Windows onto Other Worlds: Music and the Negotiation of Otherness in Iranian Cinema

Abstract

This article examines the role of music in exoticising processes of representing and negotiating otherness in Iranian cinema, with reference to two main case examples. It explores the ways in which film narratives have been mobilised in the service of, or resistance to, differing visions of nationhood, in the context of which music facilitates an affective sonic marking of difference.

Introduction

Film arrived in Iran following the first state visit to Europe of Muzaffar al-Din Shah (r.1896-1907) when, at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, he encountered the cinematograph. Captivated by the moving images, he ordered his court photographer to purchase one to be taken back to Iran. Screenings initially provided entertainment for royalty and the aristocracy, at weddings and other celebrations, but film soon entered the wider public domain, where it faced opposition both on religious grounds and due to political sensitivities in the period leading up to the 1906 Constitutional Revolution and which forced the closure of Tehran's first cinema hall soon after opening in 1905. In his 4-volume *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, Hamid Naficy describes the early years of Iranian cinema and its ambivalences, including the tension between the opposition of religious authorities on moral grounds on the one hand, and film's potential as an education tool on the other; the new kinds of spectatorship that it engendered; and the contested public spaces it opened up, particularly for women. Despite objections, film gradually became established and by the early 1930s there were 15 cinemas in Tehran and 11 in the provinces. The significance of cinema at this time lay in its heralding a new modernity that conflicted with traditional lifeways, and in offering a window onto other worlds and other subjectivities, something that marked it as somewhat transgressive (Dabashi 2001).[1] The first full-length Iranian silent film, *Abi and Rabi*, was made in 1930 by Iranian-Armenian Ovanes Ohanian (who had also established the first film school in Iran in 1925), and the first sound film, to be discussed below, in 1933 in Bombay. As Naficy observes, cinema in Iran was thoroughly transnational from the outset; and from the start was also implicated

in inscribing notions of difference. Many of the key players in early film production and screening were Others of various kinds: Russian and Arab émigrés, Catholic missionaries or members of internal religious minorities such as Armenians, Jews or Zoroastrians. In particular, film generated anxieties over questions of representation, both in the representation of Iran and Iranians by filmmakers outside the country, and local filmmakers' representations of internal and external Others. An important dimension of this was the modernising self-othering that has marked Iranian cultural production since at least the early 20th century and which can be characterised by what Stokes describes as 'East looks at West looking at East' (2000:213), an intense awareness of how outsiders viewed Iranians. Naficy describes local reactions to what were seen as negative representations in early films produced outside Iran – seen 'through the eyes of the others' (2011:17) - as socially backward, exotic and sexualized.[2] In response, and with particular intensity from the 1930s with the modernizing policies of Reza Shah Pahlavi, one finds a simultaneous appeal to the glories of the pre-Islamic Persian Empire *and* to contemporary Europe and North America, as forms of cultural validation and symbolic nation-building that often depended on marginalizing Iran's internal Others.

This article explores the role of music in exoticizing processes of constructing and representing otherness in Iranian cinema, specifically in relation to contesting visions of nationhood. The two main case study films mark key historical moments in the shaping of such visions. The first, *Dokhtar-e Lor. Ya Iran-e Dirooz va Iran- e Emrooz* (*The Lor Girl. Or Yesterday's Iran and Today's*, Ardeshir Irani, 1933), the earliest Persian-language sound film, was made at the time when Reza Shah Pahlavi's policies of modernization, westernization and secular nation-building were gaining momentum. Such policies depended on increasingly centralized power and administration, the attendant disempowerment of traditional power bases, particularly among rebellious tribal leaders, and the promotion of a strongly Persian-centric national identity, notably through a strong state bureaucracy and new legal and education systems.[3] By contrast, *Bashu, Gharibeh-ye Koochak* (*Bashu, The Little Stranger*, Bahram Beyzai,1985), was made at the height of the Iran-Iraq war in the context of rather different struggles over national identity, and was one of the first Iranian films to problematize the Persian-centric vision of nation promoted by the Pahlavi regime by fore-fronting Iran's historically-rooted cultural and linguistic

diversity. Sandwiched between these two case studies is a consideration of other dimensions of music and otherness in Iranian cinema, including the discourses and practices by which music itself became othered in post-Revolutionary cinema, both as part of socio-cultural-political attitudes to and restrictions on music-making and, separately but in tandem, the aesthetic preferences of art-house cinema directors.

The development of Iran's post-Revolutionary film industry has been accompanied by a growing body of scholarship, starting with Richard Tapper's landmark edited volume (2002; with papers from the first major conference on Iranian cinema in London in 1999), which addresses questions of aesthetics, identity, representation, ideology, gender and nationhood, as well as strategies for working within and around state restrictions. Notably absent from this literature is any detailed consideration of music or sound more generally[4] and certainly nothing on music as a marker of difference. Within the broader film studies and screen media literature, there has been some attention to such questions (see, for instance, Richardson 2010), most obviously in relation to Hollywood's somewhat obsessional focus on positionings of self against Others of various kinds, human and non-human, a trope encountered with wearying regularity. Such relationships of alterity are almost invariably marked (at least in part) through music, a tradition dating back to the earliest days of sound film. Mark Slobin, for instance, provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which music is deployed in *King Kong* (1933) to represent the primitive and barbaric natives of Skull Island (2008:8-17), composer Max Steiner both drawing on existing and creating new codes of 'all-purpose exoticism' (ibid. 13).[5] Such codes are also discussed by Claudia Gorbman (2000) in relation to the changing musical representation of native Americans within Western films from the 1930s to the 1990s. Exploring music's participation in processes of othering, Gorbman notes the shift from 'classical' Westerns to what she terms the 'liberal' Western in which the Other becomes humanized and may even assume the role of hero/ine.[6] From a slightly different perspective, Wanda Bryant (2012) offers a fascinating insight into the compositional processes and choices involved in creating the music for the 2009 film *Avatar* (Director James Cameron), for which she acted as ethnomusicologist consultant to composer James Horner. Bryant was initially asked to 'find unusual musical sounds that "no one has heard before"' for the fictional Na'vi people of the film; it was hoped that by 'Combining unrelated musical elements [the music] could

evoke the "otherness" of the Na'vi without bringing to mind any specific Earth culture, time period or geographical location' (2012). After a lengthy process of consultation in which Horner considered and experimented with mixing different sounds from around the world, he eventually retreated to many of the already familiar filmic signifiers of exotic difference. Beyond such musical representations of 'ethnic' and 'racial' difference, of relevance to the discussion below is that film music has of course been widely used to articulate, represent and construct narratives of nation. Indeed, one often depends on the other: defining the nation-body self is as much about who is excluded as included. Further, as Mera and Morcom point out,

> … screened music as a tool for the building and representation of self-identity … is particularly likely to be associated with nations, nation-states or transnational communities due to the necessity of large capital investment for reasonably high quality production and hence a heavy degree of state and/or large corporate ownership of media industries; the potential for encompassing large "imagined communities" due to mass dissemination; and national and transnational zones mapped out by national languages. (2009:11)

The discussion that follows is based on an understanding of representation as a form of power (over the represented). The central argument is not only that music is often implicated in constructing relationships of alterity and affinity, but that its sensory and affective qualities endow such constructions with persuasive power that arguably helps to validate and normalise them.

The Lor Girl: Yesterday's Iran and Today's

Before the arrival of sound cinema in the 1930s, imported films, as well as newsreels and documentaries, were accompanied by gramophone recordings or by live musicians (playing traditional instruments, and later piano) who would sometimes also play outside the cinema before the show (Kashefi 1994). In addition, screen translators were hired to provide a running commentary. As Naficy observes: 'The movies were silent – but not the movie houses'. He quotes from an eye witness account from the early 1930s:

> ‘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 and ate noisily throughout the movie’ (2011:226)

As elsewhere, the transition to sound film was not unproblematic (and some exhibitors of silent film tried to block it) but in Iran it took on additional significance, coinciding almost exactly with the period when Reza Shah Pahlavi (r.1925-41), a former army officer who had assumed power in a coup in 1921, supported by the British, and who in 1925 crowned himself king, was starting to implement his autocratic policies of westernization and modernization, by which he aimed to transform Iran into a modern, secular, capitalist nation state; not unlike what was happening in Turkey at this time under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.[7] The first Persian-language sound film, discussed below, was first screened just two years before the 1936 *kashf-e hejāb*, the decree by which the Shah banned all veiling, from headscarves to the all-enveloping *chador*, as well as many types of traditional male clothing, claiming that ‘Westerners now wouldn’t laugh at us’ ref. As Naficy has argued, ‘Movie houses were important sites of modernity and citizenship’ (2011:265) and with the arrival of sound:

> The 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).

The first case study below illustrates some of the processes of ethnic and racial othering that were central to Pahlavi modernist nationalism and which continued in the post-Pahlavi period. I discuss the film’s fascinating history, give a summary of the plot and then consider the role of music as it is deployed in the service of exoticist othering.

As Naficy and others have argued, it is significant that the first Persian-language sound film, *The Lor Girl* (1933), was also a musical.[8] Even more remarkable for the time is that the first scene features a singing and dancing female entertainer, something that would have been highly problematic in the eyes of more traditional and religious sections of society. The film was not in fact made in Iran, but in Bombay by Ardeshir Irani (1886-1969),[9] a Parsi businessman who had founded the Imperial Film Company in 1926, and Abolhossein Sepanta (1907-1969), an Iranian from an educated family who had attended French and Zoroastrian schools in Tehran and a British missionary school in Esfahan and who in 1927 travelled to India to undertake research into ancient Persian and Zoroastrian religion and culture. Bombay had a well-established Parsi and Iranian community and there was a great deal of interest in Iran and Zoroastrian history among Parsis, who were encouraged to visit or 'return' to Iran, and there were also links between Iranian nationalist intellectuals and Parsi communities in India.[10] The Parsi community were also known for their patronage of cinema, music and the other arts. Alongside his research, Sepanta wrote for a radical periodical which, among other things, advocated for women's rights. He also visited the Imperial Film Company, which produced films in several languages and which confidently 'asserted itself both as a global and local company' (Cooley 2016:4). Iranian cinema in the 1920s and 30s was dominated both by Hollywood productions and by the growing film industry in Bombay. Sepanta 'persuaded Irani to make a film in Persian on an Iranian topic for distribution inside Iran' (Naficy 2011:232); Sepanta wrote the film script and played the male protagonist and Irani produced and directed.[11]

The film tells the story of Golnar (Figure 1) a young woman abducted as a child from a respectable urban home by the Lor tribal chief, Qoli Khan, and forced to work in the remote carevansarai roadside inn of one of his informers, Ramazan; and Jafar (Figure 2), an undercover government agent who has been posted to the tribal areas to quell Qoli Khan and his gang of highway bandits. Golnar and Jafar fall in love and she eventually escapes with him. The narrative needs to be understood in the context of Reza Shah's attempts at this time to subdue, and ultimately to disempower, local tribal leaders (the Lor tribe was notoriously one of the most difficult to control) in favour of centralised power, with an emphasis on nation-building and a particular vision of nation - *vatan* - as modern, industrialized, secular and crucially, Persian-

centric; and this in the context of Iran's centuries-long history as a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-faith country. Many of the discourses that were mobilized in the service of this particular vision of nation depended on a series of binaries which set the Pahlavi regime apart from its Others: its modernity vs the regressive traditionalism of the preceding Qajar monarchs; secular vs religious; urban vs rural; civilized vs uncivilized; tribe vs nation; and so on. In *The Lor Girl*, we see these binaries starkly portrayed in the lawlessness of the tribal regions vs the order and civilization of central control, represented by the figure of Jafar and later by images of colonial Bombay where he and Golnar seek refuge. The resulting discursive network is made explicit in the film's subtitle, *Yesterday's Iran and Today's Iran* (*Iran-e Dirooz va Iran-e Emrooz*), the significance of which becomes apparent towards the end of the film, as will be discussed, and which is, significantly, marked musically. Further, Golnar's 'journey' from low-class entertainer to educated woman comes to symbolize Reza Shah's reforms and is also marked through music. This is a pro-Pahlavi film, but wasn't commissioned or sponsored by the regime; screenings in Iran were, however, encouraged by the government (Bahrami 2000). Reza Shah's promotion of a pre-Islamic Zoroastrian heritage earned him much support among Parsi communities in India; and indeed the original version of the film included an introduction praising the Shah.

