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Sonic Sociabilities and Stranger Relations in Arnaud des Pallières' *Adieu* (2004)

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Abstract: *This article addresses the way noise has been deployed within the sonic practice of French filmmaker Arnaud des Pallières in his film* Adieu *(2004). According to des Pallières, the politics of his filmmaking resides in the way his films reflect on experiences of which he has no lived experience. With* Adieu*, des Pallières considers the experience of migration purposefully obliquely. The article examines how this indirect approach is achieved through noise that is harnessed to a political agenda, one that implicates spectators through the film's own indirect address to listening in spectatorship. Through asynchronicity, the film tunes us to noises that continually arrive from an elsewhere, annoying our sense of place and integrating us within a world of strangers. Through a close reading of this film's use of migratory noise, feedback and soundscaping, I show how des Pallières' rigorous and singular approach to noise in* Adieu *is uniquely placed to open up questions about how we relate to sound and cinema's address to listening in spectatorship. This consideration offers wider possibilities for understanding how cinema instigates more distant and radical forms of encounter through noise.*

This article considers the work of Arnaud des Pallières, a contemporary French filmmaker who, as I show through a close reading of his film *Adieu* (2004), demonstrates a singular and rigorous approach to the auditory to think about migration in the afterlife of colonial intervention. I am particularly interested in des Pallières' status as a nonrefugee filmmaker reflecting on the experience of displacement, and in the ways in which he uses his filmic and sonic practice to pay attention to and capture the experience of migration beyond the visual. I argue that this turn to the auditory is also a means of acknowledging his own distance from the subject of migration and refugee experience. Des Pallières has consistently stated he wishes to make films about experiences that do not "belong" to him. Speaking of *Drancy Avenir* (1997), a film des Pallières made prior to *Adieu* that reckons with the memory of the Holocaust in the present, he claimed:

> I say that I am not a Jew because it is clear that the huge amount of work that remains in the face of this fundamental event in recent history—that is to say the destruction of the Jewish population in Europe—that this task is for the most part left to Jewish people themselves, and this is a disgrace because such a task ought to be shared by the entire human population. It is thus in the name of a non-Jew, although it may sound deceitful, that I allow myself to propose a cinematic vision of my era. ("À quoi", my trans.)

The politics of des Pallieres' filmmaking, as he positions them, arise precisely from the way he provides a "cinematic vision" of subjects of which he has no direct experience. That is his responsibility as a filmmaker in *Drancy Avenir*: to share in the task of reckoning with the Shoah and its continual demand. This conception of des Pallières' responsibility as filmmaker is carried forth into *Adieu*, where the demand of the stranger entering France, Ismaël, is continual and remains unknown. Des Pallières' statements in interview regarding the issue of hospitality are revealing. Speaking of *Adieu*, des Pallières explains: "If I only had to tell Ismaël's story, I would be doing nothing but preaching to the converted. I did not want to be

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'with' Ismaël. Rather, I wanted him to be encountered each time as a stranger, a stranger who poses a problem" ("Aarnaud"; my trans.). Though des Pallières speaks of his work as offering a "cinematic vision", his use of asynchronous sound in relation to his images undercuts the mastery of this vision, allowing for a more incommensurable relation to experiences he cannot claim.

Through des Pallières' sonic practice, I want to think more broadly about the potential for cinema to orient us towards a world of strangers, instigating more distant and radical forms of encounter through noise. As I will show, des Pallières allows noise to migrate within his filmic spaces and to disturb the security and positionality of bodies on screen. He draws on noise as a mode of interference and intrusion, lacking in secure origin, as a means to problematise filiation and to think instead according to the logic of relation, mobilising noise to resound within the world of his film. This shift in attention, from viewing to listening, that my own research brings to his work, allows us to expand our understanding of the kinds of experiences and relations that cinema can express through noise—a less sociable, less domesticated form of sound than music or dialogue. Finally, this allows me to consider the ways in which the cinematic medium might use noise to direct our attention and create a space for listening that addresses the political.

