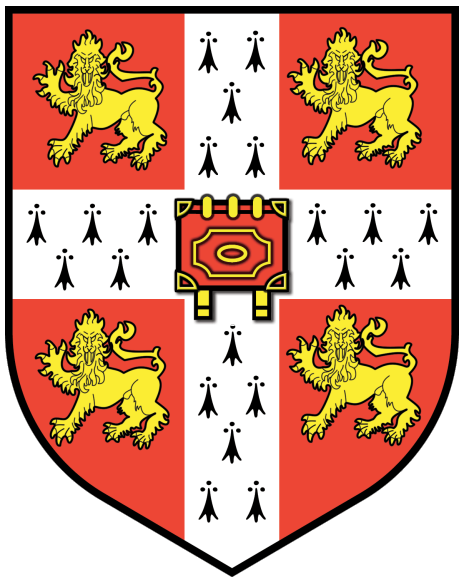
AN EXTREME EAR TO THE WORLD: NOISE IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN CINEMA

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Abstract

'An Extreme Ear to the World: Noise in Contemporary European Cinema'
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This thesis examines a recent shift in attention to the auditory present in a strand of post-1999 contemporary European film and philosophy. It argues that noise, defined predominantly as unpleasant or unidentifiable sound, has been harnessed by particular filmmakers as a means to tune our attention to different bodies sounding in our environment. Yet while the ear is an organ we perceive to be open, it could always be receiving more. This limit to our audition is a limit the filmmakers examined here productively engage with in ways that raise questions about the politics and ethics of listening to different bodies. The thesis takes Jean-Luc Nancy's articulation of the listening body, what he calls the *corps sonore*, to posit a theory of a 'cinematic corps sonore' where the boundaries between on-screen bodies, medium and spectator are dissolved in the mutual vibratory soundings that characterise the state of being 'all ears'. In doing so, the thesis offers a revision of the haptic framework that has dominated recent sensuous theories of film as well as applications of Nancy's thought to film in the inter-discipline of film philosophy.

The analysis proceeds via close readings of individual films to consider how noise tunes us to different bodies and the specific issues raised in doing so in ways that resonate beyond the philosophical limits of Nancy's *corps sonore*. Chapter one examines the 'unlistenable' in the work of Catherine Breillat and Gaspar Noé. It revises accounts of the supposed 'unwatchability' of Breillat and Noé's cinema by examining their respective appeals to volume and frequency, revealing both the possibility of intimacy and the risk of vulnerability that the *corps sonore* poses. Chapter two takes the *corps sonore* to the question of national borders and social bodies by bringing post-colonial theorist Édouard Glissant's concept of the *écho-monde* to Tony Gatlif's *Exils* (2004) and Arnaud des Pallières' *Adieu* (2004). It argues that both filmmakers appeal to the migratory properties of noise to think through questions of identity, relation and the different degrees of belonging that sound inscribes. The final chapter asks whether cinema constitutes a site that allows for an amplification of the nonhuman. Attention is given both to the practice of Foley and to the use of Foley in Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) and Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012) to show how a non-coincidence between body and sound figures cinema as a place of resonance, animated by the scattered structure of dynamic relations between things that Foley brings about. Yet the chapter also casts doubt over the possibility of noise indicating something outside of human world-projection and as such, disrupts the otherwise increasingly prehensile attention that I argue filmmakers have been able to pay to the body through the auditory.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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INTRODUCTION

'Qu'est-ce qu'exister selon l'écoute, pour elle et par elle?' (Nancy 2002, 17). This is the question Jean-Luc Nancy poses at the start of his 2002 text *À l'écoute* in his attempt to lead philosophy away from the order of understanding and instead to '*tendre l'oreille* philosophique' towards a more unknowing, receptive engagement with the world (15, emphasis in original). In posing this question, Nancy implies listening designates both a mode of thinking and a way of being in the world that is distinct from hearing, and indeed from other forms of attention. The listening ear emerges as a responsive openness and receptivity that strains *towards* sense, to what is between the intelligible and the sensible. This question of what it means to exist according to listening is one of the questions I use to frame particular instances in which cinema appeals to and constructs spectators as listeners, a state in which we become 'all ears'. In turn, the films examined herein offer various ways of understanding what it might mean to 'exister selon l'écoute', its possibilities and limits. The ear is the organ we imagine to be open. It is constantly capturing sound. Yet the openness of the ear is also a fantasy of perception, one that resonates with the fantasies of perception that have marked the cinematic medium since its inception. The ear could also always be capturing more. This thesis interrogates how noise has been deployed in contemporary film to frame our listening and tune our attention to various bodies sounding in our environment. It moves through a consideration of different and progressively more diffuse bodies, beginning with an exploration of the familiarly situated human body in chapter one and then opening out to consider less certain identities, such as national or geographic identities in chapter two and, finally, nonhuman bodies in chapter three. In each of these contexts, I argue that the auditory is used as a means to solicit extreme forms of attention that are tense, anxious and straining towards what is beyond meaning.

Noise, in various ways, speaks of the limits of our audition. It names that which we cannot stand, that which goes unconsidered, derided or ignored; it names that which troubles identity, meaning, content; likewise, it names that which challenges our ear physiologically, designating what is at the limit of our perception. This limit, I contend, is also a limit that contemporary European filmmakers have productively engaged with in order to think through the politics and ethics of listening to different bodies, their various soundings and relations. Noise, I argue, constitutes a sensuous opening in cinema that in turn opens an ethical dimension that I consider in parallel with contemporary French thought's recent privileging of the auditory as a mode of attention and sensing. As such, my interest lies in thinking through the politics of tuning in to various bodies through noise in cinema, and the ethical propositions

noises mobilise. For noise itself brings to the fore the process of relation; it signals both a here and a there through the non-coincidence between body and sound, unlike the coterminous relationship between light and its reflection off the surface of an object. And as much as noise might speak of, refer back to, or prompt a search for the body which emitted this noise, it also – far more perceptibly than vision – draws attention to the characteristics of the medium and space which shape it. I argue that a strand of post-1999 filmmakers have welcomed noise into their sonic practice in ways that demonstrate an increasingly prehensile attention to the body and to the bodily dimensions of cinema as a medium. This attention raises productive issues and questions about noise in cinema for thinking through the unknowable and unaccounted for expressions that noise brings with it. The sonic attention to the body and its murmurings that I draw out in contemporary filmmaking marks a new development for understanding how cinema might be used to test the limits of bodies themselves, their boundaries, identities and very situatedness.

Conceptually, noise is a slippery term and one which has seen renewed theoretical interest in recent years.[1] This thesis departs from an investment in noise that attempts to pin down its specificity in ontological terms to instead embrace its relativity as unpleasant or unidentified sound and draw out its performative character. I am interested in the way noise names those devalued elements of the sensory world, and in naming, positions us in various relations to those elements that could also be otherwise. I also remain closer to noise as an auditory phenomenon than others such as Greg Hainge who, in his ambitious book *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (2013), sought to pin down an essence for noise, beyond the relativity of unpleasant sound. Differently, I ask what is the specificity of the sonorous? This question seeks to account for and critique the recent use of the sonic as a figure of thought as it is presented in Nancy's text, but also across a host of others' work including Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Serres, Julia Kristeva or Édouard Glissant. In their musical appropriations, these thinkers risk instrumentalising the auditory in order to secure the paradoxical possibility of philosophical thought's ability to reckon with unthinkable limits. While contemporary French thought may have privileged the sonic in recent years, this attention frequently belies forms of elitism. In their appeal to the auditory, these thinkers draw on examples from the pantheon of Western culture – particularly highbrow, classical music – that themselves speak of the way only certain sounds come to hold a privileged status as an ennobled, non-signifying discourse. Noise constitutes a move against hierarchy and my own

[1] See for example, amongst others, Boutin (2015), Goddard, Halligan and Hegarty (2012), Goodman (2009) and Hainge (2013).

decision to persist using the term noise, over and above sound, instead draws attention to how we position what we hear (and indeed who we hear). What does unpleasant sound, meaningless sound, unidentifiable sound, sound without origin or sound that manifests as feedback or echo, in fact capture?

My exploration is done through Nancy's articulation of the resonant body, what he calls the *corps sonore*. I will fully develop the multiple ways Nancy conceptualises the *corps sonore* later in this introduction. However, a brief definition of what Nancy means by the 'resonant body' is useful here. Nancy compares the *corps sonore* to Antonin Artaud's *corps sans organes*, or Gilles Deleuze's corps 'déterritorialisé' (59). He states his aim to be:

- traiter le corps, avant toute distinction de lieux et de fonctions de résonance, comme étant tout entier (et 'sans organes') caisse ou tube de résonance de l'outre-sens (son 'âme', comme on le dit d'un tube de canon, ou de la pièce du violon qui transmet les vibrations entre table et fond, ou encore du petit trou de la clarinette…),
- et de là, envisager le 'sujet' comme ce qui, du corps, est ou vibre à l'écoute – ou à l'écho – de l'outre-sens. (2002, 59-60)

For Nancy, the *corps sonore* and its responsiveness to vibration is a way of reconfiguring the listening subject in ways that cut across the subject-object dichotomy (and its other associated dichotomies). For Nancy, every object is also a listening subject insofar as sound resounds there, fusing with and dissolving into the vibrations carried with the movement of sound. The *corps sonore* thus figures the subject as a place of resonance, an open channel through which triggers, sensations and impressions pass. It articulates at once the embodied subject in all its material presence, while also revealing this presence as co-constituted by the relation that carries the subject beyond itself, and into the world through resonance.

There is a tendency to describe and conceive of film as a singularity – cinema – yet in fact it is composed of a plurality of shared multiple elements (image track, audio-track, soundtrack) that 'resonate' amongst each other, migrating between one form or sense and another. Considering noise allows us to reflect on what I believe is a sensuous opening in the cinematic medium in which we can conceive of a *corps sonore*; one that exposes the medium itself as a place of resonance, a series of channels through which the world, self and others vibrate. Constructing spectator and medium as *corps sonores*, the filmmakers I examine in this thesis play upon and bring to the fore the border listening occupies between the proximal and the distant senses, using noise as a way of instigating a non-relational relationality between bodies.

The various tracks of which cinema is composed and the imbrication of diegetic with non-diegetic sound present, I argue, sites in which noise can proliferate.

In the first instance, my inquiry is motivated by the relative absence of noise itself in Nancy's text. This is something critic Adrienne Janus has pointed out and her observation is worth quoting at length:

> Nancy's bodies feel a little too instrumental, not messy enough, not noisy enough, as though there would be some danger of dirty hands or dirty ears […] His 'resonant bodies', in other words, need a great deal of air-space in order to sound. Yet the resonance of these sounds, as both particle and wave, never takes on the substantiality and volume of the noises that both attack and envelope us in a world where we increasingly use the noise of one technology (cell-phone or i-pod) to block out the noise of others (cars, planes, machines, cell-phones). Furthermore, while Nancy claims an empirical point of departure in the sensation of his own bodily experience, his body does not seem to compose its resonance in a medium that is, after all, at least 70% water, where the ear itself is a resonance chamber filled with water, and the womb/belly-mouth matrix of resonance is a liquid medium. It is this relative absence of liquids, paradoxically enough, that seems to underlie the relative absence of noise in Nancy's embodied resonance. (2011, 198-199)

In this sense, my thesis also seeks to go beyond Nancy and expose his thought to the messier, noisier embodied limits and consequences of what the *corps sonore* might entail. Though noise itself is not Nancy's subject, we can nonetheless understand his text as a call to attend to noise. He turns to noise [*bruit*] at key moments in *À l'écoute* to illustrate resonance and the communication of sound itself in the most basic terms:

> La communication n'est pas la transmission, mais le partage qui fait sujet: le partage sujet de tous les 'sujets'. Dépli, danse et résonance. Le son en général est tout d'abord la communication en ce sens. Tout d'abord il ne communique rien – que soi-même. *Au degré le plus faible et le moins articulé, on dira que c'est un bruit.* (Il y a bruit dans l'attaque et l'extinction d'un son, et il y a toujours bruit dans le son même). (79, emphasis my own)

While drawing out these particular issues in relation to *À l'écoute,* this thesis explores how noise in cinema responds to Nancy's thinking more broadly, taking up key questions concerning

intimacy, subjectivity, identity, relation as well as Nancy's own theoretical engagement with film in *L'Évidence du film: Abbas Kiarostami* (2001). By bringing Nancy's elaboration of the *corps sonore* to cinema, we may better conceive how cinema constructs at once on-screen bodies, spectators' bodies and the medium itself as listening and responsive. Moreover, his framework helps us think through some of the ethical and political implications of doing so. On the other hand, bringing these filmic works to Nancy's thought offers a sensuous site that arguably exceeds the limits of Nancy's own philosophical text. It is cinema that may finally '*tendre l'oreille* philosophique' (15).

THINKING NOISE

What is at stake for us in noise? A turn towards its etymology draws out no singular meaning or origin, but multiple implications for its theorisation. Noise, from the early thirteenth-century referring to loud outcry, clamour, shouting, derives from the Old French *noise, noyse* meaning din, disturbance, uproar, brawl, or as Serres puts it in his own meditation on noise and the multiple 'tapage et dispute' (1982, 31). The meaning of the term *noise* persists only in modern French in the expression *chercher noise* meaning to pick a quarrel. Other possible origins for the term derive from the Latin *nausia, nausea* (meaning disgust, nausea) or else from the Latin *noxia* (meaning hurt, harm, damage, injury). While obviously carrying these contestatory, confrontational or unpleasant connotations, noise is therefore also tied more broadly to the social and relational; it speaks of the swell and roar of crowds in their coming together and production of din, the formation of communities and their dissolution, the disturbance and interruption of the relations that determine our coexistence. The revolutionary connotations of noise (for example, its association with protest) have lead to its potential conceptual fetishisation which has insistently positioned its politics in avant-garde terms. For example, noise was seen as a cultural weapon in the early experiments of Luigi Russolo (2004 [1913]), or as a herald of a future to come in the work of Jacques Attali (1977). Yet what is novel in the way noise is harnessed by the majority of filmmakers considered in this thesis is the extraordinarily prehensile and attentive uses to which noise is put. These films demonstrate an investment in much quieter and subtler expressions, seemingly coming from images themselves that seem to be listening, and in turn demand that we listen, a move that constructs both medium and spectator as a *corps sonore*.

Serres, in developing the etymology of noise in his work *Genèse* (1982), makes much of the disappearance of the term *noise* from the French language. Evoking William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1954) as well as Macbeth's famous soliloquy, Serres bemoans:

> l'anglais nous emprunte le bruit, nous ne gardons que la fureur. Nous la gardons pour des us si rares qu'on peut dire, avec apparence, notre langue purgée de ce bruit. Serait-elle devenue de bonne compagnie, langue de communication exacte, balance juste et mesurée pour juriste ou diplomate, précise, dessinée, sans tremblé, glacée un peu, voie ouverte sans embole, pour avoir chassé maintes belles noiseuses ? (31-32)

This eradication of noise as a term in search of pure, reasoned communication resonates with the way noise has been conceived as incompatible with serious, reasoned thought. There is a long history of philosophical thinking and its relationship to noise.[2] Arthur Schopenhauer, known for his musical metaphysics, displayed open hatred of noise:

> There are certainly those, quite a number in fact, who smile at such things because they are not sensitive to noise. Yet they are the very people who are also not sensitive to arguments, ideas, poetry, and works of art, in short, to mental impressions of every kind; for this is due to the toughness and solid texture of their brain substance.[3] (1974: 642)

For Schopenhauer, noise appears not only as incompatible with ideas, thinking and art, but is linked, as Niall Atkinson points out through a closer reading of Schopenhauer's entire letter, to 'class and gender-based perceptions of the soundscape and the incompatibility of noise and thinking' (2015: 17). Janus' remarks on the absence of noise from Nancy's text would suggest this antagonism between noise and philosophical thinking endures, in spite of Nancy's own claims about the reach of his text's ear, and it is no accident that much recent otocentric thought has its roots in the contemporaries of music-loving, noise-hating Schopenhauer.[4] It is my contention that cinema, as a medium celebrated for its offering of a different mode of thought rooted in sense, offers us a sensuous site that moves beyond this incompatibility between noise and thinking. Schopenhauer's dismissal of noise as outside any intellectual realm or aesthetic system prompts my present investigation into the place noise might occupy amongst our 'mental impressions' in the cinema and the ethical and political questions it may pose concerning our relations, subjectivity and sensory engagements with the world.

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[2] Niall Atkinson examines this history, beginning with Seneca's positive attitude to noise in a letter written to his friend Lucilius from Naples between 62 and 65 CE (2015, 13).
[3] Letter written from his apartment on Schöne Aussicht 17, Frankfurt, around 1851.
[4] See for example Martin Scherzinger on structuralist and post-structuralist thought's genealogies with German metaphysics (Scherzinger 2012).

NOISE AND CINEMA

The history of film theory is littered with pronouncements attesting either to the desire to use cinema as a tool to eradicate the noise of life, or a desire to eradicate noise from the space of cinema. Béla Balázs, the Hungarian film theorist, responding to what he called the 'discovery of noise' in cinema, wrote:

> The sounds of our day to day life we hitherto perceived merely as a confused noise, as a formless mass of din, rather as an unmusical person may listen to a symphony; at best he may be able to distinguish the leading melody, the rest will fuse into a chaotic clamor. The sound film will teach us to analyze even chaotic noise with our ear and read the score of life's symphony. Our ear will hear the different voices in the general babble and distinguish their character as manifestations of individual life. It is an old maxim that art saves us from chaos. The arts differ from each other in the specific kind of chaos which they fight against. The vocation of the sound film is to redeem us from the chaos of shapeless noise by accepting it as expression, as significance, as meaning. (1952, 198)

Here is a desire to eradicate noise, along with the suggestion that cinema's role is to help us do that: rescue life from the shapeless, from what is without meaning.