How, then, did the arrival of sound film in Iran impact on exoticizing processes of constructing and representing otherness in ways that differed from the 'silent' era? Naficy has suggested that one of the most important dimensions of modernity that sound brought to cinema was 'its complex and intense sensory experience' (2011:234) and I'm particularly interested in how the arrival of sound allowed for an *affective* marking of difference that was quite new and which clearly had profound implications for audiences hearing a wide range of spoken accents for the first time, as well as actors singing and performing on screen. According to Naficy, audiences in Tehran were amazed when *The Lor Girl* was first shown at the Mayak Cinema on 20th November 1933 (see Figure 3), reportedly breaking into applause on hearing Persian spoken on screen for the first time, despite some complaints about the Indian accents.[12] Naficy provides first-hand accounts of the film's reception, both in Tehran and in the provinces where it was very successful.[13] It was hard to find Persian-speaking actors in Bombay, and the role of Golnar was played by Ruhangiz

Saminezhad, the Iranian wife of a studio employee, a woman with a strong Kermani accent - from a quite different part of Iran from the film's setting (Lorestan in western Iran) and therefore the 'wrong' accent – but which subsequently became very popular and was reportedly widely imitated by women in Iran (Naficy 2011:240).[14]

The Lor Girl provides an interesting example of how different kinds of othering can operate simultaneously. Thus, the film narrative depends on at least two centres and their peripheries, each relating to the discursive binaries promoted by the Pahlavi regime: first, between central government - represented by the character of Jafar - and the tribal and other ethnic Others, portrayed negatively and represented by the Qoli Khan, the Lor chief, Ramazan, the caravanserai owner, and the Arab Sheikh who is staying there. And second, a self-othering by which Iran is presented as backward in relation to more 'advanced' nations, here represented by colonial Bombay, where Golnar and Jafar flee after their escape from Qoli Khan and spend several years in exile. In other words, the first form of exoticism places the protagonists (Jafar and Golnar) in a relationship of alterity with Iran's *internal* others; in the second, Iran – that is, the Iran of yesterday - becomes othered in relation to other nations (and by the end of the film, in relation to the 'Iran of today'). As Cooley observes, the final setting of Bombay and the film's subtitle 'suggests that Iran has caught up in time with Bombay in terms of its modernity' (2016:6). Significantly, each of these relationships of alterity is marked musically, both diegetically and non-diegetically, as I will now illustrate with reference to selected scenes from the film.

The opening credits are set to music and it soon becomes apparent that this is a diegetic band of musicians playing for the caravanserai guests and accompanying Golnar's dancing. Indeed, the film's first image is a close-up of her gyrating hips (1:03) from where the camera pans slowly up to her face (1:13). Such intimate bodily images and the direct female gaze would have been very provocative for the time, with clear implications for local viewers: the immortality of the dancing girl, and her perceived sexual availability, become symbolic of tribal backwardness. The music itself is also strongly marked as (non-Persian) Other through the use of Arab instruments such as *'ud* (lute) and *darbuka* (goblet drum) and the musicians wear Arab clothing and *agal* headpieces. Golnar is encircled by an enthusiastic audience of guests who clap to the music and encourage her dancing; we also see the leering gaze

of the Sheikh (2'00"), who later pays Ramazan to spend the night with Golnar and who attempts to rape her.[15] Discussing the opening scene, Cooley notes that:

> … the sonic landscape is simultaneously seductive and threatening, elements reinforced by Golnar's vulnerable yet enticing positioning and the audience's leering, eager stares and shouts. The film casts men as voyeuristic listeners and consumers of sound, and through Golnar's dancing – a role considered and reinforced by the film as disreputable – sound produces Golnar as object for the male listeners' pleasure. (2017)

As will be discussed, by the end of the film, Golnar has become transformed into a refined, educated and 'modern' woman, reading newspapers and playing the piano, but still largely at and for the pleasure of men (her husband). As per the film's subtitle, yesterday's Iran – of uncivilized and culturally- and socially-regressive tribes - becomes the clear Other in relation to the order and civilization of today's Iran. Significantly, then, the whole film is framed by these two contrasting scenes of music-making and it is women in particular who become a touchstone of the changing society, as discussed below. The character of Jafar is also introduced through music, shortly after the opening scene: after he tethers his horse in the caravanserai courtyard, he sings a *tasnif*, a genre closely associated with early 20th century modernizing processes and the constitutional period in particular, with songs by composers such as Ali Naqi Vaziri (1887-1979) who studied in Europe (Chehabi 1999). The music is markedly less 'exotic' than that of the opening scene and clearly signifies Jafar as connected with and representing the modernising state. One might also note the contrast between the (female) sensual physicality of the opening dance sequence and the more regular, ordered structure of the male protagonist's song.[16]

As I've suggested, exoticism works in different directions. Janet Afary has written about the ways in which 'competing discourses incorporate aspects of other, resisting discourses and hence become more resilient' (1996:47). On the one hand *The Lor Girl* marks difference through the negative portrayal of Iran's internal tribal others and external neighbours such as Arabs; there was a great deal of anti-Arab sentiment at this time as Reza Shah sought to promote the nation's pre-Islamic/pre-Arab invasion Aryan heritage as marking Iran out from its Islamic neighbours (Naficy 2011:236). On the other hand, modernity, symbolized by and entangled with ideas about a generalized 'West', becomes romanticized as an aspirational and positive

exotic Other against which Iran is (negatively) self-othered. The latter is marked musically at several points in the film, the first in a scene following Jafar's rescuing of Golnar from the clutches of the Arab Sheikh. She tells Jafar about herself and reminisces about her idyllic childhood in a loving and respected family. The images of an ordered and safe urban civility, before its disruption by the forces of chaos and Golnar's abduction at the age of 12 by the Lor chief, are set to an underscore of European classical music, specifically an orchestral arrangement of the piano piece *Träumerei* (*Daydreaming*) by Robert Schumann from his 1838 collection *Kinderszenen* (*Scenes from Childhood*, op.15).[17] In this scene, Golnar describes (and the audience see the images in her memory) how a mendicant fortune teller predicted her abduction and when asked by her father whether they would *ever* be rid of the menace of the tribes, the fortune teller also prophesied the rise of a star, who turns out to be Reza Shah. Slobin has noted the 'peculiar power and status of Western classical music' in films globally (2008:341) and this scene arguably uses this music as an agent of civilization. Given the technology available in 1933, the Schuman was likely added at a later date, probably in the late 1950s or early 60s, but this does not detract from the semantic significance of using European art music in the context of ever-increasing western political influence in Iran, both under Reza Shah and (from 1941), under the rule of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.[18] An interesting parallel to the case discussed here is Jeremy Barham's consideration of the role of *Träumerei* in the film *Beyond Borders* (2005), which 'makes certain awkward presumptions about the culturally and ethically superior white, middle-class European redemption of, in this case, an Africa represented as chaotic, corrupt, and violent. "Träumerei" is heavily invested with all the serenity, civilized refinement, and purity that the target country lacks, and at the same time retains its common usages as signifier of romance and childhood' (2011:298).[19] The end of the 'reminiscence' scene cuts back to the present-day and Golnar and Jafar hesitantly express their mutual attraction (to the extent allowed by conventions of the time), set to the continuing strains of *Träumerei*. The music stops just as Jafar is poised to kiss Golnar, but is interrupted by a loud disturbance downstairs.

There are three passages in *The Lor Girl* that use pre-existing Euro-American film music. The first accompanies the main declaration of love between Golnar and Jafar, following a scene in which she rescues him from Qoli Khan's men. Jafar thanks

Golnar for risking her life for him and she replies, 'What risk? In the face of love, my life is nothing'. This is followed by a quasi-oratorical passage in which Jafar extolls the sanctity of true love (Figure 4), set to an orchestral underscore of Tara's theme from *Gone with the Wind* (1939, music by Max Steiner).[20] This passage includes several settings of Tara's theme which have been cut and pasted together, including a section from the main title theme and from a later scene in which Scarlett is talking to her father under a tree.[21] According to Cooley, whilst dubbing existing film soundtracks was not common in Indian cinema, exhibitors and dubbers in Iran frequently played around with the film's sound (personal communication, January 2019). The use of Euro-American film and other orchestral music became quite usual in Iranian cinema production from the 1950s onwards and Askari notes that the soundtrack to *Gone With the Wind* had a vibrant 'after life' and was used as part of the stock library of film sound studios. Tara's theme in particular was a popular choice for emotionally significant scenes (2018). Unlike in much post-Revolutionary Iranian cinema, there is very little in this film that romanticizes tribal and rural Others: Qoli Khan's men are more often presented in a somewhat comical and bumbling way. However, this particular scene includes a moment of such romanticizing as Jafar states: 'We city people have forgotten the true meaning of love', all set to Max Steiner's music.[22]

Moving now to the end of the film: having escaped from Qoli Khan, Golnar and Jafar flee to Bombay; as they set sail, they gaze longingly back towards Iran and sing of exile and of nostalgia for the homeland. This is the first time that the two main protagonists are conjoined through music performance (and the only point in the film that Golnar sings), although they don't in fact sing at the same time: Golnar sings first and Jafar replies in a longer section that includes traditional melismatic vocalisation.[23] This passage cuts to their arrival in Bombay (1:19:29) when the music changes abruptly to an up-beat military-style march, representing orderliness and regularity, set to imposing images of the modern city, including iconic structures such as the Gateway of India arch - built in 1911 to mark the visit of the British King George V and Queen Mary and the classic entrance to colonial Bombay by sea - the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and the Clocktower (known since independence as the Rajabai Clocktower, now part of the University of Mumbai), designed by architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) and modelled on Big Ben.[24] Bombay was of course one of

the primary cities of the British Raj at this time and a key trading centre and locus of regional power. Fish notes that 'Many of the sites shown in the film were constructed thanks to wealthy Parsi backing, but nearly all of the structures were erected at the behest of British benefactors, architects, or to celebrate British events' (2018:208). Presumably intended to impress audiences in Iran, these visuals contrast starkly with the 'backward' rural mountain setting of the film so far, and indicate the aspired trajectory of Iran's future development.[25] Similarly, the steamship from which Golnar and Jafar disembark represents industrial progress [26]; according to Naficy, scenes such as this were met with applause in early screenings (2011:239).[27] Following this passage, the reader is informed through a series of intertitles that many years have passed, that there has been a coup d'état (cue background sounds of gunfire)[28] and a change of regime, and the new king crowned in April 1926, all somewhat cryptically set to an underscore of a languid instrumental quasi-foxtrot-swing band piece. At 1:21:42, the Pahlavi flag is raised to the sound of a bugle call and the achievements of the new regime are roll-called (again via intertitles) against a military march: economic stability, expansion of trade, establishment of industry, uniformity in clothing, the promotion of women's rights, the review of previous international treaties unfavourable to Iran, and so on. These changes, we are informed, have taken place in a relatively short period and have not only improved life in Iran but are also a source of pride for Iranians on the world stage ('East looks at West looking at East').[29]