What might a consideration of noise bring to a reflection on the experience and actuality of migration, as well as our understanding of films that choose to focus on this experience? For Michel Serres, noise is the "trace of alterity within belonging or ordure in language […]. I preserve my birthplace through the noise my tongue makes" (56). Following Serres, noise can thus be considered a means of throwing into question what constitutes identity in ways that can be harnessed productively to explore questions surrounding migration, exile and alterity. Identity as a substance or fixed category, and expressions that might refuse this conception, such as noise, are particularly at stake in the reality of migration where legal identities (such as migrant, refugee, asylum seeker) are so exceeded by the living, vulnerable bodies these terms do or do not circumscribe. Unmoored from its source and lacking a secure origin, noise is itself a migratory event. Thinking about noise, over and above sound, shifts our attention from thinking about a sound's source, its root, to attend instead to its errantry and movement. Noise is constantly on the move, propagating itself in space, interrupting and insinuating itself, drawing attention at once to the *here* where it is sounding, and the faceless or unidentified *there* from which it is arriving. While doing so, it carries with it material traces of everything in-between—where noise has been. As such, noise brings to the fore, in various ways, the process of relation; exiled from its source, its identity is in constant transformation.

Des Pallières' work can be characterised by its use of asynchronous sound—that is, a refusal to precisely connect sounds to actions performed on screen. He attends as much, if not more, to the auditory as he does to the visual. For *Adieu*, des Pallières maintains that he edited the soundtrack to certain sequences, before composing the image track. This approach can be found during the production process too, whereby the placement of the camera was dictated by the placement of the boom, depending on the proximity or distance from which he wanted to capture the sound. From these approaches, it appears that des Pallières' images are in some sense suppressed, summoned to the sounds in ways that remain strangely a-visual. His cinematic expressivity is therefore well placed to open up questions about how we relate to sound and cinema's address to listening in spectatorship. As I show, through his use of asynchronous sound, des Pallières draws on noise as a restless, migratory event within the layered construction of film in order to reflect on the experience of refugees, the uprooting migration entails and orders of visibility it delimits.

Adieu follows at least two parallel stories; that of a patriarchal family of pig farmers in rural France who are burying their youngest brother, Simon, and that of Ismaël who is fleeing persecution in Algeria and journeying to France. Ismaël's story is layered in complex ways with a recounting of the story of Jonah from the Book of Jonah and its retelling in the novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (1851). For Laura McMahon, who reads *Adieu* through Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida's respective thoughts on justice, the film:

> seeks also to do justice to the world of Ismaël, allowing for the singularity of his experience to impose itself upon the viewer, whilst tentatively opening (though not without the risk of reduction or universalism) onto a plurality of co-existence—through images of other immigrants, the allegory of Jonah, and the collective history of exile embedded in the name of Ismaël itself—as the film moves between the propriety of the singular and the impropriety of the common. (14)

Through these two principal stories, that of Ismaël and that of the family of pig farmers, *Adieu* explores common themes of mourning, faith, hospitality, exile and migration across borders, though it never allows the two simultaneous storylines to integrate into a meaningful totality. The film is interested instead in exploring the two narratives' indifference toward one another. Ismaël states before setting off to France that he has no desire to know France or who the French are, in much the same way as the film then goes on to show how Ismaël, a foreign body that may represent a multitude, does not count (these words are uttered by a god-like voiceover in the film's final shot). The film takes up a relational structure where each narrative sounds out against the other. Des Pallières stated in interview that "the stakes of *Adieu* rested on producing a continuity between these two stories that are blind to one another" ("Arnaud"; my trans.). Des Pallières' visual metaphor, impressing the two stories' blindness to each other, was then immediately followed by an acoustic one: "with *Adieu*", he said, "do not ask me for political proposals. That's not my role, my role is to make the scandal sound out". While perhaps taking des Pallières' language more literally than he intended, his evocation of blindness and resonance as two modes of dealing with relation is nonetheless suggestive of certain stakes between the visual and the auditory that the film is interested in, and it is, as I show, through the auditory that *Adieu*'s thinking of relation is realised. *Adieu* denies any visual encounter between its two narratives, refusing to show the webs that implicate these different spheres, yet it allows these relations to be heard, and in doing so, draws us into stranger forms of encounter that exploit the inherently restless and mobile properties of the acoustic between the film's two storylines.