But noise was also, from early on, seen as a way of integrating sound with the cinematicity considered proper to the medium, as defined by filmmakers from the Soviet School who sought to protect the principles of montage and conflict from the arrival of sound. Talking pictures, they thought, would strip the medium of its unique expressivity, reducing it to a realism that would only reproduce an image of the world, rather than participating in its creation.[5]

Cinema as art form, as medium, as architectural space and as technology, has typically sought to suppress noise. Cinema's development towards the digital is characterised by its promise of reducing noise, delivering more information, cleaner capture and transmission, either through noise-reduction software, using capture processes which exclude signals that distort from the outset, or through digital synthesis. Today, dialogue is almost always rerecorded using ADR (automatic dialogue replacement) in post-production, in order to avoid the unpredictable

[5] This view was expressed in a statement, signed by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, published on the 5 August 1928 (2004).

intrusions of the natural environment which risk occurring through the use of direct sound. The introduction of THX-status movie theatres alongside Dolby technology in the 1970s improved sound's signal-to-noise ratio, creating the possibility for the inclusion of higher frequencies and promising auditors more 'fidelity'. Benjamin Wright has shown how digital sound technology has changed and reshaped the work of the Foley artist, but despite advancements, it still has not rendered the 'human touch' of the Foley artist obsolete (2014, 205). In fact, over this period, Wright observes that the status of the Foley artist changed from practitioner to artist. The desire for the 'tactile', more expressive, noisier trace of what the Foley artist imbues is central to my own exploration of what we might consider noise in European filmmaking post-1999 and the Foley artist's practice is considered in detail in the thesis's final chapter.

Michel Chion, who has perhaps most fully developed the theorisation of sound alongside the moving image, acknowledges that genre films such as sci-fi have better harnessed the full range of possibilities offered by noise, but suggests that this has not been true of more arthouse forms or 'auteur' cinema (2017 [1990], 153). This continues to be true in a mode of filmmaking that is frequently defined by 'the spectacular, enigmatic and captivating image' (Klinger 2006, 20) and the overabundant visuality that constitutes the 'art' of art cinema. Indeed, this is one of the ways in which this thesis, in taking on noise, brings a novel consideration to the 'arthouse' filmmakers it considers. My own engagement goes beyond the usual references to Chion's concepts of 'syncresis', or the 'acousmêtre' to consider a broader range of theories and observations from Chion's work and demonstrates how they resonate with Nancy's own reflections on sound, using Chion's concepts to bridge the gap between Nancy's listening and the cinematic medium.

The notion of a digital sound without noise, or at least more perceptual fidelity, should be dispelled. The increase in sound detail afforded by digital sound has not led to an increase in clarity, as Balázs might have hoped, but to an increase in sound, producing what Birger Langkjaer considered a form of 'perceptual disturbance':

> the aesthetic use of high definition sound (including digital sound) has not necessarily led to more easily distinguishable sound space. Rather it seems that sound designers are inclined to fill in more sound detail, thus pushing sensorial awareness toward *the edge of perception*. (1997, 99 my emphasis)

Technological development has allowed cinema a more physical effect on the spectator, where noise is not in the service of the intelligible, but the sensible, emphasising the materiality of sound. Gaspar Noé's famous use of a single sub-bass frequency tone in *Irréversible* (2002) discussed in chapter one of this thesis, not quite infra-sound, but barely perceptible between 27 and 28Hz, was included to act on the spectator and produce feelings of nausea and anxiety. Equally, the increase in dynamic range afforded by Dolby has allowed for the inclusion of new frequencies, beyond the perception of the human ear.

The limited nature of our range of hearing (between 20 – 20,000 Hz) might therefore be suggestive of the many expressions of this world that go unheard, both cultural and physiological. Whereas critical studies that seek to address film sound have begun by claiming its overlooked nature, few have pushed this interrogation to its limit as noise. As a devalued element of the sensory world – taken to be intrusive, unwanted, unpleasant, meaningless – noise has been ignored, suppressed, reacted to, but rarely considered. Chion describes noises 'ces fantassins obscurs' as the 'oubliés du son au cinéma' and 'les méprisés de la théorie' (150-151). Film, according to Chion, in its deployment of sound has remained 'voco-centriste' and even 'verbo-centriste', privileging the human voice above and beyond all other sound, with the exception of music (14).

While Chion's work is foundational to any inquiry considering sound within the cinematic medium, Nancy's thinking allows me to move beyond Chion's somewhat taxonomic approach and go further in elaborating a less reified listening subject than the spectator posited by Chion, in ways that resonate with the differing and dispersed bodies that contemporary cinema seeks out. For cinema has the ability to re-construct our listening and use auditory stimuli in ways that do not merely reflect our habitual behaviour. Just as cinematic images can reinforce or reframe the way we view the world, so too can cinema embody an ear that becomes a new frame for the way we hear the world. In taking on noise over and above sound, we may open up ideas about how we respond to and position what we hear or do not hear in the cinema. Just as identities of noise may only, ultimately, be performatively maintained through what we name noise, so too does a theoretical inquiry into noise performatively transform its object – in this case sound in cinema – changing our relationship with it and drawing out new meanings and possible ranges of information. To approach noise in film is to approach a marker of the senseless or the insensible in ways that the filmmakers considered here themselves have become interested in exploring.

Though no longer analogical, perhaps what defines the cinematic medium more appropriately today is the range of evidence that film presents us with through the opportunities afforded by its multichannel and multitrack structures. Cinema creates tension or harmony between the audio and the visual, sound and image, soundtrack and sound effect, diegetic and non-diegetic, representational and non-representational, across differing or distributed subjectivities. Noise provides a way of considering these distributed subjectivities on account of its associational nature, always referring to an elsewhere or a something else, to more than just itself. And within cinema, it draws our attention to the distributed spaces, the multiple tracks and channels, that make up filmic construction. Cinema, in its richly assembled and layered structure, the spacing within and between its media, and its appeal to our senses, accommodates noise for it physically creates sites of in-betweenness within which noise might arise. To consider noise allows us to consider those impressions which operate beyond or between the fixed dichotomies of the visual and the verbal, the soundtrack or the image track. Yet as expression, noise also spatialises and gives density to the gaps that exist between sound and image, image and image, exposing the cinematic medium as a series of channels, a place of resonance where various relations come to sound.

As has been established, this thesis is concerned with noise. To do this I will be looking at contemporary European cinema that has emerged in the twenty or so years since the digital turn that demonstrates a certain aliveness and attention to noise, its possibilities and its questions. My research shows how these films display an openness to or engagement with noise that has not been fully recognised by film theory or criticism. However, celebrating the potential of sound over vision, hearing over seeing, music over language is a problematic tradition that has occurred both within Western philosophy and film theory. A turn towards noise should be further contextualised both within, and against, the 'anti-ocular' turn.

THE ANTI-OCULAR TURN

The anti-ocular turn is the theoretical and philosophical context in which Janus positions Nancy's *À l'écoute* (2011). A suspicion of the visual, and the critique of its dominance within Western culture, is typically associated with twentieth-century French philosophy in the continental tradition.[6] The anti-ocular turn is a reaction against the primacy of the visual and its privileged relationship to knowledge and objectivity, or to the perceived violence of dualistic thinking and Cartesian logic that objectifies, distances and silences a world we only

[6] Martin Jay gives a full account of this in his work *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (1993).

behold. We may think of the difficulty we encounter when wanting to speak about sounds. Nouns exist for things seen, they are object-ified, whereas for sounds, we either refer to the thing that makes the sound, or make do by assigning vague, approximate attributes (noisy, steely, loud, gentle). The anti-ocular is an attempt to get beyond the visual and the visual metaphors which structure our ways of thinking and thus shape our relationship to the world around us. As a result, theory, art and modes of representation critical of the visual's primacy have displayed a more urgent attention devoted towards other senses and their epistemologies.

However, new intuitionist gestures emerge, such as music, voice or touch. These are posited as idealised 'others', as alternatives and ways out of the visual. I have briefly mentioned philosophy's turn to music, away from vision and with it, language. This has been given a broader history by musicologist Martin Scherzinger, who coined the term 'sonotropism' to describe philosophy's theoretical aspiration towards the condition of music, in the same way sunflowers twist toward the sun. Scherzinger traces this occurrence across Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and into twentieth-century structuralist and post-structuralist thought with Kristeva, Derrida and Barthes. Musical thought is a way of moving away from the limiting structures of language towards a 'non-signifying' discourse which is posited as its 'other'. Like Janus, Sarah Hickmott has equally positioned Nancy's text within the sonotropic tendency of contemporary French philosophy. She labels Nancy's thinking as 'otocentric', arguing that within this celebration of music lie problematic, inherited ideas originating in Enlightenment thought. For Hickmott, this tendency relies on examples from a Western canon of high-art music and re-inscribes music within dualistic thinking, associating it with the '"lesser" term in the corresponding binarisms: as emotional, primitive, and certainly feminine' (2015, 487). Music remains a form of coded sound, and sounds themselves are also coded when considered in relation to noise. Soundtrack music in film has been seen to demonstrate some of these issues. Film theorist, Will Higbee, discusses how soundtrack music in diasporic or postcolonial filmmaking risks performing a Eurocentric, totalising gesture whereby the soundtrack acts as an 'essentialised or fixed "ethnic marker"' which imposes notions of a fixed or homogenous identity on its representational subjects (2014, 233).

Likewise, contemporary thought's investment in the voice can similarly be situated alongside the misgivings that characterise vision's denigration. Adriana Cavarero highlights how 'the voice' – its materiality, its grain, its embodied nature – has come to occupy a privileged place whereby it stands in – generally – against other signifying modes such as writing, language or reason. This move comes at the expense of considering each voice's uniqueness. For

Cavarero, the 'more that the voice turns out to be a question worthy of inquiry, the more the usual deafness with respect to singular voices appears surprising' (2005, 12). Yet like music, the human voice is readily emotive and engaging and its recuperation by philosophy once again might lead us to consider the minority stakes in sound, beyond those qualities of music and voice that are so pleasing to the ear. In tackling noise, I depart from this investment in voice to expand beyond the categories of what is even understood as constituting voice.

In film theory, sound and the haptic have been celebrated as idealised alternatives to vision on account of their 'non-representational' qualities. Criticism addressing sound usually begins by stressing the subordinate position of the auditory in comparison to the image, and on account of its subjugated status, goes on to idealise it as a form of intimacy, interiority, subjectivity and immersion. This has contributed towards Jonathan Sterne's critique of what he calls the 'audio-visual litany' which creates clear cut distinctions between sight and sound (2003, 15). This litany includes: sound immerses its subject, vision offers perspective and distance; hearing is concerned with interiors, vision with surfaces; hearing tends towards subjectivity, vision towards objectivity; hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect. These distinctions, according to Sterne, do not hold up under closer examination. There is no innocent description of interior auditory experience: 'the attempt to describe sound or the act of hearing in itself – as if the sonic dimensions of human life inhabited a space prior to or outside history – strives for false transcendence. Even phenomenologies can change' (Sterne 2003, 19). Noise exposes the untenability and non-neutrality of these distinctions. In choosing to focus on noise, we remain alert to the culturally-anchored dimensions of the sonic, continually reminded of the way we name and position sounds. Likewise, noise has the capacity to undo some of those orthodoxies that have attached themselves to the auditory. For example, Will Schrimshaw has shown how noise points us to a sonic materialism which understands sound as signal, not necessarily audible, and brings us instead towards a "pre- or a-subjective exteriority", undoing in this example the notion of sound as necessarily subjective and interior (2013, 30).

Touch and its filmic translation into 'haptic visuality' has come to be privileged as an alternative mode of vision in film, one that escapes voyeuristic distance, the creation of subject-object positions or appropriation. The influential work of Laura U. Marks, particularly her works *The Skin of the Film* (2000) and *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002), has shaped this field in recent times with its increased attention towards affect, sensation and physical spectatorship, positing touch as a privileged epistemology. For Marks, the haptic is a

move against what she describes as the 'destructive and literally imperialist potential of vision' (2000, 193). As a response to this privileging of touch within film theory, Hainge has mounted a passionate critique. For Hainge, the haptic does not go far enough in its departure from an anthropocentric subject, or from retaining a predominantly visual paradigm. With the haptic:

> there is still a retention both of a primarily scopic regime (in other words, it is still the *eyes* doing the touching) and, in addition, the retention of a fully embodied subject and subjectivity […] To put this another way, the emphasis on the idea of the tactile, of a relation sensed through the flesh of the subject, maintains a Cartesian perspectivalism that ultimately betrays the stated desire of so much work in this field. (2017, 192)

For Hainge, the sonic offers a departure for considering less anthropologically-circumscribed cinematic subjectivities. My own central positioning of noise and Nancy draws out similar affordances in Nancy's vibratory account of the subject as a place of resonance, a listening body that likewise pushes away from the retention of a primarily scopic regime. Hainge's monograph outlines what a sonic cinema might be with regards to a particular auteur director – Philippe Grandrieux (who likewise could have sat within the exploration of this thesis' first chapter) – but his own approach refuses the historical or socio-political readings my work aims to draw out in favour of considering Grandrieux's sonic mode within exclusively aesthetic parameters. I believe that the varying issues raised by noise are illuminated through a consideration of multiple filmmakers, whose works each expose different concerns. My own approach thus favours close readings of individual films by a collection of contemporary filmmakers loosely unified by their increased attention to the political and ethical dimensions of different bodies through noise.

It is not surprising, given the prevalence of the anti-ocular turn, that Nancy is not the only thinker whose work might have been brought to issues of noise and listening in cinema. Hainge, for example, elaborates his own study of sonic cinema through the ideas developed in Gilles Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: logique de la sensation* (1981). Indeed, throughout the thesis, I also bring Nancy's thought into inter-disciplinary contact with others such as sound-theorist Brandon LaBelle, post-colonial thinker and poet Édouard Glissant, or the recent experimental thought of speculative realism, in order to extend beyond Nancy's own text. Given this range of potential approaches, what are the particular film-philosophical rewards of establishing a critical exchange between the Nancean *corps sonore* and cinema, reverberating through the formal harnessing of noise? The value of this discussion is, I suggest, multiple: it allows us to

understand cinema's exploration of differing or distributed subjectivities through the figure of resonance and its vibration across different bodies; in turn, the *corps sonore* has the potential to resonate with not only fundamental and ongoing concerns in the study of how contemporary cinema might itself constitute a body, but also bring to the fore recent inchoate shifts to the auditory in contemporary filmmakers' practice.

The attention to the *corps sonore* in my investigation radically revises the insistent turn to the concept of touch in Nancy's broader work, specifically in the developing inter-discipline of film-philosophy. Nancy's concept of touch, as a simultaneous form of contact and withdrawal, has been beautifully examined in relation to cinema by Laura McMahon (2012), where she shows how Nancy departs from thinking touch in haptocentric terms that privilege immediacy, presence and continuity. Instead Nancy foregrounds touch as a form of withdrawal, separation and discontinuity which, McMahon argues, finds a privileged space in the cinematic medium – particularly in our encounter with the screen which brings us into contact with the world, as we acknowledge its withdrawal. This enquiry has afforded rich terrain on which Nancy's concept of touch might meet film. By once again bringing Nancy's thinking into resonant relations with cinema, this thesis inevitably builds on McMahon's contribution in this crossover between philosophy and film. However, the semantic field of the haptic and tactile metaphors still dominate much scholarship on Nancy, given the way touch has played such a central role in his work. Nancy's thinking of listening allows a revision of the haptic in relation to cinema, to suggest new passage between the senses, a new way of configuring how senses touch upon, or perhaps we might now say resonate through, each other in their plurality, through the auditory register of listening. This mode of thinking the auditory allows me, across this thesis, to develop an understanding of the cinematic image that can perceive it as resonant, a vision that is more akin to listening, that takes on the properties of the auditory. Nancy's thinking helpfully allows us to approach cinema in ways that account for it as a multisensory medium, instigating a shift from viewing to listening that nonetheless allows us to think between these two modes of sensing. In arguing that Nancy's *corps sonore* can help us conceive of cinema as a place of resonance, of images and spectators as *corps sonores*, my inquiry tunes us in new ways to cinema itself and the subjects it makes audible.

À l'écoute does not essentialise the auditory, but rather draws on it to think about resonance, identifying how 'chaque régime sensible fait différemment modèle et résonance pour tous' (23, n. 3). Neither does *À l'écoute* outright pit the auditory against the visual. Instead, Nancy carefully positions their difference as an 'écart tremblant' (15), an unstable boundary that

vibrates and itself contains resonance. The sonorous is invoked to figure this inseparable difference, the flickering oscillation between the two. As Nancy makes these claims for the auditory, one should bear in mind that they are there to illustrate what is true of sensing more broadly. I would contend that Nancy's philosophy of listening finds its strongest resonances and most productive dissonances in cinema's particular exploration of the 'écart tremblant' between the audio and the visual and its own attention to various bodies sounding in our environment. This trembling discrepancy is something I return to throughout this thesis as I outline how images themselves might appear to resonate and operate according to an auditory logic as a film becomes 'all ears'. As such, my discussion contributes towards a larger inquiry into the relation between film as a sensuous medium and the interplay between different senses that has interested scholars such as Jennifer Barker and Laura U. Marks.