The passage above segues into the final section of the film, which starts with a close-up of a portrait of Reza Shah hung on a wall, to the background sounds of domestic piano playing. The camera pans down to show Golnar at the instrument, transformed by way of 'modern' European clothing and cropped hair (Figure 5).[30] Here, the piano becomes what Slobin refers to as a 'figure', connoting a series of interconnected ideas including modernity, technological progress, colonial authority, urbanity, cultural capital, class and economic power, and - crucially in the context of Reza Shah's reforms– indexing European refinement and 'civilization', which by extension become associated with the 'Iran of today'.[31] I suggest that it is less the sounds of the piano (which can also be heard non-diegetically earlier in the film), but its visual iconicity that is significant here. Slobin discusses the appearance of the piano as a figure in a wide range of films, including those where the instrument

becomes a character it its own right (2008:343). Similar 'figures' discussed by Slobin (or more complex convergences which he terms 'narrative knots'[32]) include the gramophone, used by some filmmakers as:

> … a semi-sacred object representing a distant, technologically advanced urban lifestyle with strong implication of class or colonial power. Since it would not be feasible to tease out the possible intertextuality of this image - which director was watching what? – we can only suppose that the conditions of modernity make it possible for a wide range of global filmmakers to think of tying the same knot. (ibid.:338)

The same would seem to be the case with the piano. Although the piece that Golnar plays is not from the repertoire of European art music, it does make use of 'western' functional harmony and certainly draws on many of the above associations. Jafar, donning a Pahlavi hat and 'European' tie, arrives, strides up the stairs of their comfortable home (with servants busy cleaning) and commends Golnar on having learnt the piece well. He asks her to play the song that he 'taught her yesterday' and launches into a patriotic song in praise of Reza Shah to Golnar's accompaniment, the first point in the film where the two protagonists perform together. The lyrics tell of a country that is prosperous, strong and free, ancient but wrought anew.[33] Arguably, the pro-Pahlavi message is communicated more effectively through song than through dialogue, tapping into the areas 'of affect that only music can provide' (Slobin 2008:342). The viewer has been given the 'facts' of Reza Shah's achievements in the intertitles, but music's affective and emotional presence has the potential to make this truly persuasive.[34] The brief final scene shows Jafar and Golnar reading newspapers under a tree as they discuss and make their decision to return to Iran. Jafar reminds Golnar how they left Iran 'with eyes full of tears' (1:26:20), how for many years they hoped for stability in their country, and wouldn't it be a shame now to stay in this foreign country ('*mamlekat-e bigāneh*') when they can return and maybe do a service to their homeland. The film's closing image is of a rising star – that is, Reza Shah - as prophesied by the fortune teller, set to the heroic strains of Miklós Rózsa's music for *Ben-Hur* .[35]

These final two scenes complete Golnar's transformation from a captive dancing girl to an educated, newspaper-reading and piano-playing modern woman. At the same time, her usefulness can arguably be measured in relation to the needs of the

patriarchal system, as an accompaniment to her husband, for example, or in the service of the nation.[36] The message is clearly about cultivating a new kind of urban citizen. As Afary notes in relation to the introduction of secular education in Iran at this time, the aim was 'not to encourage critical thinking but to shape loyal citizens who were devoted to the shah and his rule and were peacefully integrated into the new modernizing society, and to curtail the extensive authority of the ulama [religious authorities]' (1996:33). Similarly, writing about the arrival of sound film in Iran, Nacify suggests that the soundtrack became '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 and maintaining personal and national identities' (2011:236). Likewise, I would argue that in the *Lor Girl*, music is mobilized in the service of a particular vision of nation that is modern, Persian-centric, and Western-facing (the 'today's Iran', as per the film's subtitle), and which is valorized over and presented as incompatible with the country's centuries-old ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity ('yesterday's Iran'). The forging of this vision, and the attendant discourses and policies of Reza Shah, set in train processes that ultimately inscribed polarized social binaries and continue to have profound implications for Iranian society today. As Keddie observes, 'Reza Shah's work for rapid modernization from above, along with his militantly secularist cultural and educational program, helped create the situation of "two cultures" in Iran. Upper and middle classes became increasingly Westernized and scarcely understood the traditional or religious culture of most of their compatriots'(1981:111-12).

The intersection of broader questions of othering with gender politics in *The Lor Girl* are particularly intriguing. Women were central to Reza Shah's modernization project and Golnar's metamorphosis can be understood as part of the 'secular and radical modernist discourse that called for the social, political, and cultural modernization of Iran and that considered certain changes in gender roles to be desirable factors of modernization and Westernization' (Afary 1996:29).[37] Not only does the film's title draw attention to the central female character, but from the start Golnar is made visible in one of the most public (and religiously-objectionable) ways possible: as a dancing-singing entertainer. By the end of the film, social order is re-established as her performance, now invested with social and cultural capital, becomes contained within its rightful domestic sphere. As Cooley observes*:*

> Golnar's near silence in this scene and attentive listening contrasts dramatically with the presence of her voice in the previous scenes when she argued and negotiated with the bandits, sang solos, confidently flirted with Jafar and talked with him about the differences between notions of love in the modern city and the countryside. Now, nearly silent in terms of her voice, but providing musical accompaniment to Jafar's nationalistic song through the piano, Golnar demonstrates the more limited essentialized femininity of the new, modern, middle-class woman … (2017)

Citing the work of Ranjani Mazumdar, Cooley considers 'how in emerging Indian nationalism, "Victorian ideology entered into a comfortable alliance with Indian myths to reinvent the 'virtues' and 'purity' of the Indian woman", casting her as associated with the bourgeois domestic space of the home, and interested in European-associated pursuits such as the piano' (2017). Indeed, ideas about the suitability of the piano as an instrument for women are very relevant here:

> Much has been written about why the piano was deemed an ideal instrument for women during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (in addition to the harp, glass harmonica, lute, and guitar). In her foundational study, Freia Hoffmann described how the piano enabled an upright sitting posture and relatively little bodily motion while playing. Such positioning not only reinforced modesty, but also allowed for performance while wearing restrictive corsets. In contrast, string instruments generally entailed vigorous movement and the cello required an indelicate separation of legs … This conceptualization of gendered musical instruments and performance roles was supported by contemporary understandings of evolution and biology that depicted women's naturally 'emotional' and 'passive' disposition in contrast to the 'rational', 'active' nature of men. Understandings of female passivity aligned with the piano's often accompanimental role in home music-making … A woman at the piano accompanying her father, husband, children, or guests could provide musical support without herself being the focus of attention. (Braunschweig 2017:556)

In addition to the above, *The Lor Girl*'s narrative draws on long-standing tropes of the (often abducted) female body in need of saving and/or disciplining (also found frequently in Hindi cinema), often as an allegory of nationhood and of national honour.[38] Here, Golnar's rescue by Jafar becomes symbolic of national redemption, whereby Iran - gendered as female – is 'saved' from the tribes by Reza Shah (although it should be noted that Golnar also rescues Ja'far during their escape).[39] As Afary notes, many of the forces of change relating to women's social position in the

1920s and 30s had started much earlier, under Qajar rule, and particularly following the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, with the establishment of women's associations and journals, and schools for girls, which faced much religious opposition. At this time, 'gender issues came to influence Iranian politics … [and] women's bodies became the site of political struggles' (1996:28), continuing into the Pahlavi period. Notwithstanding the new freedoms:

> … modernization also instituted new disciplinary practices with respect to women's bodies, a process that began in the late nineteenth century and accelerated after women were unveiled in 1936. These new disciplinary practices were articulated by a multiplicity of powers, among them the secular and authoritarian government of Reza Shah and [his son] Muhammad Reza Shah, the religious anti-modernist establishment, the left-wing and nationalist political parties, and the women's organizations themselves. (op.cit.:29)

Golnar's bodily transformations thus lie at the intersection of debates about gender, nationhood and modernity, and resonate with the idea - also found elsewhere in the region and beyond - of women as embodying the ideal of the modern nation.[40]

Given these messages, it's important to remember that *The Lor Girl* was also popular with audiences in Bombay and elsewhere in India and beyond. Whilst promotional material in Iran (circulated months in advance to whet the appetite of viewers) presented it 'as a local product … made for Iranians by Iranian artists' (Cooley 2016:4), and indeed most of the literature has focused on the film's seminal place in the history of Iranian cinema, Laura Fish has argued for a broader and more nuanced understanding of the film that includes its significance for members of the Parsi community in Bombay, whose relationship to Iran was complex:

> The Lor Girl served as an illustration of the conflict dividing elements of the Bombay Parsi community. While one segment advocated for strengthened cross-border initiatives to aid Iran and fellow Zoroastrians in Iran, another group felt that the well-being of the community in Bombay was a more significant concern. Both sides adopted an elitist regard for Iran, considering the country poorer, less educated, and less modern than Parsis and India … The joint Parsi-Iranian production afforded the Persian talkie not only Parsi Zoroastrian authenticity and Iranian cultural authenticity, but it also portrayed a conflicting dualistic vision of Parsis' imagined future. Side-by-

> side the film displayed resistance to leaving India and a simultaneous desire to make the epic return to Iran. (2018:198, 206)

The possibility of a Parsi Zoroastrian colony in Iran had been mooted as early as the 1880s and many Parsis felt themselves to occupy a 'liminal position between India and Iran' (ibid.205), particularly with the growing independence movements in India of the 1930s which left many feeling vulnerable and uncertain about their future place in a post-colonial India and which heightened the desire to strengthen links with the 'original' homeland of Iran.

That the first Persian-language film was made outside Iran and included the globally-circulating music of European colonial powers attests to the fact that from the start, Iranian cinema and its music were tied into globalising processes. Working across two national audiences, Sepanta had to 'negotiate all sorts of cross-cultural issues and interests' (Naficy 2011:243), not unlike Iranian filmmakers today who seek to reach both local and global viewers. Sound had particular ramifications for the local-global nexus, as Cooley's observes:

> The addition of sound changed what people understood a film to be, and it also meant an exponential rise in circulation of film around the world. The infrastructure and expense required to make sound films meant that film producers catered not just to local domestic markets, but also depended on global audiences for revenue, which set global-local relationships. (2016:2)

Notwithstanding its Indian production and strong Bombay-Parsi connections, for audiences in Iran *The Lor Girl* marked a particular moment in relation to nationalist discourses of the 1930s. Sepanta went on to make two more films with the Imperial Film Company - *Firdausi* (1934) and *Shirin va Farhad* (*Shirin and Farhad*, 1934), the former receiving funding from the Iranian Ministry of Education (Naficy: 2011:241) - and two more with other companies in India: *Cheshmha-ye Siah* (*Black Eyes*, 1936) and *Laili va Majnun* (*Laili and Majnun*, 1937). To the extent that all four films were based on historical themes and stories from classical Iranian literature, they continued *The Lor Girl's* participation in nationalist discourses of the time, for instance as part of the millennial celebrations of the birth of the national poet Ferdowsi (c935-1020 CE). With the exception of *Firdausi*, they also continued to

deploy music and song as a means of enhancing audiences' affective sensory engagement. Buoyed by the success of *Laili va Majnun*, Sepanta returned to Iran where he failed to achieve much recognition and made no more films, other than a short documentary-style film comprised of footage shot in the countryside outside Esfahan where he spent the final years of his life (Naficy 2011:244).