Restless Acoustics

The restless nature of sound is something I draw from the work of sound-theorist Brandon LaBelle whose theory of restless acoustics and itinerant listening is useful for thinking through what a poetics of mobility through sound might yield. LaBelle argues that the restless, mobile properties of the acoustic and its production of space as a space between bodies might be used to offer alternative forms of publicness that are emergent, unlike the visual which he claims is locked into a logic of manifestation and identity. The emergent public LaBelle identifies is not fixed, but always a potential one, dependent on sound as a temporal event, producing a sociability that is marked by contingency. He writes: "from my perspective, sound operates in support of an *emergent public* by specifically bringing together bodies (human and nonhuman, objects and things) that do not necessarily search for each other, forcing them into proximity, into a form of nearness" (276; emphasis in the original).

The acoustic orients us towards voices that appear suddenly, that have simultaneously nothing and everything to do with us, integrating us within a world of strangers on which the notion of any public depends. LaBelle goes as far as suggesting that sound's ability to problematise identity and notions of community is how we might arrive at "new conditions of solidarity, of knowing and being known" (285). Sound, for LaBelle, is a means of arriving at a radical sociality. Yet I would suggest that the strangers involved in LaBelle's imaginary of this emergent public seem rather too sociable. And this notion of a public is perhaps not sufficient when it comes to those subjects who do not possess legal identities with which they could participate. Notions of publicness, even if they incorporate strangers, do not admit those without documentation, who cannot participate in a public, or become public. This echoes Judith Butler's thinking on the inequitable distribution of vulnerability—how some lives are denied by being excluded from public forums of grievability, such as the obituary (35).

LaBelle's thinking of the sonic body as an emergent public is useful for thinking about the way films engaging with migration might use noise to rethink notions of publicness, based on more radical forms of "sociality". Yet in bringing LaBelle's thought to *Adieu*, I wish to build on his thinking and suggest ways that films engaging with migration also demonstrate more doubting positions towards the possibility of such sociality. *Adieu* uses noise to think through the different degrees of belonging that sound inscribes, yet it also seeks to refuse any narrative that recuperates or erases the strangeness of strangers. *Adieu* marks hesitations over LaBelle's claim that listening "locates us within a field of events in such a way as to instigate a 'sociality of strangers'" (278). Rather, des Pallières uses sound to make palpable those relations that do not bring us into forms of proximity or nearness, using noises on the periphery of expression as a means through which to think about the incommensurable strangeness of these encounters. In what might be considered an expression of des Pallières' distance from the experience of the migrant, *Adieu* deliberately seeks a less knowing, less socialised sense of the world, using noise and feedback to create a cinematic space of echoes open to contamination. Through this, the film addresses the political by opening up a space for directing the attention of a viewer and listener towards strangers who remain strange.

Community

Adieu begins with an image of unity, both in terms of the relation between sound and image, as well as its presentation of a group of listeners. This initial unity is one that the film will subsequently seek to deconstruct. An early scene opens with a woman reading a passage from a book aloud. She is framed in an intimate close-up. It is not possible to see, at least initially, the group of off-screen schoolchildren in their classroom to whom she is reading. The text is a remarkably loyal paraphrasing of an extract from French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, though *Adieu* provides no context to signal this. The woman's voice is synchronous with her image. She is bathed in a soft light from the window, her back facing the outside world, while the melodious strings of a Vivaldi concerto accompany her voice. The passage describes a group of men gathered around a fire, listening to a storyteller, who recounts tales that teach them of their shared origins and filiations. She reads slowly:

> the story isn't always easy to follow, it often scares the listeners. It tells of strange powers and frightening transformations. It invents names they have never heard and creatures they have never seen. But the congregated listeners will remember every

word. They'll understand why they had to congregate and why the story had to be told. (My trans.).