However, the auditory itself troubles the distinction between the distant and proximal senses that Marks outlines (2008). In her article for the journal *Paragraph*, 'Thinking Multisensory Culture', we once again encounter a schematic framework which separates the senses, positioning the auditory, like vision, as one of the 'distant senses'. According to Marks, the distant senses are privileged as vehicles of knowledge, a privileging which comes at the expense and neglect of the proximal senses – taste, touch and smell. This seems to rather reductively characterise the auditory; for example, noise itself attests to the way sound might resist becoming a vehicle for knowledge. Marks argues in favour of the proximal senses' ability to present us with an immanent epistemology, a form of knowledge that is important for its position on the border between the private and the social, the communicable and the incommunicable, the 'thinkable' and 'the sensible'. For Marks, such a position means that the proximal senses take on an ethical dimension for the dualities they mediate between. However, it is precisely this border between the 'thinkable' and the 'sensible' that Nancy claims listening occupies on account of its openness to the infinite resonance [*renvoi*] between meaning, sound and self.

In the subsequent chapters I show how noise allows us to think this interplay between the senses across new borders, disrupting stable identities and bringing new bodies into relation. This will involve consideration of the issues raised by noise as it operates across the borders of inside and outside, troubling for example the identity of pleasure and violence. These issues also have a particular valence for thinking national and geographic identities and, as studied here, will be explored with relation to the displacement of logics of filiation through noise and, further beyond this, the relational logic of the nonhuman.

JEAN-LUC NANCY: LISTENING FOR THE 'CORPS SONORE'

I mentioned earlier that, in spite of the absence of noise in Nancy's text, we can nonetheless understand *À l'écoute* as a call to attend to it. Throughout, Nancy demonstrates a desire to bring our attention to the senseless and insensible. Listening names a disposition, a mode of attention that can attend beyond message or meaning, beyond perception and be open instead to the resonance of meaning, sense and sound. This is what Nancy describes as 'l'écoute de l'outre-sens' (60). He figures listening as a way of being 'en bordure du sens, ou dans un sens de bord et d'extrémité, et comme si le son n'était précisément rien d'autre que ce bord, cette frange, ou cette marge' (21). Nancy foregrounds listening on account of its special relationship with sense and *À l'écoute* continues his interest in drawing out the multiple meanings of *sens* that have marked many of his previous works from *Une pensée finie* (1990) to *Être singulier pluriel* (1996). For Nancy, sense carries several meanings: sense is at once our perceiving sense (visual sense, auditory sense), it is perceived sense or meaning ('in what sense?') and it carries a directional aspect, the French *sens* also referring to direction. The shared space of meaning, sensing and direction is resonance; sound spreads out in space, where it resounds or re-sounds, in a manner akin to the way meaning consists in reference [*renvoi*], made up of referrals between a sign and something else (22). Listening is privileged for the way it foregrounds the resonance common to all senses, which for Nancy, allows us to move away from understanding sense simply as signification, a position which he critiques for having too much emphasis in Western metaphysics and limiting the scope of philosophical inquiry.

Nancy configures resonance [*renvoi*, referral] as at once interior and exterior, spreading in space, while also penetrating the listening body and resounding in it, from it, through and across it. In this identity of the subject based on feedback, Nancy's resonant body affirms at once the place of a 'subject' (human, animal, thing), an *être à l'écoute* (a being who is listening), at the same time as it resounds outwards, resonating with all other existents; the condition of a singular-plural being, a being listening in, to and through the world. It is a paradoxical movement in which this *être à l'écoute* is at once here and there, present as a sounding body, while also being carried beyond itself in resonance that structures the relation between self and other, and the space between them. This space is a space of sharing in which, Nancy claims, noise resonates: 'dans un corps qui s'ouvre et qui se ferme à la fois, qui se dispose et s'expose avec d'autres, résonne le bruit de son partage (d'avec soi, d'avec les autres)' (79).

While Nancy does not explicitly claim in *À l'écoute* that noise actualises the concept of the singular plural ontology he developed in *Être singulier pluriel* (1996), he does position listening (to resonance, or noise) not as a mere metaphor for self, but as the *reality* of an access to the *structure of a self*.[7] This reality is, according to Nancy, both "mienne" and "autre", "singulière" and "plurielle". For Nancy, there is no reality of a proper self, an 'I' with any substance, but neither does this position completely abandon a relation to the real. Listening becomes the reality of an access to the structure of self in the way it [self] takes place as resonance. Like in his earlier texts *Corpus* (1992) or *L'intrus* (2000) where the body is exscribed and exposed through Nancy's formulation of it as an exteriority, a summation of parts, gestures, technologies, the self once again emerges in *À l'écoute* as a fragmented collection of referrals, made up of a 'rapport *à* soi, ou d'une présence *à* soi' (24, emphasis in original).

Nancy's ontology of the listening subject can therefore also be considered a departure from Sterne's audio-visual litany that sees sound as interior and subjective; resolutely at once exterior and interior, Nancy's listening subject is nothing more than a self-expansive place of resonance, a *corps sonore*, that dissolves distinctions between self and world into vibrations, echoes, feedback. The listening subject is a site of opening and spacing:

> Écouter, c'est entrer dans cette spatialité par laquelle, *en même temps*, je suis pénétré: car elle s'ouvre en moi tout autant qu'autour de moi, et de moi tout autant que vers moi: elle m'ouvre en moi autant qu'au dehors, et c'est par une telle double, quadruple ou sextuple ouverture qu'un 'soi' peut avoir lieu. (33)

This sense of multiple openings, for Janus, makes the concept of the listening subject difficult to locate in one place and indeed the directional, resounding, expanding nature of resonance itself diffuses this subject across Nancy's text. Janus points out that throughout:

> Nancy's listening subject becomes less 'subject'-like, less human – not more substantial but certainly more textured – and, most interestingly, progressively larger and louder in volume, diffusing itself through more acoustic space and more expansive frequencies before its final diminuendo and return to itself as 'corps sonore' (2011, 194).

[7] In a footnote, Nancy also states that 'la structure et la dynamique "singulières plurielles" de l'ensemble des sens, leur façon d'être précisément "ensemble" et de se toucher tout en se distinguant seraient l'objet d'un autre travail' (23-24, n.1) This suggests that Nancy's thinking of the singular-plural is nonetheless underlying his discussion in *À l'écoute.*

Janus identifies seven possible identities for the listening subject: as a subject constituted by the self-reflexion of sense; as a diapason, a metaphor that conceives of the subject as an attunement to the resonance of all possible intervals contained within it (in classical music, the diapason names the interval of an octave); as echo-chamber (a child is born with their first cry, which Nancy describes as the sudden expansion of an echo chamber that opens a subject in the world); as a place of resonance (this allows Nancy to posit the listening subject as human, animal or thing); as text (Janus describes this listening subject as seeming 'to emerge as the echo of this kind of speaking and listening against and through the body of text and reader, in the *renvoi* of the senses that fuses text and reader' (196)); as the attack of time (here the idea of rhythm, which broaches the subject, opens the embodied space-time of the subject); and the subject as *partage* where for Nancy *partage* carries both the meaning of 'sharing' and 'parturition' (in the *corps sonore* 'résonne le bruit de son partage (d'avec soi, d'avec les autres)' (79)). Certain of these conceptions of the listening subject take precedence over others in my own inquiry into the cinematic medium as *corps sonore*. Across the chapters that follow, I explore the *corps sonore* in contemporary European cinema as a form of sensual self-reflexion, as echo-chamber, as place of resonance, as the relation between film and spectator, as the attack of time and as *partage*. However, I avoid the more instrumentalising conceptions of the listening subject that Janus points out, such as the subject as diapason, or Nancy's comparisons with 'la pièce du violon qui transmet les vibrations entre table et fond, ou encore du petit trou de la clarinette…' (60). I contend that cinema offers a special site in which to test Nancy's thinking of listening, for the way it responds so explicitly to the *écart tremblant* between the senses, creating resonances that resemble what Chion termed the 'contrat audio-visuel' (2017 [1990], 9): the relationship which governs the *co-presence* of the visual and auditory channels, creating relations – harmony or dissonance, synchronicity or its absence. Sound in the cinematic medium actualises Nancy's concept of '*renvoi*'. It brushes against cinema's images, transforming them, and as it resounds in the frame, the image transforms the sound, lending it new identities.

Chion's own work on sound helps us position Nancy's philosophical thinking of listening and resonance in relation to film and the language of film studies. Nancy argues that 'le sonore […] emporte la forme. Il ne la dissout pas, il l'élargit plutôt, il lui donne une ampleur, une épaisseur et une vibration ou une ondulation dont le dessin ne fait jamais qu'approcher' (14). This is particularly manifest in the cinematic medium in which 'il n'y a pas de contenant sonore des sons' (Chion 2017 [1990], 76). Unlike the image which has its place in the visual frame and can be considered a cinematic unit, sound has no place, it is cinema's *passe-muraille*

– 'hors-temps et hors-espace, la musique communique avec tous les temps et tous les espaces du film, mais laisse exister ceux-ci séparément et distinctement' (89). In Chion's vocabulary, we can hear the Nancean terms of contact and withdrawal, configured in relation to sound and image. Chion argues that we can speak of an image track, but not of a soundtrack, for sounds do not create relationships horizontally amongst each other but only enter into vertical relationships with images or narrative elements simultaneously present to the eye (48). Chion's discussion of the relationship between the visual and auditory channels in filmic construction reveals its open structure, its capaciousness, the opening and spacing in the cinematic medium that creates resonance between perceiving senses and perceived meaning. Cinema is thus a privileged space of resonance that responds to Nancy's text *À l'écoute* which this thesis goes on to explore.

This understanding of film as sensuous opening is one that has found expression in Nancy's own elaboration on the specificity of the filmic medium. *L'Évidence du film* (2001) elaborates a way of attending to cinema, beyond representation and sense as signification, figuring the evidence of film instead as a relation to the presentation of worldly existence and sense as sensuous perception, as it imposes itself when cinema gazes upon the world. Cinema is 'l'ouverture d'un voir à un réel au devant duquel il se porte et qu'il laisse de cette façon se porter aussi jusqu'à lui. C'est d'un tel 'porter' et 'se porter' qu'il s'agit, et de sa portée' (Nancy 2001, 19). This carrying look takes on an ethical dimension for the way film structures our way of looking at the world. It creates a 'juste regard', at the point when we are opened to seeing something real, a real which is exactly what resists at the point of our looking. The real that cinema makes evident, according to Nancy, is a conspicuous part of the world which always includes a blind spot (that which is not made evident) and through this opening, remakes our own look upon the world. To quote Nancy: 'Si ce regard prend soin de ce qu'il regarde, il aura pris soin du réel: de ce qui résiste, précisément, à l'absorption dans les visions ("visions du monde", représentations, imaginations)' (19). According to Nancy, this caring attention is likewise, or perhaps more so, opened up through listening as the sensory register which responds best to resonance, to sound itself as noise, in the way it preserves a certain unknowability, an attention to the real which resists at the point of our looking, or listening.

The question of whether Nancy can be considered a realist philosopher has been carefully explored by Ian James in his introduction to the philosophy of Nancy, *The Fragmentary Demand* (2006). James identifies the ways Nancy's thinking of world-hood, the senses and materiality develops a 'postphenomenological philosophy of existence' (202). In this context, James argues that Nancy's theory on art could be tentatively qualified by the term realism. For Nancy,

limits always imply delimitation. It is through an exposure to excess at the limit that the real presents itself. This process is something Nancy elaborates in *Une pensée finie* (1990) as the process of 'exscription' whereby an image marks off what is in excess of it. Crucially, for Nancy, sense and its correlate are neither simply present, nor entirely absent, and thus his thinking moves away from the representational logic of metaphysics. For Nancy, art holds a privileged place in this exposure to an outside for it proceeds through non-mimetic means and is thus not an instance of representation but the presentation of presentation.[8] As James summarises:

> as the pure presentation of presentation, the tracing of a figure or form beyond whose line sense absents itself, art, for Nancy, is an exposure of truth, a touching of the "real" of a world, beyond or in excess of any mediation through signifying systems or discourses. Art exposes or touches a fragment of the world. (229)

As I go on to show, noise in cinema constitutes such a limit. One that, for the filmmakers considered in this thesis, allows their films to articulate both the limits of representation, at the limit of representation, and in doing so, gesture beyond this limit to bodies that lie beyond our 'field of vision', attending to the blind spot Nancy claims to be an act of taking care of the real.

THESIS OVERVIEW

As I have established, this thesis explores the issues and questions raised by noise in cinema and the way it tunes us to the body through a consideration of the *corps sonore*. By considering the ways these questions are raised through close readings of specific texts, I am mindful to draw out these various issues in relation to specific bodies and the relations between them. The chapters are organised thematically in line with the different bodies each considers, allowing me to explore the *corps sonore* in multiple iterations. Yet, in my own exploration of noise across these different bodies, the thesis is also structured in line with the logic of sound itself, its emanation from an origin and propagation outwards, as it dissolves into less certain identities. The thesis moves with this self-expansion to consider ever-more deterritorialised, less 'subject-like' bodies. It begins by considering a familiarly situated body in chapter one, through to considering more diffuse foreign bodies and social bodies in chapter two, to the

[8] In *À l'écoute,* Nancy foregrounds the specifically non-mimetic character of the auditory, drawing out instead its methexic properties that have to do with participation, contagion, mixing. Not only this, but the properties of the sonorous do not fall between the poles of presence or absence. Sound occurs rather on a continuum, between loudness and softness, audible and inaudible, diminuendo, crescendo, moriendo. It is thus clear the way sound foregrounds the qualities in Art that have interested Nancy more broadly.

most radically depersonalised nonhuman bodies in chapter three. In this organisation, the body as it is traditionally conceived, becomes ever less recognisable as it opens out with resonance, and is dissolved into the dynamic relations of the world. Each chapter also goes beyond Nancy's text by taking his *corps sonore* away from the musical register that gave it its instrumental 'cleanliness' to put his theory of the *corps sonore* in contact with cinema's more extreme articulations of the body.

In departing from the more traditional investment in voice that I earlier identified and considering noise, my study also moves beyond recognisable vocal expression to consider murmurs and susurrations that have been traditionally excluded from this category. This issue is at stake, for example, in the case of pornography and the body, which this thesis considers in its first chapter through the work of Catherine Breillat. The question of whether or not this genre or mode of filmmaking constitutes a form of speech has been central to debates about pornography's legislation in the US, and it is entirely within its territory that the question of voicing female pleasure has been central. The issue of voicelessness is equally critical in the case of clandestine migrants who may not be able to become public in such a way that would allow for their presence or uniqueness to be disclosed by 'voice' in the traditional sense. The way cinema might choose to tune us to strangers through the restless movement of noise is something explored in this thesis's second chapter. Finally, the thesis's final chapter, in its exploration of nonhuman noise, considers nature and the world of objects and demonstrates how the practice of Foley in the cinematic medium might tune us to those bodies we do not necessarily consider as possessing voice in the traditional sense. Here, the ventriloquising operations of cinema are brought into question.

Noise also brings a different attention to the filmmakers this thesis considers whose work may not have been evaluated from an auditory dimension before. The directors discussed all stress the importance of the auditory in their work and, in the films I consider, work with sound in novel ways to depart from auditory conventions present in other proximate genres or modes of filmmaking such as pornography or horror. Many of the filmmakers I consider share an interest in the principles of *musique concrète*, have longstanding collaborations with particular composers and sound designers or are composers themselves. These filmmakers' own singular and rigorous attention to the auditory reflects on the way they are moving filmic practice forward, affording us new understandings of what cinema can express through sound. While I claim that contemporary cinema, in its harnessing of noise, is able to display an ever-more prehensile attention to the body, each chapter progressively casts doubt over the possibility

and reach of this attention. As such, the various extremities of the body or bodies that this thesis explores themselves reflect on the limits of filmic form and what can be articulated, known, shown or heard.

Though most of the material I consider can be situated within the context of French cinematic production, with the progression of each chapter, the justification for grouping material under a national umbrella becomes less and less meaningful – hence the European scope of my inquiry. Chapter one engages with a particular mode of filmmaking – what has been coined the 'New French Extremity' – that has been strongly tied to France and notions of Frenchness, though the bounds of this cinema have since been extended to a wider European context.[9] The films I consider here and their appeal to what I term the 'unlistenable' are interesting within the French context for they can be seen as a reaction against other contemporary films emerging within France's national cinema at a similar time that offer a cleaned-up image of the nation, digitally cleansed of impurities, immigrants, crime etc. Chapter two moves out to consider geopolitical concerns through questions of migration and foreign bodies. Here, the question of the national is rightfully strained. Tony Gatlif is uncomfortably subsumed under the heading of French cultural production as his own hybrid identity and the interest of his filmmaking extends much outside it. Arnaud des Pallières, on the other hand, though identifiably 'French', has consistently engaged with subject matters that do not 'belong' to him in a cinema that wishes to take responsibility in the task of reckoning with the memory of the Holocaust, or the responsibility towards clandestine migrants arriving in France under conditions of enforced exile. Chapter three necessitates the greatest departure from any French national cinema as it considers categories of the nonhuman whose philosophical questions have roots in a much broader Western European cultural tradition emerging from the eighteenth century. Here my thesis opens out to consider films from the wider European art cinema context, with close readings of Lars von Trier and Peter Strickland.

The focus in the thesis on these six filmmakers is not intended to provide an exhaustive survey of the use of noise in contemporary cinema. Nor are these the only filmmakers I could have considered. As is clear from Hainge's own elaboration of what may constitute a sonic cinema, Philippe Grandrieux is another whose sonic mode could have formed part of my inquiry. Likewise, Bruno Dumont, another contemporary to the filmmakers I consider, has made similarly compelling pronouncements on his interest in noise. Speaking with his sound editor

[9] The move of 'New Extremism' from France to Europe is explored in the introduction to an edited volume by Tanya Horeck and Tina Kendall (2011).