Music was clearly an important part of the arrival of sound film in Iran. Not only does *The Lor Girl* include a great deal of music, only some of which it has been possible to discuss here, the film begins and ends with on-screen performances and both of the main characters are introduced via music. *The Lor Girl* offers a fascinating early example of how the new film sound medium, and music in particular, allowed for the first time a powerful affective sonic marking of difference and otherness that could also be enlisted to underscore the 'regime of truth' represented by the film's message, in this case promoting a particular vision of nationhood. Interestingly, as noted earlier, the first sound film made *in* Iran (and the first Iranian feature after Sepanta's *Laili va Majnun*), *Tufan-e Zendegi* (*The Storm of Life*, dir: Ali Daryabeygi, 1948), also opens with an on-screen musical performance set in a concert hall. This centrality of music continued for several decades until the 1979 Revolution, when it became marginalized, as will be discussed below.

Post-Revolutionary Cinema: Music as Other

It wasn't until the 1950s that a local film industry started to emerge in Iran with productions known as *Film Farsi*, which often included musical items and vied for popularity with foreign imports, particularly Hollywood Westerns and Hindi musicals. There was a significant expansion in local production in the 1960s, with an average of 25 commercial films produced annually in the early 60s, increasing to 65 by the end of the decade, mainly melodramas and thrillers. This period also saw the emergence of an art-house movement, known locally as *Cinema-ye Motefavet* (Alternative Cinema) and strongly influenced by Italian Neorealist and the French *Nouvelle Vague*. In the first half of the 20th century, France was the major destination for Iranians studying abroad and this included individuals such as Fereydoun Hoveyda, who came to play an important role in the French cultural scene in the 1940s and 50s, especially in the field of cinema (and who later served as Iran's

Ambassador to the United Nations, 1971-79). A protégé of François Truffaut with whom he was friends, Hoveyda served on the editorial board of the French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* that helped to spearhead the French New Wave; he also worked closely with Italian director Roberto Rossellini on several film scripts. Iranian 'new wave' films typically had a political or philosophical focus, using poetic language and filming techniques and several filmmakers associated with this movement were educated abroad, including Dariush Mehrjui who studied with Jean Renoir. Farrokh Ghaffari's *Shab-e Ghuzi* (*Night of the Hunchback*, 1964) and Mehrjui's *Gav* (*The Cow*, 1969) were among the first Iranian films to attract international attention, and the former was the first to be screened at an international festival (Cannes, 1964).[41] Both *Film Farsi* and 'new wave' cinema used traditional and popular musics of various kinds, as well as orchestral music in classical Hollywood style by local composers, some of whom also trained outside Iran; Hormoz Farhat, the composer for *Gav*, for instance, studied in the USA (including with Darius Milhaud). Some films were simply dubbed with existing orchestral music from outside Iran.

Anxieties over cinematic representations of self and others of various kinds continued throughout these decades and into the period that followed the 1979 Revolution in which Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (the son of Reza Shah) was overthrown. The revolution was brought about by a wide spectrum of organisations and individuals that included leftists, nationalists and Islamists, all opposed in various ways to the social and political agendas of the Pahlavi regime, and who viewed the Shah as a 'puppet' of the West. I will return below to the impact of the revolution on the national imaginary. The current section will examine two aspects of post-revolutionary cinema that are particularly pertinent to questions of othering: first, how the success of Iranian films internationally from the late 1980s perpetuated a particular cinematic style aimed at a global cosmopolitan audience that included a strong element of exoticism; and second, how music arguably became othered as part of this. In the late 1970s, and with mounting political unrest leading up to the revolution, film faced increased opposition from religious groups. Indeed, several cinemas were subject to arson attacks at this time, the most tragic being the fire at the Rex Cinema in Abadan in August 1978, in which 420 people died. Much like music, film was branded as un-Islamic and a form of cultural imperialism and after the

revolution faced government restrictions. By the early 1980s, however, the government realized that film could be co-opted for its own purposes, particularly for propaganda use during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), and began to support film production and training.[42] From this emerged a new generation of feature and documentary filmmakers, including a significant number of women. Much to the consternation of the government, which had not anticipated that its investment would produce a body of independent and liberal-minded filmmakers, Iranian cinema began to attract international attention from the late 1980s. This fledgling art-house movement was influenced by the earlier 'new wave' cinema, but it also evidenced a new aesthetic that drew inspiration from Iran's historically-rooted poetic and mystic traditions and traditional theatre and story-telling, as well as from movements outside Iran such as neo-realist cinema and the so-called 'Slow Cinema'. Many of these films were arguably exoticist in their representations of Iran, including the almost exclusive use of rural settings, and amateur and child actors:

> Their simple, quiet stories, told without the gloss and glamour of stars, special effects, violence, and chases – their smallness – offered a refreshing contrast to the blockbusters and high-octane movies that dominated the world markets. Their humanism and smallness were doubly attractive as they seemed to offer a total contrast to the dominant view abroad of the Islamic Republic … as a hotbed of hostility, violence, intolerance, and terrorism. These multiple contrasts made Iranian art-house films counterhegemonic politically, innovative stylistically, and ethnographically exotic. (Naficy 2012:175-6)

As these films started to attract the attention of critics and festivals abroad, such aspects became exaggerated as filmmakers responded to what they believed audiences outside were looking for. The result was the emergence of a discursive bifurcation locally between so-called 'festival films', *filmhā-ye jashnvāreyi*, and those aimed at audiences in Iran. Although in reality this was a rather blurred divide, there certainly were films primarily made for a global audience, some garnering critical acclaim abroad whilst enjoying little success at home. At the same time, restrictions on imported films (notwithstanding the thriving black market and later access via satellite and the internet) arguably helped the domestic film industry. Some heavily censored versions of classic and contemporary Hollywood productions have been

shown on state television, and imported (usually dubbed) drama series from countries such as Argentina are very popular, as is Hindi cinema, although these have not been authorised for cinema screening.

What we also see in the 1980s is a marginalising othering of music itself, for a variety of reasons: aesthetic, social and political. A number of commentators have noted the sparse aesthetics of many post-1979 art-house films, something no doubt related in part to their generally neo-realistic ethos, and this often includes a reduced musical palette compared with the richness of earlier films. Celli suggests that this is rooted in a privileging of the visual over the aural/oral, arguing that 'many of the more renowned Iranian filmmakers have opted for a cinematic style dependent on long takes that emphasize the visual rather than the oral aspects of the cinema' (2011:74). Alongside aesthetic imperatives, an important factor was the problematic status of music as the post-revolutionary government sought to align cultural policy with Islamic precepts, such that it was somewhat easier for filmmakers not to include music for which permission would need to be sought over and above the already complex process of gaining authorisation for the film. Several film composers that I have spoken to suggested this as a factor in the paucity of music in post-Revolutionary cinema, but they also pointed to something else: an anxiety among some filmmakers in relation to music, exacerbated by the fact that few are accustomed to working closely with composers and sound designers. One prominent filmmaker noted a hesitance to accept composers as creative equals, and therefore to relinquish an element of creative control, in the overall film-making process. There is likely a cultural dimension to this in the traditionally low social status ascribed to musicians within Iranian society, and residues of such attitudes persist despite recent changes, most notably the emergence of music as a graduate profession. An indication of such change is that the House of Cinema (*Khaneh-ye Cinema*, established 1989), the professional trade association for cinema, includes a composer's section (the Iranian Society of Film Composers), which has about 100 members and is very active within the wider organisation (Mani Jafarzadeh, interview, 2nd September 2015). Although there is a range of practices from the use of traditional music and/or orchestral scoring to more sparse sound palates, many art-house films have tended to use music minimally, mostly in diegetic contexts. Ironically, because of this, when music *does*

appear, its presence is often highly potent and symbolically-charged, as will be discussed below.

As a cultural form which has itself been contested and peripherised by the Islamic government since 1979, and by religious authorities for centuries, music is an eminently suitable medium through which to explore, represent and negotiate otherness. Thus, as well as the actual othering of music in film soundtracks, several filmmakers have offered a critical commentary on music's marginal social position and the competing discourses over its religious permissibility, particularly in films where music and musicians play a central narrative role. In *Do Fereshteh* (*Two Angels*, Mamad Haghigat, 2003), two young people from very different social backgrounds find a bond in their shared love of music, but their union is ultimately thwarted by the opposition of the male protagonists' family to his musical activities. The film tells the story of Ali, a young man from a religious family who one day hears a shepherd playing a *nei* (end-blown) flute. Ali falls in love with the instrument and pleads with his mother to allow him to take lessons. Unbeknown to his strictly-observant father, Ali travels to Tehran for lessons and there encounters an entirely new urban-secular-liberal social milieu and strikes up a romantic relationship with a music student called Azar. The story ends tragically when Hussein, Ali's father, finds out: the final scene shows Hussein mourning the loss of his son to the sounds of religious chanting which are – ironically - not so different sonically from the music played by Ali on his *nei* and which his father objected to so violently. One of the most iconic and moving scenes of the film is Ali trying to practise his instrument secretly at night out of earshot of his family: we see him draped in a blanket-tent and hear the feint, muffled sounds of *nei* leaking out (insert two figures?).[43] This single image encapsulates centuries of religious censure that has forced Iranian music into the most private and intimate spaces. Another film that draws on the same cultural trope of music's marginal status is *Santoori* (*Santoor Player*, Dariush Mehrjui, 2007), about a musician whose decline into drug addiction and the break-down of his marriage is precipitated in large part by the difficulties in earning a living as a musician. The film ends on a positive note with the protagonist's rehabilitation and we see him using his music to help others affected by addiction. Other films in this category include *Del Shodegan* (*Love-Striken*, Ali Hatami, 1992), a historical drama about a group of Qajar court musicians who travel to France in the early 20th century to make recordings; and

Bahman Ghobadi's *Niwe Mang* (*Half Moon*, 2006), which follows a group of Kurdish musicians travelling from Iranian Kurdistan to their home in Iraqi Kurdistan where they are due to perform at a concert. Along the way, they are joined by a female singer who, at the border crossing is forced to hide under the floor of the van. A later film by Ghobadi that is both exoticist and addresses music's marginality is the 2009 docu-feature *No One Knows About Persian Cats* (*Kasi az Gorbeh-ha-ye Irani Khabar Nadareh*), which focuses on the Tehran rock music scene and follows two musicians who are trying to leave the country. Ghobadi's shift from focusing on a marginalised people (Kurds) to a marginalised music scene is an interesting one. The film received positive acclaim outside Iran, including a number of awards, but was much criticized locally for its sensationalist portrayal of the Iranian underground music scene, and in particular a kind of fetishist exoticization of resistance aimed largely at audiences abroad (see Steward 2013:26, 122-130). One critic, for instance, noted the 'over-dramatization in the film as it exaggerates the troubled lives of underground musicians' (Golnaz Jamsheed quoted in Steward, 2013:128) and female rock singer Maral commented that the film potentially had:

> … 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 … (online interview, June 2010, as quoted in Steward 2013:129)

Rock music in Iran has a legally ambiguous status and the musicians that Maral refers to were apparently rehearsing on a farm because they couldn't find anywhere in the city where they could do so without being overheard. One prominent rock musician that I interviewed commented on this scene: '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 ['*oonvarihā*' i.e. those outside Iran] will like' (2.9.15).

