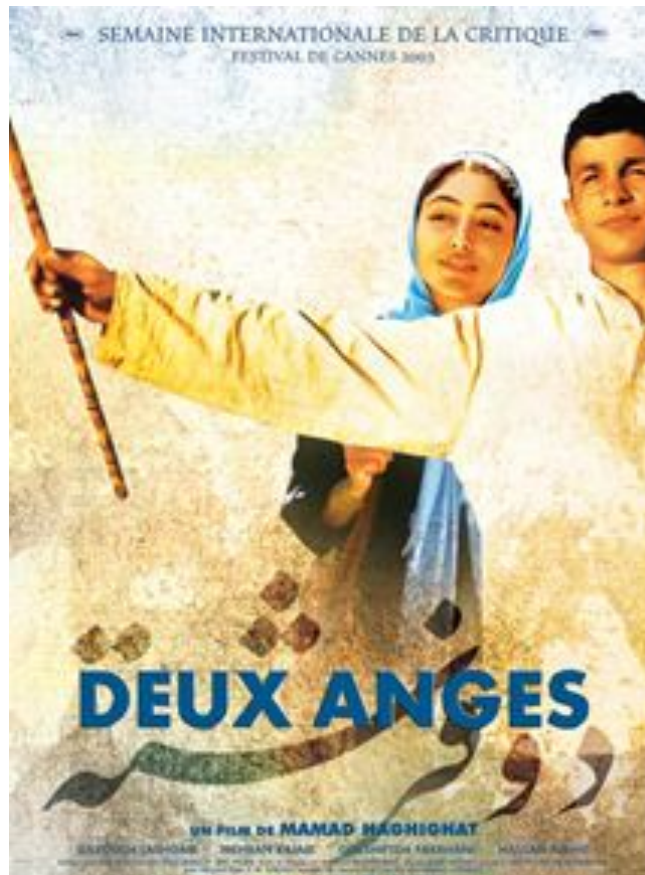
Naficy, Hamid (2011) *A Social History of Iranian Cinema. Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897-1941*. Duke University Press.





Santoori (Santoor Player,
Dariush Mehrjui, 2007)

Do Fereshteh (Two Angels,
Mahmad Haghigat, 2003)



Marmoolak (The Lizard,
Kamal Tabrizi, 2005)

‘... over-dramatisation in the film as it exaggerates the troubled lives of underground musicians.’ (Golnaz Jamsheed quoted in Steward, 2013, p.128)

‘... a big role in showing the world more about Iranian underground music scene. It was a very important step, but I wish it could be more real. I mean it’s not like we are begging to get a passport or visa at all or having to practice in a cow farm. Most of the underground musicians I know in Iran are not really happy with the outcome of the movie. I wish it could focus on real life and the art that is coming out of this scene ...’ (Maral, online interview, 2010, June, quoted in Steward 2013, p. 129)

Steward, Theresa P. (2013). *“I am the brave hero and this land is mine”: Popular music and youth identity in post-revolutionary Iran* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Edinburgh.

‘actually, the musician practising in a cowshed is quite wealthy – the farm belongs to his father. Sometimes I think our artists and filmmakers create something that those on the other side [‘oonvariḥā’ i.e. those outside Iran] will like.’ (interview 2.9.15)