Emmanuel Croset, he remarked 'il vaut mieux avoir une aberration dedans quoi (sic) mais des vrais sons, que de filtrer tout. Histoire de nettoyer, mais on perd en intensité' (quoted from the documentary *Le Fracas des pattes de l'araignée* Aurélien Vernhes-Lermusiaux, 2012). The choice of my material is dictated by the way each film raises specific issues regarding noise in relation to particular bodies. Inevitably, I consider some issues at the expense of others. However, given my claim that the films I consider are loosely unified by an increased attention to and seeking out of various bodies through noise, it would, I think, be unhelpful to broaden the parameters of my inquiry at the expense of close attention to, and full concrete description of, the different ways in which noise tunes us to the body within these individual works.

In chapter one, I develop the idea of a cinematic *corps sonore* most fully and in the most intimately bodily terms by thinking through two supposedly situated bodies: the female body on screen and the spectator's body. This reflection reveals the possibilities of intimacy and risk of vulnerability that the cinematic *corps sonore* poses through a consideration of two filmmakers – Catherine Breillat and Gaspar Noé who both use noise to tune us to what is 'unlistenable' in an attempt to recast the borders of subjectivity. As such, the chapter revises the supposed 'unwatchability' that both Breillat and Noé's works have been considered alongside. By showing how these directors work with noise, volume and frequency, I expose the resonant quality of the flesh that this *cinéma du corps* is understood as appealing to, and reveal the conditions under which we could rename it a *cinéma du corps sonore*.

In chapter two, the body becomes less securely situated as I take the idea of the *corps sonore* to questions of national borders and bodies constituted in or by the national and social spheres. My concern in this chapter is to show how cinema might refigure different social bodies by constructing sonic ones. Here, the thinking of Glissant and his concept of the *écho-monde* is brought to two films exploring bi-directional migration between France and Algeria: Tony Gatlif's *Exils* (2004) and Arnaud des Pallières' *Adieu* (2004). I show how both filmmakers appeal to the migratory and restless properties of noise through asynchronicity, harnessing the border between diegetic and non-diegetic sound in the cinematic medium to think through identity and different degrees of belonging. Gatlif's work shows how noise might be used to expand our sense of the spaces cinema offers between the verbal and the visual, or between image track and sound track, for the articulation of an exilic identity. The work of des Pallières takes asnychronicity to an even starker level, showing how noise bring us into forms of relation with strangers. Rather than drawing us into proximity, noise is used to underscore distance in ways that allow for the invocation of a more radical strangeness, not marked by sociality, to emerge within his work.

In chapter three, the possibility of figuring such radical strangeness within cinema is interrogated by considering the nonhuman, asking whether we can ever hear the nonhuman on its own terms. I show how cinema might constitute a site that allows for the amplification of and attunement towards diffused, deterritorialised bodies through its placement of sound. The chapter engages with the practice of Foley to explore whether noise in the cinematic medium can indicate something outside of, or in excess of, human world-projection. Through Foley, the films I consider break down the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, producing non-coincident identities between bodies and sounds, in ways that underscore a scattered structure of dynamic relations between things that has been of interest in recent philosophical inquiries situated within what is known as speculative realism.

Nancy's listening, and the form of attentiveness it names, speaks to the way these filmmakers display a desire to attend to different and diffuse bodies through noise. Yet this attention is also, critically, one that only ever strains towards the possibility of listening to *l'outre-sens*. This attentiveness, which never quite has access to the world that also resonates within it, manifests itself in the films I consider as a form of extreme attention, an encounter that is at the limits of what can be listened to, tuning us instead to the senseless and the insensible. The films this thesis goes on to consider, in various ways therefore, also stage the limits of Nancy's thinking, placing the ear into more extreme forms of interpolation through noise that, in turn, open a space for considering the political and ethical questions that listening to these different and diffuse bodies may pose.

CHAPTER 1

BODILY NOISE: THE 'UNLISTENABLE' IN THE FILMS OF CATHERINE BREILLAT AND GASPAR NOÉ

> Elle émet des petits bruits tout en continuant apparemment de dormir; mais ne révèle-t-elle pas en cela une forme de duplicité – elle émet donc des bruits de petits grognements repus, satisfaits d'eux-mêmes et autoritaires.
>
> Breillat *Pornocratie*, 81

INTRODUCTION: THE BODY AT CLOSE RANGE

Despite its wilfully pornographic, extreme close-ups, perhaps the most enduring image from Catherine Breillat's *Anatomie de l'enfer* (2004) is the iridescent, naked reclining body of her female protagonist, played by Amira Casar. This is how we encounter her throughout most of the film: fixedly at the centre of the frame, stretched out along a bed in a sparse room, with folds of cotton white sheets escaping the curves of the body (Figure 1). Breillat's image is extremely painterly, formally stylised and visually resplendent. Yet this is not the only way we attend to the woman in the film, asked though we are to watch her over the course of four nights alongside the gaze of Breillat's male protagonist, played by Rocco Siffredi. *Anatomie de l'enfer* also asks us to listen to this body as a *corps sonore*, both at a distance and up close, and to strain our ears to the small noises, droning and soundings it emits at its surface. In this engagement of our listening, via noises whose extreme quietness exist at the limit of their own disclosure, Breillat draws a spectator into a resonant intimacy with the body on screen whose presence is at once in abeyance and excess.



Figure 1. Listening to the female body in *Anatomie de l'enfer*

This image, central to *Anatomie*, reflects this chapter's broader exploration of the way cinema can take us towards the body at close range, offering an extreme sensitivity to it through attention to its noises and soundings. In doing so, I show how cinema has the ability to reconfigure our viewing experience, such that at times we become all ears. The two filmmakers I examine, Breillat and, subsequently, Gaspar Noé, have frequently been situated in what is referred to as the 'New French Extremism' – a term used to designate films characterised by extremely sexual or violent representation. Both Breillat and Noé have made claims for the 'unwatchability' of their own work and both filmmakers demonstrate a desire to affect a spectator through extreme imagery, in order to provoke reflection on what is considered 'unwatchable'. Here, I ask whether Breillat and Noé's appeal to the 'unwatchable' extends to the 'unlistenable' and what the implications are of its theorisation. This question is particularly interesting in films of the New Extremism where extreme images might prevent us from thinking critically about the noises we are exposed to. In these films, noise is also used to provoke extreme forms of sensation or reaction in the viewer. The interest that films from the New Extremism display towards representational limits makes them a productive site for my own inquiry into noise and the way I am positioning it as an extreme form of sound. Though Breillat and Noé's visual aesthetics (how they approach the unwatchable) and politics (what the unwatchable might mean for them) might not be aligned, their sonic practice (an interest in what I term the 'unlistenable' and their recourse to noise) nonetheless might. Attending to this alternative range of information – noise – in the work of Breillat and Noé allows us to ask what the unlistenable contributes to our understanding of their work and the modes of attention their filmmaking solicits. At the same time, it allows us to think more broadly about how cinema approaches the body, both onscreen and off, and how its auditory dimension might reflect on political or ethical questions concerning intimacy, vulnerability and agency. I argue that both these filmmakers engage the auditory in ways that appeal to and construct the spectator as a *corps sonore*: an open channel that is traversed by, fuses with and goes toward other resonating bodies. In choosing to focus on these filmmakers' sonic practice, this shift from viewing to listening allows us to consider how images themselves might at times embody auditory instruments or organs (such as an ear or a stethoscope) taking on the logic of the auditory as they become resonant and sensitive to sound.

The 'unlistenable' as I refer to it here, suggests both that which we cannot bear to listen to, as well as that which we cannot hear. As such, the unlistenable can be understood as at once an affect, an effect, a concept and a limit. These multiple ways of understanding the unlistenable tie it productively to thinking about filmmaking in this 'extreme' mode and its interest in

representational limits, sensation and sensibility. Conceiving of the unlistenable as both concept and affect solicits a range of questions concerning the unpleasant that films within the New Extremism have been keen to explore: the unlistenable as concept points us to the limits of our sensibility, while the unlistenable as affect refers to the limits of sensation. Expressions that fall out of range, or beyond the range of our hearing, constitute unlistenable subjects or bodies to which we are nonetheless relationally tied. As I will show, noise, and its vibratory impact on the body, allows us to remain alive to these relations and the way they affect or inconvenience us.

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, it is this vibration-focused account of the sonorous that Nancy draws on in order to break down reified conceptions of subjectivity or bodily integrity, exposing a subject instead to the constant re-sounding between bodies which accompany and constitute our being. Nancy's account of the *corps sonore* resonates particularly intensely with the projects of filmmakers like Breillat and Noé who aim to disrupt bodily integrity and open up bodies both on screen and before the screen, seeking to eliminate boundaries between them and expose their relations. My own focus on unpleasant sound allows us to think about how the limits of cinematic form might be productively engaged to express what is typically considered unlistenable or inaudible, and how these limits might also be mobilised to tune our attention through our bodies to signals, impressions and triggers that remain beyond us, or opaque to us.

Taking Janus's criticism that Nancy's bodies take up too much airspace to sound, that they are not 'noisy enough', as its point of departure, this chapter tests Nancy's *corps sonore* away from the background of classical music (such as Wagner) and painting (Titian's *Venus and Cupid with an Organist*) that he exposes it to, and puts it in more fraught contact with extreme cinema's messy, unpleasant, fluid corporeality and its unlistenable sounds, producing effects of turbulence or assault on spectators. The image from *Anatomie* with which I began in many ways recalls Nancy's reading of Titian's Venus as *corps sonore* but Breillat's film and staging of the body is far less prudish than Nancy's own disavowal of the possibility that the organist may

in fact be gazing at Venus's crotch.[10] By considering the instances and ways in which this cinema addresses a listening body before the film, through noises that either envelope or attack, this chapter probes the noisier bodily limits of Nancy's *corps sonore*, while still thinking about how this *corps sonore* might provide a model of spectatorship for our engagement with film.

Listening is to strain the ear towards what is beyond sense, to the senseless and insensible, which in some cases, as I discuss here, might be towards what is unlistenable: to that which we do not hear (sounds at a threshold of audibility) or what we cannot bear to hear (unpleasant sounds that affect and traverse our bodies), both of which reflect on the relations between bodies and how these might be made palpable through the limits of representation and cinematic form. Breillat, through her exploration of female sexual subjectivity and the body, helps us to think about Nancy's *corps sonore* as an intimate resonance or relation between bodies, a responsiveness that cinema makes possible to expressions that evade capture and exist at the limits of their own disclosure. In Breillat, the unlistenable designates sounds that have typically been kept off the scene of representation when representing female sexuality and pleasure. Breillat's sonic practice poses questions about the listenability of female pleasure, its resistance in the auditory realm, in contrast to the auditory conventions of pornography which make the sounds of female pleasure highly available. My argument shows that the unlistenable in Breillat emerges through a formal play of volume that attaches itself to Breillat's wider exploration of sexual politics and of listening to the female body. Noé, on the other hand, uses noise as a form of sonic violence and dominance within his work that raises questions about the dystopian possibilities of Nancy's *corps sonore*. His films demonstrate a form of sonic dominance that overwhelms the hierarchy of our senses revealing how Nancy's *corps sonore* also necessitates vulnerability, a betrayed body deprived of sonic agency. Thought together, Breillat and Noé, allow for a productive critique that leaves open the possibilities of what might constitute the unlistenable in this body of filmmaking, and how the *corps sonore* as a model of spectatorship can be thought.

[10] Hickmott brilliantly elucidates this disavowal in her own reading of Nancy's engagement with Venus: 'although Nancy is happy to acknowledge that the organist is certainly gazing sensually at the naked Venus, he contends that the gaze is directed towards her belly […] it seems evident that the organist's gaze is actually directed towards Venus' crotch. Do we not find, rather more revealingly, a psychosexual scene of acoustic self-identification, whereby the male organist (read, also, philosopher) – effectively blinded by the threat of castration – has to continue to play his 'organ' in order to initiate an otic disavowal of what he has (not) seen' (2015, 491). By contrast, in *Anatomie* it is the female body and the female genitals that are the emitters of sound, rather than being a resonant sounding board for the 'organist', and these soundings and noises do not offer themselves up to the ear easily, but remain withheld. Likewise, it is 'she' (Breillat's protagonist) who insists that 'he' gaze at her.

EXTREMISM IN CONTEXT

Before moving on to discuss Breillat and Noé's films in particular, it is useful to spend some time outlining the limits and politics of the New Extremism. The 'New French Extremity' or 'New Extremism' was coined as a pejorative term by *Artforum* critic James Quandt, who bemoaned a recent trend in French filmmaking since the turn of the century in an article entitled 'Flesh and Blood: Sex and Violence in recent French cinema' (Quandt 2004). Quandt's article posited the 'New French Extremity' as an umbrella term, grouping together diverse filmmakers that Quandt thought to be wilfully transgressive. This list included Gaspar Noé and Catherine Breillat, alongside other contemporaries such as François Ozon, Claire Denis, Philippe Grandrieux and Bruno Dumont. Since Quandt's tirade, these filmmakers have become emblematic of this mode of filmmaking, and notwithstanding their extremely diverse visual aesthetics and politics, are continually invoked as examples of 'extreme' cinema.

Despite the pejorative connotations implied by 'extremism', Quandt's term has been taken up productively by film theorists such as Martine Beugnet (2007), Tim Palmer (2011), Tanya Horeck and Tina Kendell (2011), Absjørn Grønstad (2012), and Nikolaj Lübecker (2015) as a category through which to interrogate the value of extremity and transgressive representation in the twenty-first century. For Lübecker, rather than these films demonstrating a belief in the emancipatory possibilities of transgression, as was the case with transgressive cinema of the 1970s, these films 'extend and explore the distance between transgression and emancipation' (6). Lübecker argues that these films demonstrate not an emancipatory project but a 'desire for such a project' (7) and that this distance itself, between desire and its realisation, becomes the source of 'feel-bad' experience for a spectator.

Palmer's work, *Brutal Intimacy* departs from Quandt's pejorative designation to describe this diverse body of filmmaking. For Palmer, the term 'extremism' misguidedly suggests 'lost control' or 'an inability to be measured and precise' (2011, 35). This, Palmer argues, is far from the reality of these filmmakers' practice. Instead, Palmer proposes that we think this cinema as a '*cinéma du corps*' (cinema of the body), on account of these films' frequent foregrounding of the body in frank and graphic depictions of corporeal transgression or vulnerability.[11] The *cinéma du corps*, Palmer argues, derives from 'collective ambitions for the

[11] Theorisations of cinema as a corporeal medium, or cinema as a body, have seen an enduring presence in the context of French film theory since Deleuze (1985) and more recently developed by Martine Beugnet (2007) or Raymond Bellour (2009) as well as in an

medium itself to generate profound, often challenging sensorial experiences' (58). Extreme cinema is interested in exploring the limits of the body, both as they are represented within cinema and as they are appealed to in spectatorial bodies. As such, these films rethink the terms of spectatorship through the interaction and exposure to cinema as a medium, via the body.

This chapter takes forward from Lübecker his thinking of the 'feel-bad' experience, alongside Palmer's emphasis on the corporeal contours of the *cinéma du corps*, to suggest ways of understanding these films as constituting a *cinéma du corps sonore*: an exploration of the medium itself as a site of resonance, and a cinema that would seek out the spectator as a resonant body, appealing to our listening and tuning us to the relations that constitute our being. Both terms – extremism and the *cinéma du corps* – are productive for thinking about unpleasant sound, noise and the unlistenable. Extreme, derived from the Latin meaning 'outermost', provokes an understanding of noise as an outlier of sound, existing on the fringes of meaning, content, legibility, always threatening to disrupt and destabilise from this limit. At the same time, the term *cinéma du corps* is equally productive for thinking about the tactile and somatic properties of noise as a physical force that vibrates and affects bodies through sensation.

What does thinking about noise bring to our understanding of the New Extremism? These films embrace noise as a form of impurity, uncleanliness, disturbance or interruption in ways that denature the image and react against the perceived cleanliness offered by the digital. For instance, Grandrieux and Dumont both use noises (as well as images) that are deliberately difficult to perceive in order to refuse explanatory representation in favour of more sensory, visceral engagement with their films. Thus, they maintain the distance between sound and sense which Nancy argues is a condition of sonority. The visual equivalent of noise – unclean, unclear or dirty images – has also received some attention. It was arguably the low-budget, low-quality graininess of the video image that made the extremely explicit female rape-revenge film, *Baise-Moi* (Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi, 2000) so controversial. Often seen as a feminist revision of the road movie, like *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), the film is perhaps as explicit as other material appearing in French cinema around this time. And yet it received far harsher treatment at the hands of its censors. One could argue that it was the anti-aesthetic image-quality and sound that made it so unpalatable. The film resists a security of style that sublimates its scenes of sex and violence to a realm that is recognisably

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edited volume exploring the inter-respondent relation between images of bodies and bodies themselves (Game 2010).

artistic. This is contrary to a filmmaker like Breillat who mixes pornographic material with images that are highly painterly. Rather, the 'dirtiness' of the image in *Baise-Moi* seems to accumulate the environment that the two protagonists inhabit. As Beugnet argues, 'it is as if the video's porous surface has absorbed the grime and bleakness of the world it describes' (2007, 51). [12]

These extreme works have been understood as providing an anti-canon to contemporary French films without 'noise' such as *Amélie: le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2002). Here, digital technology offers a cleaned-up version of Paris, cleansed of ethnic diversity and social problems (Kaganski 2001). Palmer, who positions the *cinéma du corps* within the 'eco-system' of French cinema, equally pits these films against the heritage film that dominated French cinematic production in the 1980s and 1990s. Heritage films offered 'a way of conceiving of the nation as a cultural community, formed by common historical experiences…privilege[ing] collective memory which it presents as the guarantor of national stability and integrity' (Oscherwitz 2010, 13).[13] In contrast, New Extremism rejects such a unified notion of community, favouring dissolution, fragmentation and offering disparate visions in which humanist and liberal values such as community, social contract and collective memory, are doomed to fail.