One also finds passing, but often very potent, references to music's social othering in quite unexpected places. In the satirical comedy feature *Marmoolak* (*The Lizard*, Kamal Tabrizi, 2005), Reza, a convicted petty thief, escapes from hospital by

stealing and donning the clothes of a cleric. Thus disguised, he makes his escape by train, eventually disembarking in a small town where he is mistaken for the new Imam whose arrival has been anticipated. His rather unconventional approach to matters of religious orthodoxy includes a scene in the local mosque where, following a communal meal a young attendee asks whether it would be alright for another member of the gathering, who has a good voice, to sing. Clearly contravening accepted orthodoxy which prohibits musical expression in the mosque (other than religious chanting, which is in any case not considered to be 'music') - and thus challenging music's marginalization by the religious establishment - Reza replies: ('Of course. What's wrong with it? In fact, let's have a song. It's good for the digestion' ('*Baleh. Che eshkāl dāreh? Etefāqan ye āvāzi ham talāvat besheh. Barāye hazm-e qazāh ham khoobeh*'). As the man sings, and Reza becomes affected by the music, swaying from side to side, his assistant shifts uncomfortably in his seat and eventually questions the appropriateness of having this music in the mosque. Reza replies: 'What's wrong with it? It's very good, in fact. Who says that mosques are only places of mourning. Sometimes it's necessary to be happy and enjoy yourself' ('*Che eshkāl dāreh? Kheili ham khoob-e ... Ki gofteh ke masched faqad jā-ye azādari-e? Etefāqan ye vakht-hā-i lāzem-e shādi bokonin, hāletoon-o bokonin'*). In this context, the presence of music comes to denote religious tolerance.[44] The sensitivities over music and the resulting restrictions have afforded it such symbolic potency that even its momentary presence can be powerful, as in the film *Zendan-e Zanan* (*Women's Prison*, Manijeh Hekmat, 2002) where music only appears at the end, as a prisoner is released, clearly signifying notions of freedom. There are many such subtle moments, often just a few seconds, of hidden comment tucked away in the folds of Iranian cinema. Their meanings may be lost to audiences outside Iran, but they are of great significance locally.

Sonic Marking of Difference: *Bashu, The Little Stranger*

As well as the actual marginalization and symbolic discursive othering of music in post-1979 Iranian cinema, music continued to be used as a powerful medium through which to represent and negotiate otherness on screen, and this brings us to the second main case example of this article. *Bashu, The Little Stranger* (*Bashu, Gharibeh-ye*

Koochak, Bahram Beyzai, 1986) was made just over 50 years after *The Lor Girl* and engages with many of the same questions over nationhood, including who belongs within the nation-body and what that body should look like, but in quite different historical and political circumstances. Like many nationalist revolutionary movements, the Iranian Revolution involved intense contestation over national identity, and in particular a challenge to the Pahlavi vision so vigorously promoted since the 1930s. That the revolution was in large part an assertion of national identity in the face of decades and more of perceived external interference in Iran's affairs, particularly by Britain and the US, led to some important shifts in dominant discourses of nationhood, not least in the strongly anti-imperialist rhetoric of the government. The power vacuum that followed the Shah's departure on 16th January 1979 was quickly filled with the return from exile of charismatic religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who set about side-lining the many non-religious (and some religious) groups who had helped bring about the revolution and retrospectively creating the idea of an 'Islamic' revolution. But there was also what I have called a 'play of identities' between religious identities on the one hand - particularly Shia Islam, adopted as the state religion under the Safavid monarchy in the 16th century as a way of demarcating Iran from its Arab and Turkish Islamic neighbours - and a much older pre-Islamic national identity which many Iranians also identify strongly with.[45] In seeking to forge a new kind of religious-cultural national identity, the post-revolutionary regime initially sought to downplay aspects of the latter, appealing instead to a pan-Islamic identity, for instance discouraging celebrations with pre-Islamic roots such as the spring equinox *noruz* (new year), without much success. This became increasingly untenable after the start of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980 when Iran was invaded by an Islamic neighbour. The post-revolutionary period thus posed some interesting questions in relation to national identity, and indeed much of the political contestation in Iran over the last 40 years has centred around the complex relationship between religion and nation. In the midst of this struggle over the forging of a post-revolutionary national identity, however, there were some clear continuities with the Pahlavi period. For instance, whilst the post-revolutionary regime certainly started to pay more attention to provincial and rural areas that had been largely neglected in the centralized and top-down development model of the Shah, still the central discourses of nationhood remained strongly Persian- and urban-

(and Tehran-) centric, largely ignoring Iran's regional, linguistic and religious diversity. Whilst, as mentioned above, an 'ethnic' filmmaking presence did emerge at this time, *Bashu* was the first Iranian film to directly challenge the normative mono-cultural idea of nation.

Bashu, The Little Stranger displays many of the features of post-1979 Iranian cinema described above, including a rural setting, child actors and minimal use of music. The film is set in the early 1980s against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq war and tells the story of a young boy, Bashu (played by Adnan Afravian), who flees the war-torn south of Iran after his home is bombed and his entire family killed. He stows away in the back of a truck which, unknown to him, is heading to the far north, to the green and peaceful province of Gilan, by the Caspian Sea (a journey of about 1,000 kilometres), which is both physically and emotionally distant from the war zone. Here, he finds himself in a place that is entirely alien, both in its landscape and in the regional language (Gilaki) and culture of its people, to the extent that he assumes he is no longer in Iran. Bashu is taken in by Na'i (played by Susan Taslimi), a mother-of-two whose husband has ostensibly gone to the city to work (there are hints that he might be serving in the war), despite the hostile objections of her relatives and other villagers to the presence of this outsider. Here, the notion of outsider focuses on Bashu's 'racial' and ethnic identity as an Arabic-speaking 'black' Iranian. His arrival in Gilan forces an encounter with otherness which lies outside the villagers' conceptualisation of what it means to be Iranian: none of them have seen a black Iranian before.[46] Thus, the film's narrative revolves around the central theme of difference: cultural, linguistic, ethnic and gender. Initially unable to communicate, for reasons which will be discussed, Bashu eventually becomes part of Na'i's family, working on the farm and helping her in the absence of her husband.

Made at the height of the Iran-Iraq war in 1986, *Bashu* didn't receive screening permission until after the war ended, due to its anti-war sentiment and sympathetic treatment of the Arabic-speaking protagonist. The film also challenged conventional gender hierarchies, most notably through the character of Na'i. Censors were particularly concerned about her direct gaze at the camera at several points in the film (Naficy 2012:38).[47] Beyzai was required by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to make around 80 changes, only some of which were implemented before the film was finally screened in 1989. Following its release, *Bashu* generated a great

deal of excitement and positive critical response, and was one several films screened in the immediate post-war period that were marked by subtle political and social critique, including critique of the war.[48] As the social milieu opened up in the aftermath of war, and particularly after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989, cinema became one of the few spaces where people could gather for a collective oppositional experience.

Bashu offers an interesting counterpoint to *The Lor Girl*. Where the earlier film used the new sound medium to construct the idea of a unified and homogenous nation, particularly focused around Persian (which Reza Shah made the official national language in 1935), *Bashu* was one of the first films to shatter that and to forefront Iran's cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. As well as being inscribed visually in his dark skin colour, Bashu's difference is highlighted most obviously through his initial inability to communicate verbally with Na'i. His first language is Arabic, specifically Khuzi Arabic, a dialect spoken in the southern Gulf region; hers is Gilaki. Bashu has some knowledge of the official *lingua franca*, Persian, through his schooling, but Na'i is uneducated and her knowledge of Persian is rudimentary. Moreover, when Bashu arrives, Na'i has no reason to believe that he speaks Persian, since he only attempts, unsuccessfully, to communicate with her in Arabic. Only half-way through the film, when Bashu finds a school book and starts to read aloud from it in Persian, does Na'i realise with a shock that Bashu is Iranian and speaks Persian, and he that he is still in Iran. Nasrin Rahimieh has discussed the significant ways in which the film plays with language: in contrast to *The Lor Girl* and its centring of Persian, *Bashu* is not just multi-lingual, but shifts the two erstwhile peripheral languages (peripheral in Iran, that is: Gilaki and Arabic) to the centre. Indeed, there is an interesting symmetry in that *The Lor Girl* was the first sound film in which Persian was spoken and *Bashu* was the first to use Gilaki on screen.[49] Gilaki in particular becomes 'an agent of displacement' (Rahimieh 2002:241), peripherizing the majority Persian-speaking audiences. As Rahimieh observes, 'Removing the audience to a remote village in Gilan and subjecting it to the local idiom makes possible experiments with other shifts in power and authority' (ibid.). This was a particularly striking feature of the film when it was first screened, where audiences accustomed to imported films being dubbed into Persian were left to work out what was happening on screen and without the help of subtitles.[50] Beyzai himself spoke about this aspect

of spectatorship: 'The film is about the language of emotions and not the formal language … I think people related to the film by the emotions, not by the language of the film, but by that other language – the emotional or human language'. (2006:32).

Bashu was one of the first post-revolutionary films to include on-screen performance, and the performative aspect of the film is significant and arguably contributed to its transgressive ethos. Beyzai's work draws on influences from traditional Iranian theatre and other performing arts, often in quite subtle ways.[51] As well as the diegetic music-making, some of Na'i's physical movements, for instance the circular lifting of her arms when she feeds the chickens, are very dance-like. Given the prohibitions on dance in public (since 1979), and the anxieties more generally over women dancing, audiences would certainly have picked up on such moments as deliberately provocative.[52]At the same time, like many films of this period and in line with its neo-realist aesthetic, music is used selectively and entirely diegetically (except for the opening credit music and a short passage showing the truck on its journey north). It isn't clear whether the music and dance-like movements were among the changes required by the censors; the fact that most of the on-screen performances are by children may have rendered them less contentious, and this may have been a deliberate move on Beyzai's part. Either way, despite its minimal use, indeed perhaps because of it, and also due to its positioning at strategic points in the narrative, music is afforded great potency when it does appear, as I will discuss.

Just as language is central to the film, so also are various kinds of non-verbal communication. Notwithstanding the sparse use of music, like much post-1979 art-house cinema, *Bashu* is immensely complex and rich in its sound palate. Writing about post-1979 Iranian cinema more generally, Slobin observes, 'Sound is extremely important, appearing with the fine precision that the director gives to dialogue, visual composition, and editing. Often natural and human sounds alternate or overlap in apparently meaningful ways' (2008:358). In *Bashu*, music is part of a broader sonic ecosystem, including, most prominently, animal calls and other natural and environmental sounds, the percussive beating of pots and pans to ward off evil spirits and scare birds and other animals from the fields, and so on.[53] We see this most obviously in the character of Na'i who has an almost elemental connection with nature, particularly with animals whose calls she imitates, something which Bashu later learns from her: animal calls and Na'i's imitation of them saturate the film.[54] The

absence of sound is also deployed creatively and becomes another colour in the sonic 'scape', with the contrast between sound and its absence often playing powerfully. For instance, arriving in Gilan, Bashu is awakened by the deep lowing of a cow (the first animal sounds of the film) and clambers from the back of the truck to find himself on a quiet country lane where the only sound is of a passing cyclist. The stark contrast with what he has left behind (and what the audience has just experienced) - the ear-splitting sounds of shelling and other noises of war - has the effect of making the new place almost deafening in its quietness.[55] This is almost immediately shattered, however, by a controlled explosion as part of tunnel-building which Bashu takes to be the sound of bombs and from which he escapes by running into the adjacent woods.