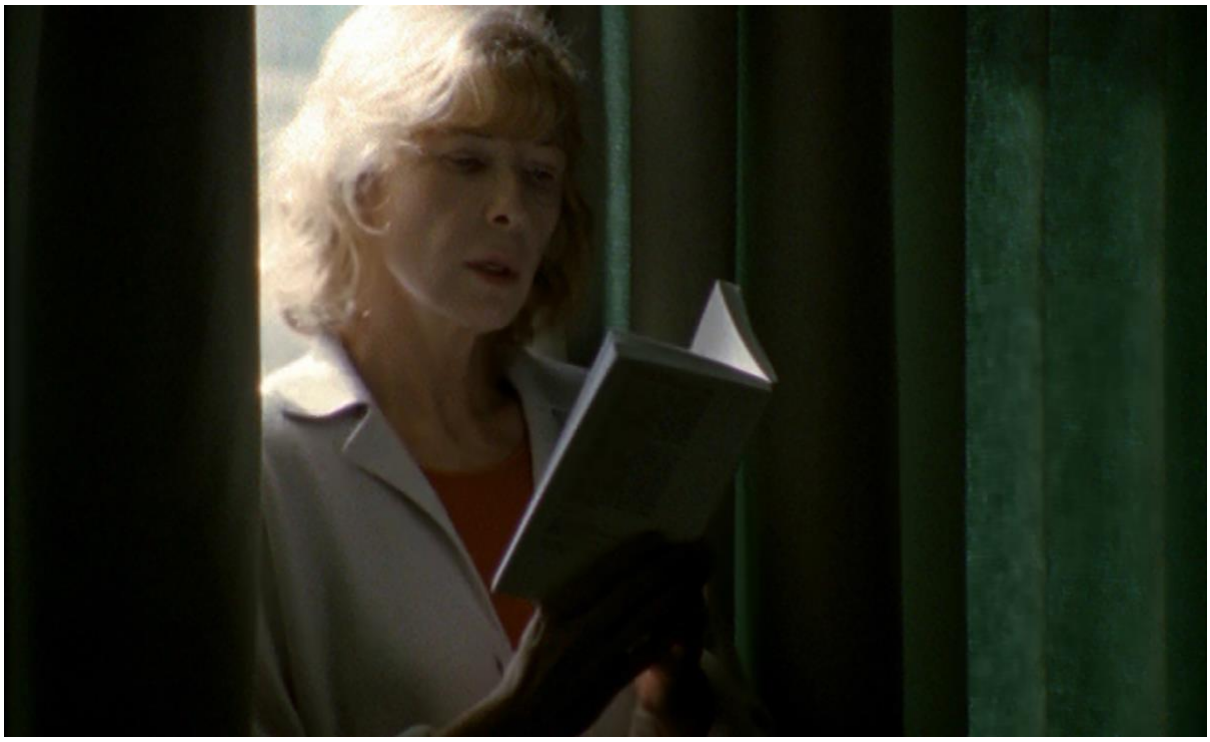


Figure 1: Aurore Clément reading at the window in *Adieu* (Arnaud des Pallières, 2004). ARTE France, 2004. Screenshot.

An intimate realm of the mythic is created in this close-up, accentuated by the softness of the lighting, the measured pace of the woman's reading, there is nothing to interrupt or mediate the seemingly direct transmission in this image between the book she holds before her and her reading face (Fig. 1). Yet this mood is broken by the arrival of another light on her face from the right of the frame. The scene is reframed from a wider angle. We see the schoolchildren around her, we see a man speaking with the teacher. He is delivering bad news. A tragedy has occurred. She places a call. Someone has died, an accident in the road. The synchronicity of des Pallières' scene begins to break down. Jump-cuts between frames suggest her personal and devastating experience of temporality in that moment.

This early scene thus enacts a transition, or trauma, that will be a definitive break from synchronicity between image and sound to a more interruptive, scattered mode that will mark the remainder of *Adieu*. The choice of this particular passage from Nancy's text, with its image of the group as a group of listeners, its figuring of the group as a community of listeners, is not inconsequential to *Adieu*, a film keen to probe the notion of community through its story of exile and uprootedness and, as I will be discussing, a film that is distinctive in its use of the acoustic in its address to us as listeners. The film incorporates Nancy's image of a listening community but this is, as McMahon shows, "a myth which it will seek to stage and destabilise simultaneously, in an echo of Nancy's own questioning of communitarian bonds" (10). From here on, the film addresses us as listeners indirectly, through noises that arrive from an "elsewhere" beyond the image, in a manner that consistently refuses this initial presentation of an ideal listening community, receiving a direct transmission of myth, from some unidentified, nostalgic point in the past.