Noise, in its many interruptive and disturbing guises, is a formal element that responds to this anti-canon. The work of Lisa Coulthard has paved valuable ground for showing the way New Extremism engages with noise. She argues that 'New Extremism simultaneously relies on and thwarts the quiet technologies of digital sound in order to attain an aural impact on par with its visual extremism' (2013, 115). For Coulthard 'dirty sound resonates with the violence and disaffections addressed in the new extremity' (124). Lübecker too has acknowledged the soundscapes of these films as characterful. The feel-bad film, he suggests, employs sound to blur, destabilise and displace knowledge of situations. He identifies films of 'assault' as being noisy, whereas films of 'unease' are quiet, almost silent, where the 'main characters are bodies, and we are invited to listen carefully to the hushed words of the film' (2015, 99). My

[12] *Baise-Moi* is an important intertext between Breillat and Noé. Both filmmakers lent their support to the film. Breillat created a petition in order to repeal the film's X certificate while Noé helped and supported Despentes and Trinh Thi in their development of the film and he is acknowledged and thanked in the credits. Noé's film *Seul contre tous* (1999) appears as an intertextual reference within the film itself. It plays on a TV screen watched by the character Nadine as she performs a 'trick' with a client.

[13] Heritage films from this period include, for example, *Jean de Florette* (Claude Berri, 1986), *Manon des sources* (Claude Berri, 1986), *Germinal* (Claude Berri, 1993) or *La Reine Margot* (Patrice Chéreau, 1994).

conception of the unlistenable is in keeping with these distinctions, though moves in a different direction in considering how noise and the unlistenable are used to reflect on the ethical and political dimensions of the body.

In the case of Breillat, whom this chapter now goes on to consider, the *corps sonore* we tend towards is the female body that Breillat places at the centre of her work. Breillat's films take us extremely close to this body, frequently shown reclining and resounding. Though it is on the visual field that much of Breillat's thinking takes place, my own critical shift from viewing to listening reveals that little noises are an important part of her project. Usually loud, usually prescriptive, sound is one of the dominant and most conventional ways our culture represents, recognises and hears female sexual pleasure and it is very much in the realm of the auditory in which the question of representing this pleasure is at stake. This issue is at the heart of Breillat's sexual politics and filmmaking as her films explore female sexuality, subjectivity and questions of obscenity.

CATHERINE BREILLAT: LES PETITS BRUITS

Romance (1999) and the subsequent *Anatomie de l'enfer* are perhaps where Breillat's filmmaking has engaged most intimately with the pornographic and sought to question the way sensibility functions as a mode of censorship, just as censorship affects sensibility. *Romance* tells the story of Marie (Caroline Ducey), a primary schoolteacher who is frustrated with her boyfriend (Sagamore Stévenin) for refusing to touch her. As he does not acknowledge her desire, Marie embarks on a search to satisfy and discover her desire through a series of sexual encounters, while navigating wider social feelings of shame and disgust. *Anatomie* is a filmic redaction of Marguerite Duras' *La Maladie de la Mort* (1982) which Breillat rewrote into the novel *Pornocratie* (2001) before it became the screenplay for the film. In *Anatomie*, an unnamed woman (Casar) establishes a contract paying an unnamed man (Siffredi) to watch her over the course of four nights. Her demand, as she puts it in the film, is: 'me regarder par là où je ne suis pas regardable'.

Not only did Breillat cast the Italian porn-star Siffredi in leading roles in both films, but she herself claims that with *Romance* it was the time to 'regarder la pornographie en face' (Breillat 2006, 122). Though I focus primarily on *Anatomie,* the two films prompt being approached as a pair; *Anatomie* could be considered a loose remake of *Romance*, an opportunity for Breillat to go further in her confrontation with the pornographic and challenge the fears that held her back when making *Romance*. In interviews with film critic Claire Vassé, Breillat claims that despite

the scandal *Romance* provoked, with its scenes of un-simulated sex and use of porn actors, she did not go far enough. This is because she elided filming the female genitals from up close, despite such shots being planned and written into *Romance*. For *Anatomie*, Breillat explains 'il était irrépressible pour moi de montrer le sexe de la femme en gros plan […] parce que c'était ce que j'avais évité dans *Romance*' (Breillat 2006, 109).

Breillat's images thus encourage spectators to confront graphic, close-up depictions of the female body in terms of what Breillat sees as its facticity and materiality. In doing so, she claims her images move away from 'le sentiment de la pornographie' to be instead in 'le sentiment que "c'est ça qui est"' (Breillat 2006, 109). For Breillat, it is important that representations of the female body and of female sexuality exist away from their usual pornographic frame. Her cinema endeavours to show that 'an image is not pornographic in itself, it's the way we look at it' (Breillat 2002). This importation of the pornographic finds its way into Breillat's otherwise visually striking stylistic habits, characteristic of art cinema. Alongside their graphic display, her films are also distinct for their highly aesthetic, painterly style: long takes, decisive camera movements, subdued colour palettes with bursts of vibrant red, austere sets, classical symmetry and precise lighting. Beugnet, in her own discussion of Breillat's work, stresses the tactility of her cinema. She argues this tactility emerges through the 'meticulous composition of its close up images' and 'the effect of high-resolution film, where […] a wealth of content details and high concentration of the textures and hues reproduced can create a tactile effect' (2007, 48-51). My own discussion builds on Breillat's cinema considered in terms of tactility, but discusses the way pornographic sound complicates orthodoxies associated with the redemptive value of tactile or haptic sound. Breillat uses the tactility of her own little noises to anchor sound back to the body on screen, in line with a Cartesian perspectivalism that has been denigrated by haptic film theory. I refer to Breillat's sounds as 'petits bruits' (little noises) following her own description of the sounds emitted by the female protagonist in her novel, *Pornocratie* which became the screenplay for *Anatomie*. This text, as well as Duras' *La Maladie de la mort* which inspired it, provide literary supports to my own discussion of noise.

After placing Breillat's filmmaking in context, I establish the conventions of sound in pornography. This is done using film theorist Linda Williams's seminal work on hard-core's generic codes in 1970s feature-film pornography, to which Breillat's films most evidently respond. I then proceed to discuss Breillat's own sonic practice, considering in turn bodily noises, noises emitted by her protagonists, and finally her approach to soundscaping. My

argument shows how thinking about noise and volume – noises at extreme limits of audibility – reflect crucially on Breillat's wider exploration of female desire and subjectivity as well as opening new avenues for thinking about her engagement with questions concerning intimacy, exposure and the real. Through Breillat's engagement with volume in particular, she favours contained noises, expressions of response and resistance which occur at different volumes to the codified sounds of sex in pornography. Attending to her noises allows us to reconsider the relation between the pornographic and the postmodern within which Breillat's 'unwatchable' images have been understood (Downing 2004, Best and Crowley 2007). In line with Nancy's distinction between hearing and listening, I make a case for Breillat's little noises soliciting our ears and bodies in an attentive listening, one that is straining towards possible meaning, rather than allowing us to 'hear' these sounds in the service of stimulation and pleasure, as we do in pornography.

Determining exactly what kind of pornography Breillat is engaging with is not straightforward. While it is problematic to consider pornography a homogenous category, Breillat appears to be interested in confronting what exists in our mental and imagined repertoire of images and sounds when we picture what pornography is – its generic codes.[14] On the one hand, the casting of Siffredi imports, along with the associations and accretions that surround his hyper-masculine muscles, an entire history of his pornographic body. On his personal website, Siffredi claims to have had sex with over 3000 women in professional circumstances and the Internet Adult Film Database attributes 718 titles to his name.[15] Siffredi's body thus carries a sheer weight of pornographic references that arguably exceed any specific text or style. Other potential source texts for Breillat might be the 'classical' pornographic feature films of the 1970s, the decade in which she began writing and making films. Breillat's cinema rethinks the relationship between narrative and sex number that characterises full-length feature pornographic films such as *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano, 1972) from the US, or *Emmanuelle* (Just Jaeckin, 1974) from France and questions the utopian discourse around sex that these films offer. Douglas Keesey, in his monograph on Breillat, suggests that her work is indebted to the relaxing of censorship laws surrounding the release of

[14] Speaking in interview about why she likes to keep her female actors away from their male partners during the period of filming, Breillat explains: 'car si on lui dit ce qu'on a fait, lui le transcrira en images horribles. Comme toujours sur le genre de scènes que je filme, les gens imaginent des images qui sont nécessairement horribles, des images répertoriées dans leur tête' (Breillat 2006, 143).

[15] Last accessed May 19, 2017. Siffredi is most known for his appearance in Gonzo-style pornography, a sub-genre characterised by participants holding the camera themselves, creating first-person point of view shots, generally from a male perspective.

Emmanuelle in 1974 (Keesey 2009). Grounding Breillat's pornographic reference point in 1970s narrative pornography becomes particularly compelling in light of Breillat's confession that she had wanted to make *Romance* since making *Une vraie jeune fille,* realised in 1976.[16] Breillat also consistently positions the Franco-Japanese pornographic art film *Ai No Corrida/In the Realm of the Senses* (Nagasi Oshima 1976) as the film that enabled her to make *Romance*. What seems certain is that Breillat desires to use the hard-core elements of pornography, rather than titillating erotica or soft-core, evident from her own distinctions between the two. For Breillat 'l'érotisme, c'est l'humiliation totale de la femme. L'idée que c'est acceptable, car joli. La pornographie, c'est laid, moi je préfère le laid' (Armanet and Vallaeys 2000).

SOUND IN PORNOGRAPHY

In her seminal work on hard-core pornography, Linda Williams claimed that 'there can be no such thing as hard core sound' (1989, 126). Some time should be spent understanding the conventions of sound in pornography, as well as the context in which Williams makes this claim, before we can move on to asking whether Breillat seeks an equivalent form of hard-core sound or noise in her pursuit of the 'ugly' and rejection of prettification in the representation of sex. Williams defines hard core as a condition of 'maximum visibility' that does not play 'peekaboo' and whose quest is to capture the involuntary confession of pleasure in the form of visible frenzy, epitomised in hard core by 'the money shot', also known as the 'come shot'. This is the shot in which the reality of the sex act on screen as having 'really' taken place, and the knowledge that pleasure has indeed been had, is disclosed to the viewer through a shot of a man's ejaculating penis. When Williams argues there is no such thing as hard-core sound, she makes this argument referring to sound's ontology, which is different to that of the image, and therefore does not provide the same certainty, evidence or knowledge of pleasure as the 'money shot'. As she observes 'maximum visibility proves elusive in the parallel confession of female sexual pleasure' (49). This undermines hard-core pornography's desire for 'assurance that it is witnessing not the voluntary performance of feminine pleasure, but its involuntary confession' (50).

A crucial formal difference in the use of sound in 'classical' narrative pornography from 'traditional' narrative cinema is the way it does not serve to anchor the images and enhance their realism. Instead it indulges an almost surreal effect, but does so, Williams jokes 'without having the function of avant-garde deconstruction' (122). Because even big-budget hard-core films 'revert to nonsynchronous sound in the "numbers"' Williams suggests 'this technique

[16] Though the film did not enjoy general release until 1999, following the success of *Romance*.

would seem to be an important *formal* feature of the genre's representation of sex' (124; emphasis in original). Scenes are shot without sound so that the camera can get as close as necessary to bodies on set and move around them without capturing extraneous noise. Pornography thus seeks to suppress noise in favour of its codified sounds which hold the promise of meaning and deliver certainty. These are added in post-production, with almost no regard for synchronicity with the image. Additional sounds of smacking, slapping or slurping are rendered through Foley, and function to produce a sense of proximity rather than spatial realism. Hard-core sound:

> does seek an effect of closeness and intimacy, rather than of spatial reality. In hearing the sounds of pleasure with greater clarity and from closer up, auditors of hard core sacrifice the ability to gauge the distances between bodies and their situation in space for a sense of connectedness with the sounds they hear. (Williams 1989, 124)

Sound is thus not authentication but stimulation. It can be understood as demonstrating haptic properties, privileging proximity, materiality and aural close-ups that collapse spatial realism to favour instead an immediacy and sense of touch with a female *acousmêtre*.[17] Contrary to traditional theorisations of the haptic, in this instance therefore, pornography's haptic economy could be said to support the violence of the scopic. Corbett and Kapsalis point out that the uncertain legal status of sounds that we might consider aurally pornographic mean that female sex vocalisations are a more 'available form of representation' that 'creates another way of sanctioning the construction and circulation of women as the objects of sex, as being "on the market"' (1996, 104). That the female voice is acousmatic in visual pornography makes this voice readily detachable and easier to circulate 'on the air' in other non-pornographic spaces.[18] Sound thus constitutes another way in which women are constructed in and across different media as objects of sexual availability.

Evidence of the differing legal status of sound can be heard in the many non-pornographic films that gesture toward a censored image, which is kept off-scene. For example, Atom Egoyan's *The Adjuster* (1991) features scenes in which a woman working on the Board of

[17] 'Acousmêtre' is a term coined by Chion. It designates a voice specific to cinema that is heard and not seen (2017 [1990], 135-136).

[18] For example, in popular songs, or in a subgenre of online videos which insert the sounds of female orgasms into public spaces as pranks or as asynchronous to an image which subverts a viewer's expectations such as in this video https://www.facebook.com/takeel.teelocc/videos/10154194295254215/ [last accessed 22 June 2018].

Censorship watches and censors pornographic material. The spectator only hears this material. The mise-en-abîme of judging and evaluating images is mirrored in our own viewing of *The Adjuster* where the film's formal construction sunders the relationship between sound and image, forcing us to continually appraise, judge and re-evaluate what we are seeing, hearing or overhearing. Whether the sounds of sex are heard autonomously from an image or not, they function in relation to an image nonetheless, either by playing deliberately on the image's absence or, if an image is present, are coded by it. It is the aural availability of women, the knowledge and legibility of their pleasure offered through the use of sound that Breillat, I argue, withholds through an engagement with the unlistenable: noises at extreme thresholds of audibility and noises that have remained off-scene (ob-scene) in pornography's demonstration of female pleasure.

The female voice is equally pushed to certain limits in pornography – either through straining the performer's voice or by manipulating the voice through technology where the louder she vocalises, the more she puts on display her enjoyment. Volume becomes a quantitative measure of pleasure: to turn her on is to turn her up. Corbett and Kapsalis have suggested that a frenzy of the audible, of volume, provides an equivalent to hard-core's frenzy of the visible (1996, 103). This seems insufficient as the verification provided by sound still remains too uncertain to fulfill Williams's notion of hard-core's quest for evidence. It does nonetheless position the formal property of volume as problematic, and this is one aspect of Breillat's approach to the auditory that I explore.

As well as raising issues about the real (is she really enjoying herself?), sound in pornography raises questions about the codes that construct what we think of as real and the ways pleasure is narrated or communicated. The sounds of sexual pleasure are highly codified, even as they tread with ambiguous proximity to sounds of pain, and it is largely through pornography that the aural codes for voicing pleasure, 'real' or faked, are constructed. This communication is mediated just as much by sounds that conform to what we think our partner wants to hear, as sex is mediated by what we think they want to see.[19] The opening of the romantic comedy *Amélie*, which I have already positioned as a counterpoint to films situated within the New Extremism, illustrates the way pornography's aural representation of sex mediates the sounds of sex in popular culture. Amélie, looking out over Paris, wonders how many couples are

[19] It is important to acknowledge that pornography has also been a site that responds to debates about female pleasure and the problems sex raises. For a detailed discussion, see Williams's chapter on 'Hard-Core Utopias: Problems and Solutions' (1989, 153-183). Nonetheless, it is problematic that pornography remains one of the few authors of female pleasure and sites in which this pleasure sees itself represented.

having an orgasm at that moment in time. There follows a montage of fifteen heterosexual couples having sex with rapid cutting between the different spaces. These scenes of climax are sutured into one continuous female sexual moan, the editing creating a sound bridge across the images of the couples, whose individual voices can be recuperated into one meta-orgasm – because they sound the same.[20] Pornography provides sexual pleasure with one grand, loud narrative. To problematise this sound, via the unlistenable, is to question the representability of this pleasure and the ways it is made intelligible. What noises might resist this intelligibility of female pleasure at its increased volume, present not so much to acknowledge a woman's desire, but as stimulation for a viewer?

An observation made by literary and feminist critic Barbara Johnson (1998) seems pertinent here:

> There seem, then, to be two things that women are silent about: their pleasure and their violation. The work performed by the idealisation of this silence is that *it helps culture not to be able to tell the difference between the two*. (137, emphasis in original)

Though Johnson's analysis of this undecidability between pleasure and violation, abuse and desire, takes place with reference to high art forms such as sculpture (Bernini's statue of St Theresa's *jouissance* in Rome), poetry (Keats' 'unravished bride of quietness' from his poem *Ode On A Grecian Urn*) or myth (Apollo and Daphne) her comments find their negative in pornography. In this 'lowbrow' genre, instead of an idealised silence, we deal with an idealised sound which nonetheless performs a similar function. Some of pornography's idealisation of ravishment often ends in scenes of sexual coercion where, as Williams puts it, the female victim is shown 'lying back and enjoying it' (1989, 164). This, Williams goes on to argue, is the 'dilemma of rape in a sexist society: the suspicion that the victim wants to be victimized, a suspicion that has made rape notoriously difficult to prove in courts of law'. Sound in pornography always poses this problem, whether it is depicting ravishment or not; pleasure or pain, desire or abuse, the evidence of sound is undecidable and the confession of pleasure we hear 'onscreen' cannot assure us of the industry's non-violation.