Alongside language, music plays an important role in marking Bashu's 'racial' and ethnic difference. As the narrative progresses and Na'i and Bashu start to communicate verbally, we see the transition from Bashu as an unknown entity to Bashu as human being. One of the most touching scenes is where that communication starts, initially with the naming of objects but leading, significantly, to learning each other's names: a watershed in establishing Bashu's humanity. As Na'i says, addressing Bashu early in the film and before he starts talking: 'You are black; also dumb. You have no name either. Everybody has a name. Anyone with no name is a wild monster' (20:58).[56] The naming scene is also the first time that we see Bashu smile (Figure 7).[57] It is significant that the naming scene is directly preceded by the first instance of music-making. Watching warily from a distance while Na'i and her children process around the fields warding off evil spirits with their pots and pans, Bashu sees a mirage/ghost of his dead mother and is visibly affected by this reminder of home, burying his face in his hands (Figure 8); this leads directly into a scene in which we first hear and then see Bashu sitting in the yard singing and performing southern-style body percussion (Figure 9).[58] This is the first of several passages that link the character of Bashu with music. Indeed, a contrast becomes evident between the two main protagonists: it is almost always Bashu who makes music and Na'i who imitates animal sounds. Only once in the film does Na'i sing, briefly, as she lays out her wares at the local market. As the film progresses and Bashu becomes gradually integrated into Na'i's family, so the link between his character and music is reinforced. I would suggest that this is an important means by which Bashu's

humanity becomes affirmed: through language and through music, Bashu becomes less Other in the eyes of the villagers. At the same time, because music is such a powerful signifier of place, it also serves to mark Bashu's difference. For the villagers, his music-making simultaneously signifies his ethnic difference on the one hand, and his shared humanity, if not his shared nationhood (at least until it becomes established), on the other. For Bashu, music-making is both an often painful reminder of home and a means of communicating across cultural boundaries. When he discovers that he can talk in Persian with the village boys, the first thing he asks is where their palm trees and oil companies are - commonplace in the southern Gulf region, but quite alien to the northerners. Bashu asks why they don't talk about the war; and then: 'I don't see anybody playing the *arbāb*' [a kind of lute]. Have you heard its melody?'[59] Later, he cements his bond with the boys by teaching them agricultural songs and dances from the south, intended to encourage crop growth and closely related to the agricultural cycle and therefore very relevant to Gilan, but from an entirely different part of the country. Bashu knocks two rocks together, watched by the baffled boys; soon, one of them catches on and starts to imitate and the others follow. By the end of the scene, Bashu is teaching the boys planting dances (Figure 10). This is where he first 'connects' with the boys who had earlier teased and taunted him as an outsider, and where he starts to gain acceptance, celebrity status even, through the vehicle of music and dance.[60]

Significantly, the points in the film where Bashu makes music all mark stages in his gradual incorporation into the body of the village and his diminishing otherness. As noted, the first instance of music-making directly precedes the scene where Bashu and Na'i first communicate verbally; and the second marks his acceptance by the village boys. Towards the end, Na'i becomes ill, and unable to procure medicine for her, Bashu drums and sings healing songs from the south (Figure 11). These songs, and the associated rituals (known as *zār*) are used to exorcise evil spirits and like the agricultural songs are specific to the southern Gulf region.[61] This is the only point in the film where Bashu and Na'i are bound together by music. Bashu's anguish at Na'i's illness is clear as we see him trying to heal her through his music and through his otherness. At last, it seems, their fraught and complicated attempts to communicate verbally are transcended by the affective power of music.[62] The scene that follows directly on from this shows Na'i, now recovered, dictating a letter to her

absent husband in which she introduces Bashu for the first time as her son. Arguably then, music has (at least symbolically) helped to facilitate Bashu's transition from guest to son. Whereas Nai's earlier letters were dictated in Gilaki and translated into Persian by the elderly villager scribe (Na'i being illiterate), now Bashu takes on the role of amanuensis and Na'i dictates the letter in Persian – 'the language of power' (Rahimieh 2002:248) - thereby 'authorizing him as her son' (ibid.:249).[63]

Bashu's only encounter with Gilaki music takes place at the local market where he comes across a group of men listening intently to a flute player (Figure 12). Initially happy to hear the music, this episode prompts a crisis for the homesick Bashu who, seeing a fleeting mirage of his mother and feeling that he doesn't belong, runs away.[64] Once again, music's affective affordance enables it to signify, more intensely perhaps than anything else, notions of belonging, and for Bashu emphasises the contrast between home and the new place in which he finds himself. When he eventually returns to the village, he holds a flute which he has bought in the market (using money given to him by Na'i) and which he plays at the end of the film as Na'i's husband returns home after a lengthy absence. The musical style is now markedly northern in contrast with Bashu's earlier musicking. We see the (unnamed) husband approach from a distance, walking along the dusty track. The first family member he encounters is Bashu, sitting by the track playing his flute (Figure 13). During their exchange, it transpires that the husband, who we see has lost his right arm, also used to the play the flute.[65] In this context, the instrument and music become symbolic of and pre-figure Bashu's acceptance into the family; the implication that he will become a substitute for the husband's lost arm is confirmed ~~reinforced~~ verbally in the exchange between Na'i and her husband in the final scene that follows.[66] It is worth comparing the penultimate scene to that in *The Lor Girl*. In both cases, instruments become markers of the protagonist's journey: from traditional to modern in the case of Golnar, and from non-human other to human self in the case of Bashu.[67] Interestingly, both scenes also re-establish and reconfirm the patriarchal order of things, as discussed earlier for *The Lor Girl*. In the case of *Bashu*, the return of Na'i's husband,

> … dictates that Na'i must vacate the position she has carved out for herself and hand over the negotiation of power to her husband and Bashu, the newly integrated male member of the family. This is a particularly

> ironic ending, for the film succeeds in its critique of Persian nationalism through the agency of a woman whose final resubmission to patriarchal family replicates the pattern of subordination the film lays bare in the discourse of nationalism. (Rahimieh 2002:251)

Bashu is a film of great humanity and compassion which, provisionally at least, gives voice to those on the margins. Rahimieh suggests that Bashu portrays 'a country incapable of facing its fear of the other within … What Na'i and Bashu communicate to Iranian audiences is a need to rethink the space assigned to the marginalised and minorities' (2002:251). Na'i and Bashu are both outsiders in different ways: he through his ethnic and linguistic difference; she because of her challenge to the established gender and social hierarchies of the village:[68]

> What Na'i and Bashu have in common is their status as peripheral to the existing linguistic, social, and cultural systems of signification (241) … The woman and the stranger need each other to unsettle the beliefs and customs of an established community. They must together become the outsider, the embodiment of the other side of the self, in order to put the self and the other into dialogue with each other. That such a dialogue must cut across ethnic and linguistic boundaries is underlined in the film's juxtaposition of Persian, Arabic and Gilaki. Only such cross-breedings can make possible revisions of the categories of race, ethnicity and national identity. (2002:250)

Music clearly plays an important role in this self-other dialogue. As in *The Lor Girl*, music facilitates an affective marking of difference, most obviously in relation to the character of Bashu; but this is arguably more nuanced in the later film, in that the music also marks, and arguably participates in, Bashu's diminishing otherness as the story unfolds. Although used selectively in the film as a whole, music is an important part of Bashu's voice and becomes increasingly so as the film progresses. As Bashu becomes integrated into Na'i's family, so the link between his character and music is reinforced, ultimately providing a channel for his journey from stranger to guest to son, from outsider to insider, from other to self. Alongside the central theme of difference (cultural, linguistic, gender), *Bashu* is also about finding ways of transcending the self-other dichotomy, and here music serves to centre the peripheral, quite appropriately for an art form which those in power have sought to peripherize for centuries. Ultimately, ~~then,~~ music plays a humanizing role in *Bashu*, suggesting

that its capacity to simultaneously signify alterity and affinity affords it the potential to mediate and even transcend difference in ways that are arguably unique.

Concluding Comments

From the earliest days of sound film, music has offered a particularly powerful medium through which to represent and construct otherness of various kinds. This article has explored such processes, with reference to dominant and contesting discourses of nationhood in Iran and focusing on two case study films made at critical moments in the country's recent history. Whether connected to the 'spectacle of power and authority' (Naficy 2011:230) that characterized Reza Shah's autocratic modernization of the 1930s, or the play of identities following the 1979 Revolution, both films illustrate music's mobilisation as a sonic marker in the service of, or resistance to, differing national imaginaries. In the case of *The Lor Girl*, the arrival of sound allowed music to participate in the film's message promoting a homogenous national identity that is Persian-centric, secular and western-facing and closely allied with the power of the centralized state; 50 years later, *Bashu* challenged the myth of cultural and linguistic homogeneity by bringing into the centre – and into dialogue with one another - two hitherto peripheral parts of Iran's diverse nation body. I have argued that music's sensory and affective qualities make it particularly efficacious in constructing and marking relationships of alterity and endow it with the persuasive power to validate, and ultimately to normalise, such relations. Further, in both films, ethnic and racial othering intersect in interesting ways with questions of gender and indeed both films also show how othering can operate simultaneously on different levels, with multiple centres and peripheries. Thus, in *The Lor Girl* internal others are denigrated at the same time that the virtues of external others are extolled as part of processes of self-othering and, significantly, each of these binary constructions is marked musically. In all of the above, music becomes implicated, and perhaps complicit, in the underlying power dynamics. The central section of the article considered how music itself became marginalized in post-1979 Iranian cinema, as a result both of ideological and political pressures and aesthetic trends, and this can be seen in film narratives that explore music's contested social position, as well as in the selective use of music itself. Despite, or indeed because of this, music often takes on

heightened significance when it does appear. It will be interesting to see what the future brings as Iranian filmmakers and film composers find themselves navigating increasingly complex dynamics of self-other representation, both in relation to local national imaginaries and in the global circulation of their work.

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[1] The title of this paper paraphrases Dabashi's discussion of early Iranian cinema as 'A window unto the world' (2001:15).

[2] An interesting example was the 1925 ethnographic documentary *Grass*: *A Nation's Battle for Life*, made by the Americans Merian C. Cooper (producer), Ernest B. Schoedsack (cameraman) and Marguerite H. Harrison, and filmed among the Bakhtiari tribes, and which many in Iran felt presented a negative depiction of the country (Naficy 2011:161-70). Coincidentally, Cooper and Schoedsack went on to direct and produce *King Kong* (1933). By contrast, Naficy reports on a proposal by one A. Salimi, based on mobile cinemas in the Soviet Union, that would screen 'domestically produced newsreels and educational and public health films … [and] could show the military might of the government, modernization and progress achieved under the Shah … [and] could be influential not only in settling the tribes but in countering the Orientalist stereotypes of Iran that had relegated it to the pages of *The Thousand and One Nights*' (2011:194-5).