The teacher, played by Aurore Clément, continues her lesson. The casting of Clément allows echoes from other films to be heard and imports into *Adieu* a specific set of meanings drawn from her previous roles in *Lacombe, Lucien* (Louis Malle, 1974) or across four of Chantal Akerman's films—*The Meetings of Anna* (*Les Rendez-vous d'Anna*, 1978); *Toute une nuit*, 1982; *The Captive* (*La Captive*, 2000); *Tomorrow We Move* (*Demain on déménage*, 2004)—thus tying her into a past body of work that has explored displacement in a particular kind of post-Holocaust Europe. The frame, as it opens out onto the classroom, presents other signifiers, practices, inscriptions that the film goes on to problematise. On the blackboard in chalk are the words: "Origins", "People", "History" and "World". The children are asked to perform a grammatical analysis of these terms, rather than evaluate them conceptually. The teacher tells the children it is time for their dictation. Here too, the terms are those such as "God", "brother", "son"… filiation, in short. Through dictation, the film presents us with another type of listening that it then departs from. Prescriptive and pedagogical, the children are hearing and learning, sound is acting on them. In these various ways, the scene establishes sound as a realm of doing, reminding us of both the auditory dimensions of spectatorship and film as a potentially didactic medium. However, des Pallières' subsequent use of asynchronicity suggests an alternative pedagogy, one which involves us with the film as a world of echoes that we are tuned to, without it becoming an object for our knowing. It is this approach to sound that I now consider in closer detail.

Displacement

From this point on, *Adieu* employs two different approaches to soundscaping between its parallel stories. These are maintained almost unfailingly, until the distinction breaks down and the sonic signatures that defined each narrative begin to collapse into one another, inverting to create the echo of one within the other. The rural French location, where the family are burying their youngest brother, is full of ambient noises that are rendered in hyperrealist fashion, stressing their materiality and reflecting on the family's rootedness, territorialisation and sense of place. Materialising sound indices provide auditory close-ups of the earth, the soil, the tinkling of china in their homes. Conversely, in the story recounting Ismaël's flight from Algeria, the film avoids the use of direct sound, employing a more celestial, acousmatic and immaterial soundscape, suggestive of Ismaël's uprootedness and exile. It is only at the start of the film before Ismaël leaves Algeria, as he looks from his window at the city below, that any ambient sound is included. The noise of the Algerian city, the sound of the muezzin, comes in and out of focus, along with the image's play of focus and blur as Ismaël begins to withdraw from his surroundings and recount the story of Jonah, from the Book of Jonah. Jonah, Ismaël tells us, sought to disobey God and flee from his sight by boat, a boat that is swallowed into the belly of a whale. It is this story and its recounting in the voiceover that will accompany Ismaël's own clandestine journey to France.

Yet, after setting up these two sonic identities for each narrative, reflecting emplacement and displacement, embodiment and disembodiment, *Adieu* fails to maintain their neat separation and allows each sonic identity to insinuate itself into the world of the other. For example, as the father of the family approaches his death at the film's close, the rural French soundscape abandons its hyperrealism and becomes abstract with the presence of a nonidentified buzzing hovering over the images, sounding the formal principles that have characterised Ismaël's story, as the father migrates across the border between life and death. Or, as Ismaël sits, clandestine amongst other migrants, in the back of a lorry, highly material, indexed sounds infuse the image, transforming its identity and importing the acoustic principles

that have characterised the French rural countryside. They are not the sounds of the lorry in which Ismaël sits, but a metaphorical soundscape from Jonah's journey by sea that Ismaël is recounting. Here, sound inscribes Ismaël's journey into a history of displacements: Jonah's, of course, but also the belly of the boat that carried slaves across the Middle Passage, echoing the comparisons between contemporary migration and the slave trade that many have recently drawn, such as postcolonial theorist and writer Patrick Chamoiseau in his short text *Frères Migrants* (2017). We hear the overbearingly present creaking of the boat, the crack of the rigging, a foghorn. In such a way, the aesthetic principles that have kept the two stories separate, the hyperrealism of the pig farmers and the abstract immaterial soundscape that accompanies Ismaël's journey, traverse and infuse each other, mutually implicating the sonic identity of one into the images of the other.