[20] For an interesting counter discussion that rereads *Amélie's* sentimentalism as a fascination with the sordid, and links the film to contemporary French directors situated within 'extreme' cinema such as Breillat, see Scatton-Tessier (2004).

Controversially, Breillat aims to complicate both the idea of pleasure and violation in her films in order to think sexuality away from readable norms. Breillat's cinema aims to trouble the rape script by presenting situations we are inclined to read as rape but denies us the certainty of doing so. *Romance,* for example, features a scene in which Marie pays for an act of cunnilingus in a stairwell that turns into (we think, almost certainly) a rape. After failing to fight the man off, Marie demands payment for the act and, once it is over, shouts after him that she is not ashamed. In her troubling of the rape script, Breillat undermines the dominant representational paradigms of rape that assume an empirically verifiable and unambiguous 'reality' that often, in a legal context, does not work in a victim's favour. This is a perspective that Catherine Wheatley has thoughtfully brought to Breillat's work through an engagement with Catherine MacKinnon's examination of the legal context surrounding rape (2010, 29). MacKinnon states that the 'problem facing legal assessments of rape crimes is this: the injury of rape lies in the meaning of the act to its victims, but the standard for its criminality lies in the meaning of the same act to the assailants.' MacKinnon goes on to argue that 'the deeper problem is the rape law's assumption that a single, objective state of affairs exists, one which merely needs to be determined by evidence, when many (maybe even most) rapes involve honest men and violated women' (MacKinnon 1983, 654).

For Wheatley, Mackinnon's framing of the issue of rape as a question of hermeneutics, rather than of facts, reflects Breillat's own engagement with rape as a hermeneutic question across her films from *Romance* to *À ma sœur!* (2001). This provides a particularly productive way for thinking about Breillat's use of noises and the hermeneutic issues posed by the auditory in Breillat's films. Breillat aims to disturb and disrupt the idealised silences and idealised sounds that package up these experiences (pleasure, violation, etc.) as intelligible, assuming we can tell the difference. Breillat shows us that we do not, and that there is violence in assuming we do. As well as operating against the codified sounds of sex, noise, as disturbance and disruption, arguably provides a better term for examining the auditory representation of sex in Breillat's work, for it reflects her wider project of confronting us with the disruptive, unpleasant and bothersome nature of female sexual subjectivity in its non-hygienic, un-prettified form. In considering noise, we move away from the prescriptive, intelligible 'sounds of pleasure' to noises not appropriable to stimulation, that challenge pornography's regime of representation and imagine alternative expressions to communicate pleasure and intimacy. This is not to suggest a definition of noise that denies semiotic content. However, in pornography, sounds are overtly laden with directed content and, as we shall see, Breillat's noises resist signifying in this way. Nor does this definition seek out the material or ontological conception of noise like

that sought by Hainge (2013). Such an approach does not reflect Breillat's desire to expose the subjective structuring of our perceptions. Hainge even compares his investment in an ontology of noise to Justice Potter Stewart's famous ruling on obscenity – 'I know it when I see it' (Hainge 2013, 7) – a conception of obscenity that Breillat outright refuses. For Breillat, the act of naming something obscene renders it so, a naming which a film like *Anatomie* seeks to work against. It is what is at stake in the gendered dimension of the auditory in pornography that I draw out here.

NOISES OF ANATOMIE

As well as a visual confrontation with the 'obscenity' of the female body, Breillat's films call upon us as listeners to this body. In *Anatomie*, Breillat's frontal, unflinching camera employs the same framing as the pornographic 'split-beaver' shot (a close-up characterised by visible genitals and legs ajar) and this is matched by aural close-ups featuring the female genitals' increased audibility (Figure 2). Breillat thus ties female noise back to the body and, unlike with pornographic conventions, re-establishes a spatial realism through a use of sound that is particular to the body seen from this distance on screen. Breillat's attention to the materiality of sex has already been explored by Eugenie Brinkema in her discussion of the viscous, sticky production of the female sex across Breillat's work (2006). However, Brinkema's claim that 'Breillat's foray into the ontological realism of the image is always and uniquely centred on the sticky production of feminine desire' (149) passes over the noise of this desire and, as a reading, stops short of another way in which noise reverses the aural codes of pornography by re-orientating the discourse of realism onto the female body through these materialising sound indices and a re-establishing of Cartesian space through sound.[21]



[21] The term materialising sound indices (M.S.Is) comes from Chion's theories. It refers to sonic details that aim to 'materialise' their sound source.

Figure 2. Breillat's extreme close-ups in *Anatomie de l'enfer*

Of course, the sounds of female genitals are also present in pornography – it is a sound which pornographic Foley goes to great lengths to render. However, this sound of wetness is usually included to represent genitals in action – to support what Williams terms the 'genital event' and offer the sound of bodies put to work in real pornographic performance (1989, 83). Breillat's body, by contrast, is almost always-already noisy. When her camera glides across the surface of Casar's body or approaches her in close up, it is accompanied by various faint high-pitched droning sounds.[22] This simultaneously figures the body as already sounding, at the same time as it suggests (in borrowing sound typical of the horror genre) the horror this body inspires. Breillat's body does not require energetic penetration or action in order to hear it. Instead it is sounding at its surface, at the slightest touch, and is in fact not heard at all in scenes of penetrative sex. Volumes are engaged formally to announce autonomous arousal and presence, the noise of a body pre-touch, rather than the idea conveyed in pornography that a body's manipulation corresponds to a parallel manipulation and modulation of sound.

Breillat's gazing camera thus functions as a microphone held up to the female anatomy as it becomes audible, in line with the scale of the shot as if the image's approach were a bringing into earshot. However, a better comparison for the camera's behaviour here might be a stethoscope, an instrument of listening rather than amplifying, and specifically an instrument for listening that takes place at the surface of the body, bringing sound into focus only alongside the scale and proximity of the close-up. Breillat embraces the role her handling of technology can play in relation to mediating what Arnt Maasø describes as 'the spatial relationship between speaker and listener' (2008, 38). Or in this case, body and listener. Noise here is not a figure of interiority, as Sterne laments as symptomatic of the audio-visual litany (2003), but for exteriority, an emitted signal, expressive of this surface and boundary between the body's inside and out. This mechanism of externalising is something Brinkema points out in reference to *Romance's* visual representation of female wetness, claiming it is an act of 'radically *othering* the image' by reversing the ontological authenticity typically centred on the male body in the pornographic image (2006, 152). For Brinkema, *Romance's* entire colour scheme of white performs a spatialisation of sex that allows Marie to disrupt this whiteness through her bodily expanses across the images. In discussing the extreme close-up of the live-

[22] These are difficult to hear, particularly due to their high pitch, and depend on good-quality audio in viewing conditions. Similar high-pitched drone sounds are also attached to the body of Marie in *Romance* during the seduction scene with Robert, suggesting again the use of noise to animate a dynamic of desire, which Breillat does not articulate in conventional terms.

birth at the end of *Romance*, Brinkema argues: 'The dark metaphysical gap, the fantasy of female interiority, is filled in, given image-to; it is shown and seen and therefore known' (152). Just as *Anatomie* is a call to watch that which is unwatchable, it also ends up sounding like a call to listen to that which is (usually) unlistenable. Contrary to the aural close-up of pornography that detach the female voice and bodily noises from the body on screen, in both *Romance* and *Anatomie*, Breillat engages a sonic materialism, alongside the image, that asks us to confront *this exact* body on screen, up close, and listen to it.

LISTENING

As well as anchoring noise back to a visual body, both *Romance* and *Anatomie* privilege the vocal sounds of male pleasure at a higher volume than those of female pleasure. The female protagonists in these films remain relatively quiet during scenes of penetrative sex with Siffredi making small noises, or taking breaths, more like the murmurs of a sleeper (in *Anatomie* the woman indeed frequently appears to be asleep). The sex scenes with Siffredi employ aural close-ups of his sounds rather than hers, his breaths, as if they were hot in our ear (Figure 3 and 4). Breillat thus performs a reversal of the audio-visual economy of pornography that relegates the evidence of female pleasure to the overly vocal realm of the auditory while the evidence and teleology of male pleasure demands a visual conclusion. Indeed, Breillat elides the 'come shot' entirely in her sex scenes with Siffredi, instead preferring to foreground his moaning exertions. At these points, it is as if the camera has become Marie's or Casar's ear. The ear is given prominence in the frame, and the proximity with which Siffredi's voice is captured allows for an auditory close-up that exceeds the scale of the image. Here, the film image itself, its entire 1.85:1 aspect ratio, becomes a listening organ, the opening of a cine-ear across its anamorphic expanse, that identifies with the female subject and constructs her as an active listening subject. Just as the camera became an *instrument* of listening at the point of confronting the female anatomy, so too does it at this moment of relation become an organ of listening, aligned with the female protagonist as subject. This embodied understanding of the image corresponds to Breillat's own statement about her filmmaking that 'les mots de *Romance* sont comme l'âme de Marie, l'image est comme son corps' (Breillat 1999, 23). Breillat's films thus provide a way of understanding the image itself as a *corps sonore*, one that is listening and re-sounding to us those sounds kept below the standard thresholds of audibility. As Breillat's image simultaneously seeks to embody these two different orifices on the body, eye and ear, attention is drawn to listening as a mode of relation taking place alongside the act of looking.





Figure 3. Siffredi's breaths in the woman's ear, *Anatomie de l'enfer*

Figure 4. Siffredi's breaths in Marie's ear, *Romance*

In using both the image and the soundtrack in ways that work to solicit our ear, Breillat's films provide an example of the way cinema might reflect Nancy's model of existing according to listening. Pornography's address allows an auditor to hear, rather than challenging them to listen. Pleasure is made to speak, but is inattentive to the sonority of communication itself – resonance – that Nancy identifies in listening. Breillat's novel, *Pornocratie* makes clear that one of the modes of relation and intimacy Breillat is exploring in *Anatomie* is precisely a form of resonant sense away from intelligible sense. *Pornocratie*'s description of the man drinking whiskey in his chair while watching the reclining woman lie naked on her bed, describes the bodily noise of his swallowing, standing in place of words, as a form of offering to her: 'le bruit léger de sa déglutination tient lieu de l'espace des mots. Il lui offre cette intimité sonore' (2001, 61). The attention to this swallowing noise coming from the body's interior is carried over from novel to film, as the sound mix allows the interior of the body to be intimately heard in the detailed noise of the man's gulping, between his own words, as he announces that beings have nothing to say to each other and communication is impossible (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Hearing sounds from the body's interior, Siffredi's gulping in *Anatomie de l'enfer*

Though audition is one of the distant senses, according to Marks (2008), listening is revealed in Breillat's work as a form of intimate relation with its own dynamics of presence. However, this presence is one we strain towards. Her camera, at times embodying our auditory sense, as well as an organ of vision, constructs listening as an active and fine mode of attention, one receptive to different noises and lower volumes. Elsewhere in *Pornocratie* are examples of noises occurring on contained, small scales equivalent to the 'bruit léger' made by the man. Breillat describes the woman's noises as 'petits', and these are figured as a form of resistance that is even perceived as duplicitous and threatening. In what is described as a power game between the sleeping woman and the man she pays to be the 'possesseur nocturne de son corps', the little unconscious noises she makes divest these power positions of their typical dynamics. While the man manipulates the woman's body into lewd poses, we are told 'elle émet des petits bruits tout en continuant apparemment de dormir; mais ne révèle-t-elle pas en cela une forme de duplicité – elle émet donc des bruits de petits grognements repus, satisfaits d'eux-mêmes et autoritaires' (2001, 81).

Breillat is thus interested in contained noises, favouring quieter (though not silent) expressions of response and resistance which occur at different volumes to the codified sounds of sex in pornography. Pleasure is figured as non-appropriable and unknowable. The noises remain close to their source, incorporated and attached to the body, cast out across a small range. Duras' *La Maladie de la Mort* figures female pleasure in a similar way: inaudible and unknowable to the male watcher, incapable of hearing her. The first person narrator, addressing the man, wonders: 'Je ne sais pas non plus si vous percevez le grondement sourd et lointain de sa jouissance à travers sa respiration, à travers ce râle très doux qui va et vient depuis sa bouche jusqu'à l'air du dehors' (1982, 15). As a cinematic work, *Anatomie* is able to formally realise these descriptions of amplitude and volume detailed in both Breillat and Duras' literary texts. Although within the filmic diegesis, these noises remain a representation, they can also be reconciled with a form of realism in the way that, as a listener, our auditory sense is addressed by an actual little noise that presents itself and engages us in a real play of volume, suspending itself at this limit of audibility.

SOUNDSCAPES

These issues have broader consequences for thinking about the social and cultural constructs that inform Breillat's work. Paying attention to Breillat's soundscaping offers a further way we might understand her exploration of sexuality and its placement within the cultural

frameworks that construct it. Discussions of Breillat's use of voiceover have already been insightfully addressed by critics such as Emma Wilson and Lisa Downing. In *Romance*, Downing argues that Breillat 'uses the voiceover and dialogue to discourse upon the discontents of sexuality, from the point of view of the female located in the heterosexual economy' (2004, 270). For Wilson 'the very distance and split between word and image seem to tell us something of the division between Marie's thoughts and sensations' (2001, 150). Though interested in sexual identity and desire, Breillat's films are not a string of 'sexual numbers' without narrative. Unlike in pornography, where narrative is weakly embedded around sexual numbers to facilitate their initiation (something Williams discusses in her comparison of pornography to the conventions of the musical), Breillat's films intently explore and deconstruct how sexual relations are embedded into a wider narrative (social, cultural), as well as the presence of this narrative within sexual relation. Downing provides a full discussion of the way Breillat's work pursues this project. In contrast to the 1970s spirit of including explicit sexual representation in narrative cinema (epitomised by films such as Bernardo Bertolucci's *Ultimo Tango a Parigi/Last Tango in Paris* (1972)) which, Downing argues, was reflective of a cultural moment characterised by 'a belief in the liberating potential of exposing, confessing and displaying sexuality', extreme cinema such as Breillat's does not 'seek straightforwardly to valorise or attribute a positive political radicality to the mere fact of exposing genitals and gazing at genital sex' (2004, 268).[23] Instead, sexual number and narrative are brought together in these films to 'trouble value judgements about sexual politics, sexual exposure and aesthetics' and use hard-core elements in new forms of narrative, in order to disturb longstanding cultural myths that construct our grand narratives of sex and sexual difference. In this postmodern inquiry into sex:

> Sex has become […] not the object of enquiry we must constantly expose in our search for 'the truth' or for political liberation, but a rich discursive field that, if shaken, will reveal the conditions of its own construction, its plural points of apprehension, its multiple and textured perspectives and points of view. (Downing 2004, 279)

[23] Lübecker offers a somewhat different take on Breillat's film *À ma sœur* with respect to previous post-war moments of cinematic transgression. Rather than reading Breillat's film as a break from the liberating potential cinema of the seventies offered through transgression, Lübecker argues that Breillat's film moves out of the feel-bad register by in fact maintaining a continued link between transgression and emancipation that he argues is typically severed in the feel-bad experience (2015, 143-145).

However, this vococentric attention to voice and voiceover stops short of considering the ways noise can illuminate Breillat's dynamic of permeation between the spheres of the sexual and the social.

Breillat's soundscaping reflects, analogously, an interest in the relation between sex ('number') and the wider sociocultural framework that it operates within (narrative). Her soundscaping meticulously details and documents the material density of the environment and settings in which her scenes of sexual interaction take place, demonstrating an extreme attention to spatial realism through sound. Sexual relation takes place not out of time and space but is fundamentally anchored within the *mise-en-scène* of the rooms, settings and environments she has chosen. In one of *Anatomie's* opening scenes, as the woman performs an act of fellatio after leaving the pharmacy, distinct aspects of the material environment are picked out: we hear dogs barking, the noise of distant cars, the wind. Similarly, our introduction to the woman's house by the cliffs is established through the chirping of cicadas, or possibly crickets, the noise of a taxi's rumble, the sea... Rather than producing a sense of spacelessness conveyed through haptic sound in pornography, Breillat preserves a Cartesian mapping of space that implies an exploration of sexual encounter that is indissociably tied to context, setting and environment; it does not dissolve into a utopian space of sex.

This is in opposition to how Breillat treats the use of sound in the nightclub of *Anatomie*'s opening where spatial realism is collapsed. Here, sound is 'on-the-air', Chion's term to designate sound within a scene that appears to be transmitted electronically by radio, telephone, amplification etc. Chion discusses the infinite variation made possible by on-the-air sound, which enjoys the mobility of crossing the boundaries of cinematic space:

> Selon en effet le poids particulier donné par la réalisation (mixage, réglage de niveau, filtrage, condition d'enregistrement de la musique) soit sur la *source initiale* du son (la réalité des instruments qui jouent ou des voix qui chantent), soit au contraire sur sa *source terminale* (le haut-parleur présent dans l'action que l'on fait sentir matériellement par des filtrages, des bruits de friture, des résonances, etc.), le son de la musique *on the air* traversera plus ou moins les zones *in/off*/hors-champ, et se positionnera plus ou moins, pour le spectateur, comme musique d'écran ou musique de fosse. (2017 [1990], 85; emphasis in original)

In Breillat's nightclub, the music shifts from seeming unambiguously non-diegetic as it accompanies the opening credit sequence to a suggested diegetic context within the image as the sound is re-contextualised by images inside a nightclub and people dancing seemingly in time with this music. From the film's opening, Breillat alerts us to sound's ontological uncertainty, something that mirrors the sleeping woman's duplicitous 'petits bruits'. The musical style of electronic house, *Timeless Bass* (2001) by Paris-based Techno artist D'Julz, is not far from the rhythmic, electronic music popular in pornography in the 1990s, used as 'filler' sound and edited to match the movements of bodies on screen. As this music makes its transition from non-diegetic to 'on-the air', the sound quality of the mix remains the same, as if it were non-diegetic or part of the soundtrack. It is only once the woman enters the bathroom that the music takes on a quality expressive of the space. Rather than a precise mapping of space through an attention to the realism and materiality of sound found elsewhere in the film, the spatial realism of the nightclub is collapsed. In this instance, the music smothers and smooths over the noise we would otherwise hear.