[3] Disempowering the tribes was central to Reza Shah's vision of nation; see Martin (2000:11-12), Cronin (2000, 2009), Barfield (2002) and several chapters in Cronin (ed. 2003). See Kashani-Sabet (2002) for discussion of discourses of national identity during the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods.
[4] Other than an edited volume in Persian (Azadehfar 2013, a technical book with some discussion of Iranian and Egyptian cinema), other writings are brief or dated, as follows: sections in Mehrabi (1984), Mahmoudi (2003) and Zahedi (2010) (all in Persian), Kashefi (1994), passages in Naficy (2011, 2012), passing references in Chelkowski (1991), Tapper (2002), Sadr (2006) and Slobin (2008:358-9), and a conference paper and online article by Cooley (2016, 2017).
[5] See also Taylor (2000) for similar issues in television advertising music. For further discussion of the music of King Kong, see Franklin (2001). It's interesting to note that *King Kong* was released the same year as *The Lor Girl* (1933) and features a similar, but more nuanced 'stock' storyline of kidnapping and rescue of the female protagonist from the 'primitive'/'savage'/'monstrous' Other.
[6] A number of film music scholars have touched on issues of otherness in their work. In addition to those discussed here, and for writings focused specifically on musical representations of racial/ethnic otherness, see Laing (2007), Galm (2008), Brill (2014) and Fülöp (2017).
[7] For further discussion, see Atabaki and Zürcher (2004) and Devos and Werner (2013).
[8] One of the early posters made a point of mentioning the film's '*muzik bā sabk-e jadid*' ('new style music') (Bahrami 2000). Naficy discusses the many 'genre transfers' between Indian and Iranian cinema, arguing that the centrality of music in *The Lor Girl* was part of this, and 'set a pattern for the new genre of Persian musicals. Almost all of Sepanta's subsequent films, made in India, were in this genre' (2011:235).
[9] Irani is a significant figure in the history of Indian cinema. He directed the first Urdu film and produced 'India's first English talkie' (Naficy 2011:232). For detailed discussion of *The Lor Girl* and its history, see Naficy (2011:231-40). Here I focus specifically on the ways in which music is used to mark otherness. Omid (1984) is a biography of Sepanta.
[10] For discussion of the extensive trade connections between Iran and India, particularly from the 19th century, see Green (2011, Chapter 4, 'Exports for an Iranian Marketplace'), who focuses on the significant export of religious ideas and practices. Green also notes that British goods were imported to Iran via India, and that by 1850 'there were already as many as fifty shops in Yazd dealing solely in British goods from India (138) … From the 1850s the import of British and British-Indian goods (textiles in particular) began to have profound effects on the Iranian economy' (139).
[11] An interesting point that I discovered about *The Lor Girl* through this research is that almost every Iranian I spoke to about it had heard of the film, for its historical significance, but few had actually seen it. *The Lor Girl* is one of the most written-about early Iranian films in the scholarly literature, but only Naficy (2011) and Cooley (2016, 2017) discuss the music and sound, Naficy quite briefly and neither in relation to questions of othering.
[12] There was in fact an earlier 1932 newsreel with spoken Persian, but *The Lor Girl* was the first full-length film in Persian (Naficy 2011:230).
[13] See also Bahrami (2000) for an interview with the son (Ali Akbar Damavadi) and widow of Habibollah Damavandi (1900-?), one of the first importers and exhibitors of foreign films in Iran. Damavandi senior had lived in Bombay and worked with the Imperial Film Company at the time when *The Lor Girl* was being made. His son reports that a special brochure was produced for the Bombay opening that included plot summaries, song texts and photographs. According to Ali Akbar, his father purchased the exclusive rights to screen the film in Iran, rights which he claims the family still hold (they also own the original copy of the film). Ali Akbar relates that his father arranged screenings in different cities in Iran, including a travelling cinema which used tents laid out with carpets and straw mats for places where there was no theatre. The article offers some interesting insights into the challenges faced by exhibitors at this time (and in the decades that followed), including the objections of local clerics, the lack of a reliable electricity supply, the film medium's susceptibility to damage and decay, high taxes for exhibitors, and local gangs which sometimes caused trouble or demanded protection money. Habibollah Damavandi later opened a cinema hall in Tehran - the Shahnaz Cinema - which screened both Iranian and Indian films; the latter were originally shown without dubbing or subtitles because the technologies had not yet arrived in Iran. Damavandi had learned Hindi during his time in Bombay and had also got to know Indian filmmakers, as well as later having Indian friends living in Tehran. The Shahnaz Cinema closed down two years after the revolution.
[14] Kerman is a city and province in south-eastern Iran. Despite the popularity of her accent, Zeydabadi-Nejad reports that the negative social and moral implications of appearing on screen meant that, 'During the shooting of the film, the actress was physically and verbally abused offstage, and for years afterwards' (2009:108). Sadr also reports that after returning to Iran, Saminezhad 'was forced to

change her family name to protect herself from public scorn, and was socially ostracised because of her involvement in cinema' (2006:28).

[15] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8, 0:53 to 2:00. It has not been possible to establish who composed the original music for the film, although Fish observes that 'Sepanta wrote the songs and poems' (2018:197); nor who made the later decisions relating to the choice of pre-existing music. The only person listed in the film credits in relation to sound is Bahman Irani (Ardeshir's brother), the sound recordist. Note also that the version of the film available online (also held at Iran's National Film Archive) is not the original, which I have been unable to locate or even establish that it still exists.

[16] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8, 6'33" to 8'36". Since *The Lor Girl* was made before the availability of post-production editing technology, sound and image would have been recorded simultaneously. This posed particular challenges in relation to musical continuity and sound-image synchronisation. Booth discusses the impact of this on Hindi cinema between 1931 and 1935 (when playback technology arrived in India), and in particular the rather static scenes in which actors' movements were limited due to the placement of the microphone and the need to maintain consistent volume and tone (2017:112). In *The Lor Girl*, this can be seen in Jafar's stationary positioning next to the tree throughout the song, and the close up frame presumably served to hide the accompanying musicians who would have been located close by. However, the out-of-synch lip movements also suggest that the music may have been recorded first and the image frames inserted later, using the sound track as the 'master', as some Indian film-makers did at this time (ibid.:114). The same problem of sound-image synchronisation occur elsewhere in *The Lor Girl*, with both spoken dialogue and singing, although this may be an issue specific to the available version of the film rather than the original. Booth discusses other forward-thinking strategies deployed by Indian film-makers to overcome the technological limitations of the time, including using two cameras to film different perspectives, only one of which would record the sound, and the frames from the second camera would be inserted onto the soundtrack version, as in the opening scene of *The Lor Girl*.

[17] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8, 22:13 to 25:15.

[18] Ali Akbar Damavandi suggests that the non-diegetic music in *The Lor Girl* was added in the 1950s as part of a re-construction from surviving prints (Bahrami 2000). Kaveh Askari suggests that some of the non-diegetic music (particularly in passages that also have spoken dialogue) was likely added in advance of a television broadcast (television arrived in Iran in 1958), adding that such passages may have originally been accompanied by live musicians during screenings (personal communication, January 2019). It is interesting to consider the use of *Träumerei* here in the broader context of the piece's popularity within the lexicon of silent film accompaniment, as discussed by Barham (2011), although it is unlikely that viewers in Iran would have understood the more obvious semantic referents as well as others that had by then accrued to the piece, including associations with romance, nostalgia and pathos. See, for example, *Träumerei* 's inclusion in the *Carl Fischer Professional Pianist's Collection for Motion Picture Theatres, Vaudeville Houses, Theatrical Programs and Dramatic Purposes* (1913), listed under 'folk, parting and sentimental songs and melodies' (Braunschweig 2017:569).

[19] Barham details the popularity of *Träumerei*, both in the many different arrangements available from the mid-19th century, through its adoption for silent film (as early as the 1910s) and the subsequent remarkable number of sound films in which it appeared (usually in fragmented or re-arranged form) from the 1930s onwards. According to Barham: 'Schumann's music has been employed, either diegetically or nondiegetically, in at least fifty narrative feature films and short films. Over half of these instances involve "Träumerei," making it by far the most commonly used work of the composer within the cinematic repertoire' (2011:283). Barham also discusses the arguable overuse of the piece, to the extent of cliché, and how this has been drawn on for comic effect in a number of films. Beyond its use in film, there is a fairly extensive literature on *Träumerei*, including discussion of its immense popularity from the mid-19th century and its associations with romantic longing, fuelled by its entanglement with the complex courtship between Schumann and Clara Wieck. According to Braunschweig, by the end of the 19th century, *Träumerei* was the most published single piano work in German-speaking Europe (2017:547-8), noting also that 'Finding romantic meanings in 'Traumerei' was commonplace, as may be inferred not only from the numerous literary efforts that thematized the work, including novels, short stories, and poetry, but also from the artwork on the covers of contemporaneous sheet music and descriptions of the work in music appreciation books and other publications aimed at non-specialist audiences' (2017:545). By the early 20th century, *Träumerei* was also well-established as a popular concert encore piece.

[20] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8, 50:03 to 51:27. Babak Tabarraee's historiographical research on the growth of the dub industry in Iran from the 1940s onwards includes a detailed analysis of the different versions of *Gone with the Wind* available in Iran (the first in 1943), including the ways in which Iranian dubbers and exhibitors modified and 're-authored' the film's sounds, including speech, sound effects and music (2018).
[21] My thanks to Steiner scholar Nathan Platte for identifying these sections from the original film.
[22] The other two points where the underscore is taken from pre-existing film music are during the ambush scene (35:56 to 37:47) and the closing credits (1:26:52 to 1:27:19), both using extracts from Miklós Rózsa's music for *Ben-Hur* (1959). As with the earlier non-diegetic music, it has not been possible to establish when and by whom this music was added and whether there was any music at these points in the original film.
[23] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8,1:17:39 to 1:19:29.
[24] Marsden writes of the musical significance of the Taj Mahal Hotel in the 1930s: 'overlooking the bay and the Gateway to India monument in the Colaba district of Mumbai. Tall, grand and imposing, it generates an almost mythical status in the imaginations of the people of the city. In the 1930's it was the epicentre of glamorous cosmopolitan society. Jazz bands from America played the latest hits in the Taj's glittering ballroom, whilst wealthy Indians, Britishers, soldiers and foreigners from all over the world danced the latest steps. The first "all-negro" (Fernandes 2013) band played in the hotel in 1935. Musicians lived nearby so as to be close to the center of the action'(2018:12). The hotel was founded by 'Parsi industrialist Jamsetji Tata … in 1903 after he was refused entry to a whites only hotel in the city' (2018:7).
[25] Nile Green notes, 'Linked by steamship to the port of Bushire [since the 1830s], in the nineteenth century Bombay thus provided thousands of Iranian labour exiles and merchants with their most accessible experience of technological modernity. Bombay introduced Iranians to trains after steamships, as well as modern industrial methods and a cosmopolitanism that was alien to the culturally homogenous towns of the Iranian plateau (125) … By the 1860s, for travellers arriving in Bombay from the chief Iranian port of embarkation in Bushire, the contrast between their points of departure and arrival was stunning: to disembark in Bombay was to enter a new and distinctly modern environment … This new urban environment in Bombay offered many nineteenth-century Iranians a heightened renewal of the opportunities for trade, refuge and writing that the Muslim courts of pre-colonial India had in earlier centuries.' (2011:126).
[26] Golnar is now dressed in a respectable *chador*, but a light coloured one, rather than black, which might have indicated a strongly religiously-observant woman.
[27] The whole passage showing Jafar and Golnar's arrival in Bombay is from 1:19:33 to 1:20:57. Naficy comments: '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 … at this attractive but programmatic national projection … 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). Elsewhere in the same volume, Naficy describes the new genres of 'railway and oil films, that depicted Iran as a modern nation. Both the railway and oil industries were sources of pride for Iranians because they gave evidence of the country's headlong trajectory towards centralization, industrialization, modernization, and projection of a national image' (2011:178).
[28] The February 1921 coup d'état through which Reza Pahlavi came to power.
[29] As with the earlier non-diegetic music, it is hard to establish when the music for the 'Bombay arrival' passage and that which follows would have been added. It is possible that the music was recorded first and the image frames inserted later, as described by Booth (see above).
[30] There is an interesting symmetry here with the panning up from Golnar's hips to her face with which the film begins. Here the camera pans down from the portrait of Reza Shah to the back of Golnar's head.
[31] Braunschweig discusses the extraordinary growth in pianoforte ownership in Europe and North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, something only 'made possible by industrialization and a distribution system facilitated by railroads' (2017:554). In Bombay, piano ownership would have represented membership of a cultural elite. Referencing the work of Ian Woodfield, Marsden notes that as early as the '1780's the Fowkes family in Calcutta had held musical soirees and small private concerts in the drawing rooms of musically inclined Anglo-Indians and, occasionally, wealthy and important Indians. Ladies played the latest pieces on their harpsichords and newly imported pianos, supporting a thriving sheet music and instrument import business. Keeping up with London was, according to Woodfield's account of the small scene in Calcutta, of paramount importance.' (2018:1).