The recourse to creating unique acoustic spaces through a disjunction between sound and image, such as that of the lorry-boat-whale, has been used before by des Pallières in *Drancy Avenir*, a film which refused historical reconstruction to explore the Holocaust through images of the world today. In this film, a young historian travels to Drancy, a former internment camp for Jews that is now a low-rent housing complex. She makes her journey by metro, yet des Pallières chose to use the sounds of a bus in the soundtrack. It was by bus that the Jews were transported from Vel d'Hiv (the winter bicycle velodrome that was used to temporarily confine Jews) to Drancy internment camp, located in Drancy, the north-eastern suburb of Paris. The unique acoustic space des Pallières creates through this rapport between sound and image allows an oscillation between the past and the present. The film employs the auditory to create sensory triggers that suggest this past's resurfacing. Des Pallières is not interested so much in producing a nonrelation between sound and image through his use of asynchronous sound. Instead, asynchronous sound is used to maintain relations in continual development, producing feedback and echoes, passing through phases of equivalence, contradiction, and metaphor. In this way, *Drancy Avenir* reflects on the making and unmaking of meaning that is disorientating, as well as the conditions of our traumatic recollection.

The same principles of rootedness and uprootedness used in *Adieu*'s soundscapes were applied to the recording of the actors' voices for their interior monologues delivered through voiceover. The use of an acousmatic voice that either does or does not contain traces of a territorialised body is suggestive of *Adieu*'s reflection on the tension between emplacement and displacement, and the geopolitical forces that traverse and pass through each individuated body. Ismaël's voice was cleansed of any bodily noises such as the sounds of his mouth and throat because, des Pallières claimed, he did not wish the voice of Ismaël to carry a body (Marre et al. 42). In removing any trace of bodily noise from the voice of Ismaël, he is not only disembodied, but deterritorialised. Des Pallières creates a voice that is expropriated even from its body. By contrast, the material grain was kept on the voice of actor Axel Bogousslavsky because des Pallières wanted to suggest an incessant relation between inside and outside, self and surroundings, the body as one acoustic perimeter to the world outside, the way the voice is at once rooted in the materiality of the body even as it resonates beyond itself.



Figure 2 (top): Ismaël listening to the city. Figures 3 and 4 (middle and bottom): Orienting towards the contours of their worlds in *Adieu* (2004). ARTE France, 2004. Screenshots.

It is this idea of perimeter between ourselves and the world around us, and sound's incessant migration across this threshold, that des Pallières' film seems to examine. Recalling the viewpoints of impressionist paintings, throughout *Adieu* we find characters placed at windows, orienting towards the contouring of their immediate worlds and beyond. For example, we see Ismaël looking out onto the city (Fig. 2), the father being dressed at the window (Fig. 3) and the priest pouring coffee (Fig. 4). Des Pallières shows his characters pivoted towards a world that they (or we) hear, without necessarily paying attention. However, these impressionist viewpoints are given audiovisual dimensions as the auditory sense is stressed through the frequent inclusion of the ear in close-up.

Des Pallières' placement of technology in the creation of these scenes reflects this concern for an orientation towards a world of overheard sounds. For the scene where the father is being dressed for the funeral at the window, one microphone was placed on the camera's axis, capturing the materiality of the proximate sounds on the body (the rustle of the clothes, the movement of the actor), while another microphone was placed outside, capturing the ambient sounds of birds. Des Pallières describes how he wanted both these sounds to occur simultaneously: "it's not some religious principle I have with regards to direct sound. It was just the sound that was needed at that moment […]. In the film, the sounds of those little birds are hyper present in the mix, to the point of being violent, and it is synchronous sound, not ambient sound added in post-production" (Marre et al. 43; my trans.). Des Pallières' choice to maintain an equivalent volume for his outside sounds, the refusal to submit them to a traditional hierarchy between foreground and background, allows them to intrude in such a way that blends foreground and background, ungrounding the stability of the body on screen, placing it in a more exposed relation with its surroundings. Similarly, for the scene with Clément on the phone following her reading—the moment of fragmentation and transition for the film, its opening out onto the resonance of the world—the boom was oriented, as des Pallières' characters are, in the direction of the window, to capture the noises overheard from the playground.



Figure 5: Itinerant listening amongst a distracted congregation in *Adieu*. ARTE France, 2004. Screenshot.