What can be inferred from these two different approaches to soundscaping, if we separate what might be classed as narrative from what might be classed as 'number' in *Anatomie*? The nightclub scene is indisputably part of *Anatomie's* narrative, however weakly developed this narrative might be. Here, the film's only use of music and its sole collapse of spatial realism is suggestive of the way pornographic codes also infuse the space of narrative and infuse the body of the film through sound's traversal across cinematic space and its metadiegetic status. Breillat's relationship to the pornographic, which Crowley has claimed 'needs to be thought in terms of citation and entanglement' (Best and Crowley 2007, 55), is here in evidence as pornographic citation is heard migrating across the different layers of Breillat's filmic construction to show how fragile or entangled the boundaries between the sexual and the social are; that pornographic codes and forms are present away from instances of explicit representation. The space of the nightclub is formally pornographic without being explicitly obscene, reflecting how the ways that we think our own sexuality permeate within frameworks and interactions we do not believe to be sexual.

Breillat therefore uses two different placements of sound to explore a two-way traffic between the sexual and the social. In what we might classify as her sexual 'numbers', Breillat employs a realist soundscape. Rather than this realism standing in for truth or reality, it suggests mediation, the entanglement of environment and culture in those interactions that tend to be characterised as self-transcendent and part of private life. The starkness of the soundscape and

the 'petits bruits' included to make up these spaces, alongside an acute absence of soundtrack for the rest of the film, do not suggest we are in a space of nature as opposed to culture (even if the sounds included are those of crickets, the wind, the sea etc.). Rather, they suggest an exposure of the relation between sexual identity and other mediating dynamics, the existence of different bodies and the relations that structure them. Breillat's cinematic language refuses the smoothing over, smothering or muffling that the addition of soundtrack achieves in pornography. By contrast, in the nightclub, a scene we might class as constituting narrative, Breillat uses the collapse of spatial realism to create images of the social and the 'real' that are distorted by and entangled with the pornographic. Cinematic space, created through soundscape as well as the emplacement and displacement of noises, show how these spheres cannot be thought in isolation.

What critique of the pornographic do Breillat's little noises offer, and what form of resonant intimacy do they suggest? First, the alternative noises and volumes, which dial down the conventions for the representation of female pleasure in pornography, provide an alternative range of evidence through which we might hear female desire, away from a prescriptively legible portfolio of sounds and volumes that construct the aural codes of sexuality. In this sense, these little noises contribute towards a postmodern exploration of sexuality that Downing identifies in Breillat's work. This exploration is not invested in a belief of political liberation through sexuality, or an ideal of sexual relation that exists away from mediation, nor does it offer in place of pornography a 'more real' sound of female pleasure. The 'petits bruits' made by Breillat's bodies, female protagonists and the 'petits bruits' of her soundscapes, offer an auditory equivalent of Downing's evocation of postmodernism's 'petits récits' (micro-narratives) as proposed by Jean-François Lyotard (1979). These 'petits récits', singular and local, throw off grand narratives that totalise and naturalise what comes to represent or stand in for what is real. Instead, they bother and disturb these 'grands récits' or 'grands bruits' and the way we narrate the experience of pleasure. Breillat's 'petits bruits', a quieter form of expression that keeps sound local and close to the body, expose the noisy expressions beneath this grand moan. These little noises are suspended at the limit of the listenable, something that sound in pornography literally suppresses in its silencing of direct sound and amplification of female pleasure.

In noises' contained and incorporated expression at the surface of the body, in their variation and deliberate ambiguity, and in Breillat's favouring of faint, near inaudible volumes, such as the drone or the noises emitted by Breillat's sleeping, reclining woman, we can hear a form of

presentation that is not offering itself to us fully, not appropriable to meaning, confessing pleasure or manipulating female sex vocalisations in the service of a viewer's arousal. Understood against the aural codes of pornography, Breillat's noises are a form of literal resistance, in that our ear must strain towards them, we are required to listen. With these little noises and lower volumes, a form of relation is withheld at the same time as it is presented. Brinkema theorises the case of 'near inaudibility' which, she argues, is not caught up in a metaphysics of presence and absence, a form of violence to being, but is instead a violence done to form. Near inaudibility, Brinkema argues:

> is linked to a separate set of conceptual and aesthetic terms: pressure, tension, intensity, and force. Silence and near inaudibility pose entirely different formal problems and set in motion opposing formal gestures; the former concretizes the discourse of silence into a concern with being, while the latter concerns itself with formal gradations of intensities. (Brinkema 2011, 213)

Brinkema theorises near inaudibility through Nancy's figuration of laughter, to arrive at the Nancean formulation that 'as opposed to tarrying with the language of presence and absence, [near inaudibility] is rather "suspended on the limit of its own presentation"' (2011, 213-214). Nancy's discussion of laughter, another example of nonsensical broken down speech or response, is illuminating to the reading of Breillat's work offered here. It calls to mind an actual instance of laughter in *Anatomie.* A clear peal of laughter rings out from the female protagonist in response to the touch of the man, as he discovers her wetness and holds up its trace to his gaze, itself a reversal of pornography's 'money shot'. Not only is laughter ambivalent as a form of response, but it is, according to Nancy 'ni une présence ni une absence. Il est l'offrande d'une présence dans sa propre disparition. Il n'est pas donné, mais offert: suspendu sur la limite de sa propre présentation' (1990, 313-314). This conception of laughter echoes Breillat's wider interest in responses we cannot read (such as in her representation of rape), whose meanings escape us, responses that exist on and at the limit of their own disclosure, and withdraw from us in the moment of their own presentation.

More specifically, Breillat's formal play with volume echoes Nancy's account of the self in *À l'écoute* which cannot be considered in terms of presence or absence, as he attempts to move away from subject-object relations. As Janus has pointed out, Nancy's self as *corps sonore* demands that we approach it 'according to a qualitative continuum between diminuendo and crescendo, soft and hard, higher or lower frequencies, expansive and contracting volumes'

(2011, 194). Breillat's 'petits bruits' place us in a condition of resonant intimacy as we are appealed to as a *corps sonore*. Her work asks us to listen attentively to the sounding female body on screen, to these 'petits bruits' – their dronings, their diminuendos and moriendos – that carry this body beyond itself.

For those who have understood Breillat's work in response to the pornographic previously, her project is variously read as exploring 'the possibility of a non-pornographic pornography' which shows that 'a body is not pornographic in itself, it's the way we represent it, or, a space is not pornographic in itself, it's the way we inhabit it, or, even, a pornography is not pornographic in itself, it's the way we materialise it' (Brinkema 2006, 154). In resisting pornography's simulated sex sounds, and not putting them in the service of a viewer-auditor's stimulation, Breillat's noises are de-eroticised. Emitted by the 'sleeping beauty' of *Anatomie de l'enfer,* these noises become, as Nancy describes of 'sleeping monuments' in *Tombe de Sommeil,* 'vidés de leurs attributions et, avec elles, des affects qui y répondaient' (2007, 16).

Through Breillat, we might recast hard-core sound as a turn to noises which draw us towards the female body as material and sonic presence, as a desiring *corps sonore* resonating at its surface, inside and out. Volume, sound and image in the work of Breillat solicit the spectator's listening body, both through its formal play of volume and through images that embody auditory senses or sensors, fastening the body of the spectator onto its images. In soliciting our ears, Breillat's sonic practice can be seen to engage between spectator and film the 'intimité sonore' described in *Pornocratie* (2001, 61), an attention to the unlistenable, small noises drawn out from the interior of the body, reflecting both its situated materiality and its coming towards us, its propagation in space. The representational limits of the auditory are thus engaged to strain towards Breillat's female body, whose disclosure is at once in abeyance and excess.

GASPAR NOÉ: SONIC DOMINANCE

Having established how the *corps sonore* might allow for a resonant intimacy and attention between bodies, I now turn to discuss the work of another filmmaker positioned within the New Extremism – Gaspar Noé. Like Breillat, Noé is interested in interrogating the limits of representation, often through engagements with obscenity, hard-core and violence. Unlike Breillat, however, Noé is not concerned with exploring questions of female sexual subjectivity and his pornographic representations, such as his contribution *We Fuck Alone* (2006) to the DVD anthology *Destricted,* or his more recent 3D film *Love* (2015), while sonically interesting,

do not aim at dismantling the coding of sound in pornography. My exploration of noise and the unlistenable in the work of Noé turns instead to think about violence, the other extreme form of representation that categorises works situated within this mode of filmmaking.

Breillat's films offered us the possibility of conceiving Nancy's *corps sonore* in the cinematic medium as a form of 'intimité sonore' – where the unlistenable is exactly that which we should attend and expose ourselves to. Conversely, Noé's use of sonic violence can be seen to challenge Nancy's resonant body, to expose instead the vulnerability of this open subjectivity and offer an unlistenable echo back to Nancy's account of listening. As I show, Noé's films rely on a sonic dominance that appeals to, and constructs, the spectator as a *corps sonore,* a vibrating body before the film. This exposure, however, discloses the dystopian possibilities of Nancy's *corps sonore,* which risks becoming a betrayed body, unwillingly re-sounding the vibratory power of the sonic, implicating a spectator's body too.

Noé himself has stressed the importance of sound and use of noise as a strategy in his work. In an interview with *L'Humanité*, at the release of *Seul contre tous* (1999), Noé describes what he understands to be the 'real' violence of his film:

> La réelle violence du film provient du montage, des effets sonores – des coups de feu – très violents intégrés entre les plans. J'avais lu quelque part que les gens n'ont pas peur de la mort, qu'il est possible d'en discuter avec eux. En revanche, ils ont une peur terrible du vide et des sons trop forts. Grace à ceux-ci, le spectateur est placé dans un état de stress proche de celui du boucher. En même temps, la voix-off de Philippe (Nahon) est puissante et chaude. Le spectateur navigue ainsi entre un état d'hypnose et de soulagement lorsqu'il l'entend, car il la préfère aux coups de feu. (de Bourbon 1999)

Noé thus makes a distinction between violence and the 'real' violence of his films, which he establishes as a violence achieved through form. In the instance Noé outlines above, noise, as a form of sonic violence, drives the spectator towards the soothing voice and its aggressive logorrhoea. By using this 'real' violence to drive a spectator into uncomfortable proximity with the character of the butcher and his marginalised position, Noé removes the possibility of observing this character with safe distance from our own received set of values, producing instead critical reflection on those very values we would like to hold the butcher at a distance with.

Why is Noé's work considered shockingly violent? What constitutes its extremity? How does it approach limits? Like Breillat, Noé transgresses what we might consider the acceptable limits of realism in his images. In *Carne* (1991), the prequel *moyen-metrage* to his first full-length feature *Seul contre tous*, the first scene confronts a viewer with the real slaughter of a horse. Later on in the film, there is an unflinching close-up of a live birth, extremely similar in positioning and proximity to the live birth shown in Breillat's *Romance*.[24] *Seul contre tous* presents us with multiple violences across its text: formal violence, fantasised violence, and violence with undetermined sources and targets. No doubt, Noé's films are violent at the level of plot, particularly *Seul contre tous* and *Irréversible* (2002), which I now spend some time outlining.

Seul contre tous continues the story of the unemployed horse-meat butcher (Philippe Nahon) from where *Carne* left off. The film is told entirely from within his perspective. The butcher (*le boucher* as he is referred to throughout) was imprisoned for assaulting a man he believed to have raped his mute daughter (Blandine Lenoir). The butcher mistakenly jumps to this conclusion after seeing blood on his daughter's skirt. Upon his release from prison, the butcher gets the landlady (Frankye Pain) of his local bar pregnant and together they move to northern France to start a new life together at the landlady's expense. This does not go well. The butcher violently terminates the landlady's pregnancy by repeatedly striking her in the stomach after she accuses him of being unfaithful. Back in Paris to find work, the butcher's anger rises as he roves around with a gun that he identifies with his 'justice'. He faces continual rejection: by his old friends, from a horse-meat abattoir where he applies for work, from bars and other old-frequented places. Most shocking, perhaps, is the film's denouement which succeeds Noé's own warning titles. Block capital letters appear on screen: 'ATTENTION / VOUS AVEZ 30 SECONDES POUR ABANDONNER LA PROJECTION DE CE FILM'. In the scene that follows, which is replayed several times with different outcomes, reality and fantasy collapse in such a way as to make the 'reality' of what we see and hear continually indeterminate. The butcher, turning to the only person he feels ever loved him, his daughter, goes to collect her from the hospital and brings her back to the hotel room in which she was conceived. In the scenario's first iteration, we see the butcher molest his mute daughter and then kill her. Establishing these events as unreal and fantasised, the scene recommences again. This time, the butcher breaks down in tears of love towards his daughter, but again fantasises about having sexual relations with her. In spite of these horrible events, what critics of the film found most disturbing however, was the exposure to the

[24] Palmer positions these films as descendants of Georges Franju's *Le Sang des Bêtes* (1949) on account of their slaughterhouse protagonists as well as *Carne's* inclusion of images of the real slaughter of a horse.

butcher's unrelenting violent thoughts through the film's use of incessant voiceover, making it hard to get a distance on his violent, racist, homophobic or sexist remarks.

Noé's other controversial work, *Irréversible*, has often been called a 'revenge-rape' film, on account of its narrative progression backwards through chronological events, thus subverting the rape-revenge genre. Palmer's monograph on the film described it as 'a limit case or outlier contemporary French film, a lightning rod for debates inherent in expectations about cinema's acceptable conduct – or otherwise' (2015, xviii). The film begins with two men – Marcus (Vincent Cassell) and Pierre (Albert Dupontel) – entering a nightclub called *Rectum* seeking a man called Le Tenia. Because of the film's organisation of plot, the viewer does not know why. In the club, they brutally murder a man, battering in his skull with a fire extinguisher until it is reduced to a pulp before our wincing eyes. As the march of time for viewing the film proceeds, it transpires that this revenge was not enacted on the right person, making the violence seem all the more meaningless and horrific. From this revenge, the film works backwards through events to provide new pieces of knowledge which arrive in segments. We learn Le Tenia is the man they believe to be responsible for the rape of Marcus' girlfriend, Alex (Monica Bellucci). *Irréversible's* rape scene is arguably the most widely-known of scenes from films that fall within the New Extremism. It takes place in a Parisian underpass, in the street below a party the three friends are attending. The scene is notorious for its duration, shot for nine-minutes in real-time without any cuts, all registered by an immobile, static, unflinching camera positioned on the same ground on which the rape takes place. Painfully, *Irréversible* ends with a bitter-sweet 'happy ending', prior to the evening's events, where Alex and Marcus languish in a late-afternoon bliss, full of tenderness and coupled intimacy. Alex, we learn, is pregnant. In the film's final image, the camera coils away from Alex's outstretched, peaceful body on the sunny green grass, before the film dissolves into a pure noise of sound and image, an intense whiteness and flickering, and a whirring, rumbling, battering of sound.

It is through Nancy's own definition of violence that I will interrogate both the unlistenable and the model Nancy provides to 'exister selon l'écoute, pour elle et par elle' (2002, 17). Nancy defines violence in his essay *Image et violence* as 'la mise en œuvre d'une force qui reste étrangère au système dynamique ou énergétique dans lequel elle intervient' (2003, 36). Violence, Nancy continues, 'dénature ce qu'elle violente, elle le saccage, elle le massacre. Elle ne le transforme pas, elle lui ôte sa forme et son sens' (37). Nancy's thinking of violence as a force that does violence to form and meaning is particularly productive for thinking about

noise in cinema, an element external to the image that Nancy concerned himself with in that essay. Cinema, thought of as Chion does as 'un *lieu d'images* d'un côté et *des sons* de l'autre' (1985, 91, emphasis in original) suggests that sound is, always, a formal, forceful, even physical intrusion into an image that it denatures. Added to this noise's particular non-identity (its refusal of stable definition) and its very disturbance of identity, clarity, meaning (noise arising alongside, in relation to, and as a threat to transmission) as well as its performative unintelligibility, noise becomes a force that can deform, distort, and trouble the identity, form or meaning of the images it breaches.[25] Breillat's little noises withheld a legible expression of female pleasure for the viewer, engaging an almost unlistenable volume to trouble the representational norms through which female pleasure is narrated. A question I hope to explore in this turn to sonic violence within the work of Noé is whether noise, as a form of sonic violence that can do violence to identity, also acts to trouble the identity of violence itself.

It is through this formal understanding of violence, and formalist approach to cinema that I want to think about Noé's own engagement with unpleasant sound, as an unlistenable and affective force that does violence both to his images, and to spectators confronted by his films. Approaching Noé's work from the angle of the unlistenable demands that we think beyond the actual representation of violence as it occurs within his films (mimetic sounds signifying violence, or rendered sound-effects of violent acts represented on screen) and think instead about the violence of noise itself as a formal device that carries its own physical force.