[32] Slobin identifies a number of ubiquitous 'narrative knots' including groups of singing children, the iconic use of the figure of Beethoven, and the 'coupling of romantic involvement, or at least sensuality, with the space of the classical concert hall' (ibid.:339-40). Discussing the latter in the film *Now, Voyager* (1942), he observes, 'As a node of musical meaning, the concert hall knot adds extra value, beyond what the dense and motif-laden Steiner score … does by itself to detail emotion and push the plot' (ibid.:340). Incidentally, the first sound film made in Iran, *Tufan-e Zendegi* (*The Storm of Life*, dir: Ali Daryabeygi, 1948) opens with a latent love scene set in a concert hall.

[33] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvMm89lRcH8 1:24:45 to 1:26:08.

[34] There are resonances here with the work of George Marcus (as discussed by Martin Stokes) who 'argues for the recognition of the sentimental citizen as an emergent political actor, noting the new ways in which emotion was being pressed into the service of modern governmentality. Emotional intelligence, he argued, would be an increasingly vital citizenly resource. The language of political theory was limited, he suggested, by its appeal to the rationalism of the voter, the bourgeois, individual subject of liberal theory, conceived in these rationalising term' (Stokes 2017).

[35] Fish observes that the film's ending resonated with Parsi discourses of 'return' to Iran. She cites Iranian cinema historian Jamal Omid who claims that the original version of the film in fact ended after Golnar and Jafar's arrival in Bombay and that 'the scene in the house during which Ja`far extols Reza Shah's reforms and expresses the desire to return to a now glorious Iran were not original to the story and first version of the film' (2018:201). This seems unlikely, but were it the case would offer a rather different reading of the film's ending.

[36] Writing about the period directly after the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, Afary notes the widespread anxieties about women's changing social roles: 'Thus while some radical women and men were writing about polygamy and other abuses against women, the two women's journals of this period, *Danish* (1910-11) and *Shikufah* (1913-17), avoided most issues of gender inequality, sexuality, and politics and instead chose to focus on health, hygiene, education, home economics, child care, and proper etiquette. They therefore assured the public that the new Iranian woman could enjoy the advantages of modernity without challenging many traditional gender roles or moving beyond the acceptable confines of propriety and moral decency' (1996:31).

[37] Kandiyoti (1989) discusses similar processes at this time in the new Turkish Republic, as part of the modernizing policies of Atatürk. See Sadr (2006:28-32) for further discussion of both gender issues and Orientalist representations in *The Lor Girl.*

[38] A great deal has been written about 'the construction of women as the bearers of the collectivity's honour' (Yuval-Davis 1997:45), be that collectivity nation, family, tribe, and so on (ibid.45-6). As Yuval-Davis observes, 'Women, in their "proper" behaviour, their "proper" clothing, embody the line which signifies the collectivity's boundaries' (ibid.46).

[39] In this context, the attempted rape of Golnar by the Arab sheikh is highly symbolic; and there are resonances with Frantz Fanon's writings (as discussed by McClintock) on the female body as a site of colonial conquest (in the case of Algeria) and 'the long Western dream of colonial conquest as an erotics of ravishment … the Algerian woman is seen as the living flesh of the national body, unveiled and laid bare for the colonials' lascivious grip … Fanon ventriloquizes colonial thinking: "If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women." … Because, for male nationalists, women serve as the visible markers of national homogeneity, they become subjected to especially vigilant and violent discipline. Hence the intense emotive politics of dress' (McClintock 1995:364-5). This can be seen very clearly in the case of Iran from the 1930s through to the present day.

[40] For further discussion of the relationship between gender politics and discourses of nationhood, see Yuval-Davis and Anthias (ed. 1989) and Yuval-Davis (1997). As Yuval-Davis observes, 'Women usually have an ambivalent position within the collectivity. On the one hand … they often symbolize the collectivity unity, honour and the *raison d'être* of specific national and ethnic projects ... On the other hand, however, they are often excluded from the collective "we" of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position' (ibid.47). Similarly, in her discussion of the gendering of nationalism in the context of British imperialism and post-Empire, and colonialism more generally, McClintock observes that 'All too often in male nationalisms … Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation … but are denied any direct relation to national agency' (1995:354).

[41] It's worth noting that *Gav*, now considered a seminal work of the Iranian 'new wave', was sponsored by the state, but banned on completion because its vision of rural life clashed with the progressive image of Iran that the Shah wished to project to international audiences. Similarly, an earlier social-realist film, Ghaffari's *Jonub-e Shahr* (*South of the City*, 1958), was the first to be shot on location in the streets rather than on a set, and brought the reality of Iran's poorer neighbourhoods to the screens of

the middle and upper classes, offering 'an alternative narrative to the Pahlavi government's promotion of the country at the time as an oil-rich, modern nation' (Atwood 2016:74). Zeydabadi-Nejad notes that 'one of the articles of the 1959 censorship code prohibited "presentation of ruins, poverty, backwardness and scenes that damage the state's national prestige" (Golmakani 1992: 20)' (2009:33). *Jonub-e Shahr* was banned and reissued in a cleaned-up version by the government; and a series of films were also subsequently commissioned to portray the capital in a more positive light.

[42] Including earmarked funding for 'ethnic' cinema from 1988. Naficy observes that the revolution 'unleashed suppressed ethnic, tribal and religious differences and nationalist aspirations' (2012:235), which led in part to the emergence of an 'ethnic' cinema movement, which was particularly dominated by Kurdish filmmakers.

[43] The passage is from 46:53-48:57.

[44] See https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4xjqyo (50:47-51:50) for the whole passage.

[45] For the impact of this on music, see Nooshin (2005:235-8).

[46] One of the legacies of the historical East African slave trade is a large number of Iranians of African descent, living in the southern Gulf region, with very distinctive cultural and musical traditions (see, for instance, Ricks 1988).

[47] Naficy describes a scene early on where Na'i 'rises into the frame in a surprising close-up, her hair and chin covered with a white scarf, emphasizing her dramatic beauty and intense eyes, something that the early post-revolutionary censors had warned filmmakers against. With this one shot, which draws attention to the alluring possibilities of unveiled vision, the direct gaze, and scopophilia, Baizai breaks years of entrapment by modesty rules. Defying those rules, Nai gazes directly into the camera in close-up – something that she does several times hence' (2012:140) (see Figure 6). Beyzai himself referred to this image as a 'revolution' in Iranian cinema (2006:36). There are interesting parallels with Golnar's direct gaze already noted at the start of *The Lor Girl*.

[48] *Bashu* was also one of the first post-revolutionary Iranian films to attract international attention and was first screened outside Iran at the 1992 Toronto International Film Festival. Bezyai was not given permission to leave Iran to attend the festival (Naficy 2012:38).

[49] Other than short snippets for comedic effect, people from Gilan often forming the target of jokes in Iran.

[50] Dubbing has long been a widespread practice in the region, leading in some cases to confusion over actors' identities. For example, in the 1970s many Hollywood films were dubbed into Persian in Iran and subsequently exported to Afghanistan. There is an amusing passage in Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* (2003), when the young Amir (in 1970s Kabul) takes John Wayne to be Iranian through having heard him speak Persian in the dubbed films.

The subtleties of language-play between Gilaki, Arabic and Persian in *Bashu* are largely lost on audiences entirely reliant on a subtitled version of the film, where there is no indication of which language is being spoken when.

[51] See Pak Shiraz (2015).

[52] My thanks to Saeed Zeydabadi-Nejad for pointing out these movements and for describing his experiences of watching *Bashu* in Tehran when it was first screened in 1989.

[53] Beyond Iran, the use of natural sounds in film is also, of course, an aesthetic strategy in much so-called 'third cinema'.

[54] This close relationship with nature is arguably an important aspect of Na'i's acceptance of Bashu. When she and her children first find him hiding in the fields, she treats him like an animal, first chasing him with a stick, then leaving food and water out for him, and eventually luring him into an outhouse, so as to forcefully shelter him from the night storm. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 13:50 to 19:45.

Drawing on the work of Luce Irigary, Rahimieh suggests a symbolic link between Nai's mimicking of animal calls and her ability to mimic the 'gender-specific roles dictated to her by language and social convention' (2002:250), which allow her to negotiate and, to some extent, subvert them.

[55] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 7:57 to 8:54.

[56] Interestingly, the viewer never learns the name of Na'i's husband. See Rahimieh (2002:245) for further discussion of this.

[57] See the whole passage: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 28:52 to 31:25.

[58] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 28:21 to 28:51.

[59] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 1:04:41 to 1:05:15.

[60] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 1:22:31 to 1:24:58.

[61] *Zār* rituals are healing practices with quite distinctive music found in the southern Gulf region of Iran and rooted in Afro-Iranian traditions developed by slaves from East Africa and their descendants. Similar practices with the same name are found elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa.

[62] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 1:38:55 to 1:40:37.
[63] Naficy notes the use of traditional *taziyeh* (religious theatre) aesthetics in this scene, something found in other films by Beyzai, with the camera movement tracing the full circle of a *taziyeh* arena: 'This circular space described by both protagonist and camera is that of the *taziyeh* arena, whose narrator is Nai, addressing her audience, her missing husband, through his proxy, Bashu' (2012:196). Beyzai's work as a theatre director and playwright have influenced his film-making style. Other Iranian film makers have also drawn on *taziyeh* influences or reference the genre in their films. In light of the earlier discussion, it's worth noting that *taziyeh* performance was banned for certain periods under Pahlavi rule as being antithetical to the modernization agenda.
[64] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 1:12:44 to 1:14:30.
[65] The whole passage is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5v2Z33tW1fU, 1:44:41 to 1:48:30.
[66] See also Naficy 2012:140. It is interesting to note that the image of Bashu playing the flute at the end of the film was considered sufficiently significant to be used for one of the film posters and the DVD cover (see Figure 13).
[67] Slobin observes, 'Like the piano in the West, the flute in India has provided a rich source of narrative knots, as musical instruments do cross-culturally…' (2008:350).
[68] In the context of this discussion of female agency, it is worth noting that Beyzai has acknowledged the input of the main actress (Susan Taslimi) in helping him shape the narrative of the film (Zeydabadi-Nejad 2009:136). For detailed discussion of gender issues in *Bashu*, particularly in relation to the character of Na'i, see Rahimieh 2002. It has been suggested that Na'i represents the ancient Iranian goddess Anahita or Nahid, a figure associated with fertility, healing and wisdom. In this context, she becomes not only the adoptive mother of Bashu (and mother to her own children) but also a symbolic 'mother earth' figure. Beyzai's film-making style depends heavily on such symbolism (Beyzai 2006) and he has also drawn on ancient Iranian mythology elsewhere in his output.