Contrary to the listening congregation found in *Adieu*'s opening, the act of transmission and listening for the rest of *Adieu* is fraught, caught between interruption and distraction. Emmanuel Burdeau draws attention to the staging of what he considers a conflict between "God and matter" in the priest's funeral sermon rehearsal:

> In church, the priest rehearses his sermon—a mix of religious maxims and microphone tests: "My brother… One, two, three... Beat your own breast... One, two... Can you hear me well enough at the back?" Is this the sign of a battle between God and matter?... Or a sign, on the contrary, that God has now entered the machine? (15)

What is this noise that comes to parasitise the sermon? The intrusion of the "one, two" between the words of the sermon—a sound test that draws attention to the staging and potential failure of technology—is highly subversive. Later, we get the manifestation of actual feedback from technology within the church and the real sermon. For this, des Pallières and his sound editor set up three microphones to produce an intentional Larsen effect. As the priest strains with effort to produce an atmosphere of solemnity within the church, accentuated by his shrouding in dark lighting, and alongside the dirge of a plodding organ, the feedback from his microphone causes him to wince. The listeners at the congregation are distracted. The camera places itself as a participant amongst them, but cuts frequently, emulating their erring movement of attention and distraction. Ears are given prominence in the framing, yet the congregation begin whispering to each other (Fig. 5). Likewise, as the camera cuts, it focuses on individual members singling them out as individuals, but eschews the frontality of classical cinematography and painting. Instead these are dorsal shots, denying the primacy of the face and ensuring that the congregation and its individual members do not enter into a shot–reverse-shot responsive logic with the delivery of the sermon. This literal example of feedback from the Larsen effect explicitly illustrates the way *Adieu* incorporates an aesthetics of feedback and displays a deliberate openness to noise by letting official discourses acquire parasites. Feedback becomes a means of sensing and citing what Greg Hainge terms the "expressive assemblages" between subject, space and technology (161). *Adieu* brings into earshot and makes audible these relations, ushering in what does not respect boundaries, what subtends our organisation of the world.

Another instance of noise, feedback and echo can be heard in des Pallières' inclusion of Vivaldi's concerto. British electronic music artist Martin Wheeler, with whom des Pallières frequently collaborates, worked on the Vivaldi concerto, looping it, and then bringing in parasitic noises. Speaking of this move, des Pallières explains his intention to invoke the beauty of how listening situations, even the concert hall, are never free of extraneous noise:

> I made quite an iconoclastic gesture. I decided to parasite the Vivaldi, which is a piece from the past, with something extremely contemporary, highly aggressive, but which, in its own discordant and torn way, was for my ear in a certain harmony with this music, updating it so to speak; this is simply because even when set aside in a concert hall or whatever place I choose to listen to music, there are always other noises of horns or trains. I've always found this shock encounter between the past and present in the histories of listening to music very beautiful. Here, the idea was to invoke this in the film's overall musical gesture. ("Entretien"; my trans.)

What does *Adieu*'s address to listening in spectatorship thus entail? Through his soundscaping, sound bridges, placement of microphones, use of the voice to carry the trace of a body or its absence, as well as his openness to noise and feedback, des Pallières fills our

listening with displaced voices and overheard subjects. Rather than this creating a visible, identifiable community, like that found in Nancy's description of people gathered round the fire, learning of their shared origins and foundational myths, *Adieu* demands a listening that is continually distracted and errant, whose attention is caught by those absences, presences and strangers carried in the movement of a migratory noise that is presented throughout the film as a material hinge that connects, even as it leaves each story to its distinct and separate existence.

This relation and mutual implication between the two narratives is made most manifest in the film's use of sound bridges, as each image is introduced by the sound of something other. Noise runs across and traverses these narratives, brushing against them in the continual arrival, departure and "connectiveness" of its movement. Almost seeking to impress noise's circulatory nature, *Adieu* has a high recurrence of the sounds of circulation—car horns are heard beyond the frame, the noise of an aeroplane landing traverses the images of the funeral, before the image cuts to Ismaël's plane landing in France. Passages of meaning are suggested. Early on in *Adieu*, as we see the lorry that the film persistently tracks leaving the depot, we hear the sounds of gulls—themselves migratory birds—that perhaps prefigure the image of the lorry-as-boat that *Adieu* later constructs, but also more immediately, draw attention to the distances sound connects us across, the bodies it brings to our attention.

Adieu is thus full of noises that do not speak to us, but rather surround us. For example, the film emphasises a dog's barking, a rooster's crowing and the banging noises of construction during the lunch scene in which the priest delivers the theological proofs for the existence of God. Consistently, our listening is pricked and stirred by an elsewhere, animated by acoustic spaces that are constituted by exchange. The relation to the world that des Pallières achieves through editing could then be understood as a horizon of expanded immersion, which we inhabit in the form of distracted encounter. As a listener, the spectator is traversed by signs, impressions and triggers whose identities are contingent, evolving, multiple. We are strung between what is in front, what has a face, and the noisy circulation of what is around.

Conclusion



Figure 6: Tracking the lorry, *Adieu*. ARTE France. Screenshot.

Adieu remains a little more doubting than LaBelle, even if it is the restless properties of the acoustic that the film seems to mobilise in order to explore the relations between the strangers it puts into contact. This contact remains unknowing, rather than positing any "sociality of strangers" (278). By favouring noise, des Pallières remains faithful to representing the experience of Ismaël's invisible intrusion into France. Noise captures the restlessness and expropriation of his journey, its fragile and contingent moments of pause, rest and stability, while also functioning to alert a viewer/auditor to the traces of migrants' presence, without delivering this presence over to capture, to knowledge, to commensurability. *Adieu* equally strives towards visual opacity with images that are never explained, such as the images tracking the movement of the truck (Fig. 6), scenes shot in near darkness or the use of visual noise through superimposition. Thus, the film also refutes LaBelle's claim that the visual is always and necessarily locked into a logic of manifestation and identity. Des Pallières uses sound to proliferate encounters that lie between and around the two stories, allowing them to remain strange to one another, and yet making them resonate as an animating presence. Following LaBelle, we can conceive how *Adieu* creates a sonic body of distracted listeners, putting our ear into relation, into a hearing that is also an overhearing, as an alternative to the listening community found in the film's opening. *Adieu* invites us to listen differently to that which we do not know. Des Pallières' commitment to noise and his shift of emphasis between our sensory connections from the visual to the auditory suggest new ways to think about cinematic expressivity and the different ways that cinema might resonate and tune us into a world of others. The film reflects on roots, origins, filiations and place, but also irritates our sense of place and demands a distracted and errant listening that immerses us in noises that intrude from the peripheries of our immediate world. It uses noises that cannot be ascribed an identity and that speak instead to an impoverishment of the categories we use to identify. These noises extend the identities of the film's images and put them into relation with each other, opening up the film as a world of echoes where these relations resonate, without claiming any fusion between them.

Adieu thus opens itself up as a cinematic object and experience constructed across a series of channels where various relations, meanings and triggers come to sound. In its placement of sound across these various channels, the movement of the soundtrack itself is felt as a migratory noise, one that brushes against and intrudes upon the security of its images and ushers in material feedback, stirrings and interruptions. Though migratory noise is used throughout *Adieu* to put the two worlds it explores into distant contact, and is positioned in ways that affect a spectator's own listening and collect us within different groupings that annoy our sense of place, *Adieu*'s use of noise does not integrate us within what we could consider an "emergent public". We are tuned to strangers whose resonances pass through us, catching our attention from the periphery of our immediate world. Fundamentally, des Pallières opts to exclude us from Ismaël's experience, affirming its singularity and unknowability. Oriented out towards the world, *Adieu*'s final image of a tiny plane disappears onto an azure horizon. It contains Ismaël who is being deported back to Algeria. The voiceover opens out onto futurity, imagining a world beyond the image, in which there are no more waiting zones in international airports and no more camps guarded by police with machine guns. Yet, as the voiceover imagines this future without borders over the image of a horizon that is empty of signifiers except for the tiny scale of the plane in the mass of blue, the viewer realises that it is not unknown, but a certain and bounded return for Ismaël. In the voiceover's articulation, the incommensurable strangeness and separation between our experience and Ismaël's is reinforced. The voiceover, emulating the voice of God, tells us this future will be a world where "we" (and suddenly this "we" fixes the spectator, and arguably des Pallières, as a Western onlooker) understand that Ismaël never meant "us" any harm, that he never did anything, except

arouse our curiosity. The film locates us within this "we", identifying its spectator as belonging to a host nation. Yet if these final words suggest our curiosity was aroused by Ismaël, the film here takes up a different language and mode of address. Throughout, *Adieu* has constantly refused the mechanisms of a hermeneutic drive, eschewing narrative mechanics of desire and curiosity. In this final space of listening and the way we are addressed, the politics of *Adieu* are disclosed as the film opens out beyond its own self-contained sphere to resonate with the realities beyond its own world and time. The scandal sounds out between the hopeless, disappearing image of Ismaël's plane and the acousmatic voice from which it is completely cut off.

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