The most palpable manifestation of noise as a physical force is undoubtedly the low-frequency tone, at roughly 27-hertz, used during the first thirty minutes of *Irréversible.* This drone famously induced nausea in its audience during the first screening at Cannes, causing 250 members of the screening to walk out, 'some needing medical attention' (BBC News 2002). At a level below 20hz, inaudible sound becomes tactile. It produces organ resonance, nausea, concussion and physical impact, as well as possible respiration inhibition. Noé's low-frequency tone does not go below this threshold, but it is situated at the lower level of frequencies that are heard with difficulty. It is the same frequency used by police to disperse riots. Noé

[25] This does not mean that films from the 'New Extremism' revel in the purely formless, but rather the intrusion of noise is one of the ways that these films oscillate on the boundary between form and formlessness. In an article that takes to task the critical and academic discourse that surrounds the New French Extremity, Mauro Resmini argues that 'the films themselves, and not the critical discourse around them, put forward a certain resistance to any reductivist notion of the annihilation of form, situating instead their extremity precisely at the boundary that separates and unites form and the formless' (Resmini 2015, 174).

deliberately turns to noise in the form of the unlistenable to exploit its vibrational violence. In terms of thinking about how films situated within an 'extreme' aesthetic employ formal strategies that are themselves extremes, the low-tone frequency is exemplary. Here the unlistenable emerges quite literally as that which we cannot listen to, situated at the limits of human hearing, but that nonetheless affects our listening bodies.

Thinking through Noé's use of noise provokes a further set of ethical questions that typically arise when engaging with extreme forms of representation, particularly with regards to spectatorship, but demands that we think about them at the level of the sonic. How does an attention to noise in Noé's films refigure the identity of the spectator (or auditor) and the act of listening? Does Noé's use of sonic violence allow us a position from which to evaluate violence? Does the sonic violence enacted through form produce collusion with violence, or condemn it? Attending to the relation between spectator and film as a relation between two *corps sonores* raises questions for how we understand betrayed, listening bodies, alongside extreme forms of representation that present instances of betrayed bodies on-screen, those human bodies subjected to violence within the narrative.

I will demonstrate here the way Noé's early films *Irréversible* and *Seul contre tous*, can be heard as governed by the sonic, a form of sonic dominance, that is a literal force or pressure to which his images, camera movements and editing rhythms are subjected, forcing both the world of his film and the spectator into the condition of becoming 'all ears'. This cinematic practice bears striking and uncomfortable resemblances to the deployment of noise in torture and I will draw on research done in the field of sonic torture as a framework alongside which to compare Noé's use of noise. My interrogation of noise in Noé is not intended to mount a criticism against Noé as a filmmaker, to redeem or condemn these works even as it explores these questions, but instead to show how cinema's own interrogation of the limits of what is listenable, of the affective force and violence of sound, might fray Nancy's utopian account of listening at the limit of intelligibility, as being 'en bordure du sens, ou dans un sens de bord et d'extrémité, et comme si le son n'était précisément rien d'autre que ce bord, cette frange ou cette marge' (2002, 21). Noé's formal strategy of noise places us on this edge of meaning, but it is one where subjectivity, relationality and individuation are compromised.

NOISE, TORTURE

What is the alignment between the use of noise in torture and noise in film as such? Elaine Scarry in her incisive work *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1987) suggests points around which torture and cinema might constellate. She writes:

> It is not accidental that in the torturers' idiom the room in which the brutality occurs was called the 'production room' in the Philippines, the 'cinema room' in South Vietnam, and the 'blue lit stage' in Chile: built on these repeated acts of display and having as its purpose the production of a fantastic illusion of power, torture is a grotesque piece of compensatory drama. (28)

Like in film, torture dramatises the use of sound (real and rendered) to produce affects, moods, sensory manipulation and uncertainty. Though Scarry's work is not specifically concerned with the use of sound itself as it is used in torture, she does describe how the acoustic contributes towards transforming the torture room itself into an agent of pain. 'The torture room' Scarry explains:

> is not just the setting in which the torture occurs; it is not just the space that happens to house the various instruments used for beating and burning and producing electric shock. It is itself literally converted into another weapon, into an agent of pain. All aspects of the basic structure – walls, ceiling, windows, doors – undergo this conversion. Basques tortured by the Spanish describe 'el cerrojo', the *rapid and repeated bolting and unbolting of the door in order to keep them at all times in immediate anticipation of further torture*, as one of the most terrifying and damaging acts. Found among PIDES' paraphernalia in Portugal were *manuscripts of gibberish which, according to the men and women brutalized there, were read at the doors of prisoners* deprived of sleep for days. Solzhenitsyn describes how in Russia guards were trained to *slam the door* in as jarring a way as possible or to close it in equally unnerving silence […] Greek equivalent of 'el cerrojo'; the door was left open to *make audible conversations* threatening to the prisoner, his friends, or family. (40, emphasis my own)

In describing how the torture space itself becomes an agent of pain, all Scarry's examples draw on auditory phenomena within these spaces. These auditory phenomena create the space as such, both as an agent of pain, as well as creating the dimensions and borders of the space, connecting them with those other spaces that sound constructs as 'unseen'.

A declassified CIA report, known as 'Kubark', sponsored by Anglophone security services in the 1950s outlines the strategy of sensory manipulation pursued in interrogation practices in order to 'keep the subject upset by constant disruption of patterns' which, in the report's own words 'explodes, as it were, the world that is familiar to the subject, as well as his image of himself within that world' (Counter Intelligence Agency 1963, 66). The report describes these strategies as effective in inducing stress, a stress that becomes unbearable for most subjects, producing a growing need for physical and social stimuli. This causes the subject to lose touch with reality, focus inwardly and produce delusions, hallucinations and other pathological effects (89). The report chillingly outlines how pain, seen by a prisoner as inflicted 'from outside himself […] may actually focus or intensify his own will to resist' whereas 'his resistance is more likely to be sapped by pain which he seems to inflict upon himself' (94). It is for this reason that 'coercive' methods such as sensory manipulation, a form of no-touch torture, are outlined as being effective.

Sound theorist Suzanne G. Cusick has undertaken primary research in this field of sonic violence, interviewing anonymous tortured subjects from Baghdad's Camp Cropper, Guantanamo and the CIA's 'dark prison' near Kabul, about their own experience and responses to being subjected to noise and other forms of sonic torture during their interrogation. Examples of these strategies included the instalment of deafeningly loud speakers at both entrances to Camp Cropper's high-value intelligence section. These speakers would blare out music for fifteen hours at a time, which would ensure 'that every body in that space would vibrate sympathetically, every day, to sounds that produced power's presence as a palpable, physical force' (Cusick 2013, 280). The sheer physical force of the sound also meant that 'however isolated each prisoner was in his individual cell, each was denied by the ubiquitous, shared music any illusion that enforced solitude could grant him privacy'. One of Cusick's interviewed subjects, 'Z', described how the noise at Camp Cropper was so loud, he could not hear his own voice, and how he would spend hours pressing his ears to the door of his cell in order to capture what he called 'outside' sounds to create a mental, imagined image of his environment beyond. Another account from Guantanamo describes an interrogational torture method which alternated between harsh interrogation, followed by isolation in which the prisoner, 'X', was shackled to an iron ring in the floor in a stress position, while being subjected to strobing lights and deafening music. X describes how the main effect of this music was to prevent him 'from focussing his mind away from the physical pain, making that pain more vivid' as he was not 'able to distract himself with his own thoughts' (283). The music thus overwhelmed the contents of his consciousness and hijacked his interiority. The final

account from Kabul that Cusick discusses is an account of being subjected to the sole sensory stimuli of a continuous blaring soundtrack of 'aggressive, intrusive, annoying sounds' that the prisoner, 'Y', eventually began to repeat. The conditions were otherwise complete darkness, cold temperatures and unpredictable rations of food. Cusick says:

> Y became in effect 'all ears'. His subjectivity was overwhelmed by the music, absorbed into it. Or to think about his experience in a vibration-centred way, Y's psychological resistance to his situation had collapsed, betrayed by his own body's constantly repeated re-sounding of the acoustical energy that filled his space. (286)

Alongside the factual account of what happened to those Cusick interviewed, their descriptions reveal the subjective impact of this torture. Unpleasant, intrusive or deafening sound disrupted their relationality with an imaginable, intelligible world, destroyed their subjectivity, overwhelmed their consciousness, confused their temporality, produced acoustic and somatic distress, and violated interiority, individuation and privacy. Cusick describes the effects as a 'stripping of acoustical agency' producing a battering from within and without and jamming any efforts to constitute a world through call-and-response with one's environment.[26] The sonic dominance ensured that each prisoner was left alone in a state of shared isolation, reduced to a state of object, vibrating sympathetically with the sounds themselves. This meant that sound 'became not just a metaphor for power, but power itself – a vibrating presence of power' (Cusick 2013, 288).

The 'vibration-centred' framework that Cusick refers to is opposed to an anthropocentric framework of subject formation through a call-and-response relationship with the world, more akin to the relations between subject and object. In the anthropocentric framework, subjectivity is formed through the interaction between sensory reception and sensorily perceptible response. Cusick takes the 'vibration-centred' model directly from Nancy's account of listening and his imagining of what Cusick calls a 'post-liberal account of human sociality' (290). Here, the call-and-response drama of subject formation central to the anthropocentric framework was always an illusion because relationality between different

[26] Similar evidence of the unbearable nature of such an experience is the Orfield Laboratory located in Minnesota, typically used by manufacturers to test the volume of switches and displays. The room is insulated in such a way as to make it 'echo-free' with noise levels at around -9 decibels. Subjects who entered this intense silence could not stay in the room for more than 20-minutes, unable to endure the lack of acoustic response from their surroundings, while the sounds of their own bodies became audible, turning them in on themselves (Morton 2014).

'bodies' is thought, rather, as occurring against an ongoing ground of vibrations, as we are immersed in a world that re-sounds constantly between different bodies, affecting them inside and out. Cusick argues that the use of sound in torture destroys the anthropocentric framework of subjectivity and exposes the violent political possibilities of Nancy's vibration-centred model. Cusick's discussion provides another point of departure for my own exploration of what Nancy's account of listening might imply, if considered away from the instrumental semantic field and classical references it echoed within in *À l'écoute* and is exposed to noise, as a form of acoustic violence.

Although not the self-same practices of noise used in torture, it is these effects of sonic dominance at the level of the non-representational that I will show rule over Noé's two films discussed here. This sonic dominance produces what Noé terms, in his own words, the '*réelle violence*' of his films (de Bourbon 1999). French cinema has in the past been a site where a reckoning with and resistance to torture has been registered. Noé's films, however, do not concern themselves explicitly with torture at the level of the representational, and thus move away from films within the French context that have negotiated France's own involvement in torture in the Algerian war, such as Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* (1970), Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* (1963) or Alain Resnais' *Muriel, ou le Temps d'un Retour* (1963). Noé's own experience of torture is rooted in Argentina, from which he and his parents fled during the Argentine 'Dirty War' (1974-1983). In an interview in Télérama, the interviewer describes how 'incidemment, il [Noé] lâche "qu'il a connu pas mal de gens qui avaient subi la torture…"' (Farenczi 1999, 30). Recent controversies and exorcisms around France's own deployment of torture during the Algerian war have exposed the involvement and collaboration of the French in the practice and instruction of torture in South America. [27] While perhaps only anecdotally, Noé can thus tenuously be situated within this network of relations between France, Argentina and Algeria, though his films offer no direct exploration of these connections. *Seul contre tous* presents a condensed history of the butcher's life in its opening sequence. The butcher's date of birth – born in 1939 in France – 'en plein cœur du merde au pays de fromage et des collabos' – immediately calls forth, without explicitly referencing, an entire background of events we might imagine marked his life. In interview, Noé stated: 'Délibérément, je n'ai pas parlé de la guerre d'Algérie dans mon film. Mais l'acteur principal,

[27] The collaboration of the French with the Argentinian torture program has been extensively investigated by the French journalist Marie-Monique Robin who found the original document proving the 1959 agreement between Paris and Buenos Aires initiating France's military mission in Argentina. Her findings are explored in her subsequent documentary and book *Escadrons de la mort, l'école francaise* (Robin 2004).

Philippe Nahon, a fait la guerre d'Algérie, il y a été envoyé contre son gré, en première ligne' (Père 1999, 37).

Noé's range of cinematic references and influences also fall more broadly beyond his French predecessors of Chabrol, Resnais or Godard, encompassing filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick. One of the films Noé lists as being a prime influence on his work is Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma/Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom* (1975) which confronts the subject of torture during the time of the fascist Republic of Salò. Taken to see the film at the age of eighteen by his mother, Noé describes how 'J'étais assez vieux pour apprendre la torture et la nature reptilienne des relations humaines. À ce jour, je continue de le considérer comme étant le film le plus éducatif sur la domination de l'Homme sur l'Homme'.[28] It is this broader conception of torture – man's domination by man – that Noé's films can be seen as exploring, in their harnessing of noise.

Beyond the already mentioned anecdote of 27hz frequency integrated below the sound mix in *Irréversible,* I discuss how Noé's use of noise aims at the destruction of relationality with the cinematic space of the world onscreen, destroys temporality and produces sympathetic vibrations, not only in the sonorous bodies that the film appeals to, but seemingly in the images themselves. Noé's work, read through Nancy, provides a new way of understanding the way our bodies might identify with cinema's images themselves as affected, resounding and responsive to the pressure and vibration of noise and how we might recognise the cinematic image as a *corps sonore* or place of resonance. Noé's appeal to a listening body before the films reveals the way Nancy's account of resonance risks leaving bodies exposed to vibrations and subject to the sonic dominance of these particular experiences of film in problematic ways.

SPATIAL SOUND

Nancy, speaking of how the sonorous opens its own space, through the spreading out of its resonance, describes this space as 'd'emblée omnidimensionnel et transversal à tous les espaces: on a toujours remarqué l'expansion du son à travers les obstacles, sa propriété de pénétration et d'ubiquité' (2002, 32). Space in *Irréversible's* opening sequences, is constructed in line with the auditory imagination, rather than in line with the visual. The coiling

[28] A list of Noe's influences can be found on the BFI director's poll: http://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/sightandsoundpoll2012/voter/953 [accessed 16th July 2018].

cinematography, accompanying the 27hz drone, does not respect the cinematic frame or space, but travels round, upside down and through spaces, arguably reaching its peak in the film's third sequence in the dark, red strobing spaces of the nightclub. Here the camera rotates, somersaults, swings, as if striving to take on the properties of the ear, which hears across space in this omnidirectional and transversate way. The camera can be seen as following the logic of the auditory, which as Chion points out, has no container in the cinematic medium, unlike the visual which is contained within a frame. Contrary to Chion's separation between the visual and the auditory, here the lack of container appears to be true of Noé's images themselves. They spill out and break away from the cinematic frame, continually challenging its borders. The effect of the coiling, roving, turbulent camera movement is one not only of spatial transgression, or even penetration, but a violent destruction of meaningful space. Noé obliterates visual, spatial coordinates that would allow us points of orientation, frustrating the possibility of constituting a navigable world on screen, or a sense of bodily positioning that would allow a stable subject position within that world. The devastating effect of sound here, its subsuming of the image itself, is what Nancy celebrates in the sonorous; its being 'devant derrière et dehors dedans, *sens dessus dessous* par rapport à la logique la plus générale de la présence comme paraître, comme phénoménalité ou comme manifestation' (2002, 32, emphasis in original). This sequence provides a disturbing version of Nancy's omnidirectional and penetrating account of the sonorous, as Noé dissolves the boundaries of his world on screen through his use of noise and camera movement that follows this logic of the sonorous. The seeming responsiveness of the image as following sound, the visual's becoming auditory, forces us and Noé's images into the state of becoming all ears, offering a spectator no choice but to 'exister selon l'écoute, pour elle et par elle' (Nancy 2002, 17).

If *Irréversible's* descent into the nightclub *Rectum* is horrific, as many responses to the film insist, it is arguably so through what we hear, rather than what we see.[29] Because we cannot see we

[29] Critic and film historian, Robin Wood, confronts the question of the potential homophobia of this sequence in his article 'Against and For Irreversible' (2011). While praising and positioning his own high regard for the film, Wood carefully examines the 'hysteria' of this section. He writes: 'What he [Noé] presents us with is, in effect, a vision of Hell as grotesque and horrifying as anything Hieronymus Bosch could have dreamed up in his worst nightmares. The vision is conjured up by sound, camera and lighting effects as much as from any actions we are allowed to witness: The soundtrack noise (one cannot call it music), ominous, ugly, threatening; the whirling, swirling camera, seeming detached from human control, sometimes turning upside down, never still; the intermittent lighting (mostly the red of hellfire) that cuts through the murk, allowing us occasionally to make out naked male figures; the sounds of pain and/or desperation (no one appears to be enjoying himself) – everything in

are driven to listen. Much of what is in fact seen is obscured or only glimpsed. Alongside the constant warping and droning of noise, within which we make out rasped breaths or indeterminate grunts and moans, or the crack of a whip across flesh somewhere beyond the frame, human bodies appear as fragmented and fleeting singularities, warped and contorted in arrangements we cannot map, and never long enough for us to establish what is occurring within this space (Figure 6). The effect is of being pulled into a current of sound, seeking a surface on which we could settle, but then being submerged once more. The scene thus provokes what might be the diegetic world's unmaking, both through the unintelligible aural chaos that reigns in the sound mix, but also in the image's seeming subjugation to the warping pulse of the soundtrack, as the strobing light follows its rhythm.



Figure 6. Bodies as fleeting singularities in *Irréversible*

Palmer describes *Irréversible's* opening as a scene of sensory overload and aural chaos, and relates this to a broader trend in the *cinéma du corps* which 'deadens the voices and disproportionately privileges denser ambient forms' (2011, 74). Such deprivileging of the human voice reflects a further effect of the use of noise in torture whereby, intense, loud, physical sound is used to override the human voice, prevent it from hearing itself and of thus being able to construct a relationship with the space, or the world beyond it. The scene's relative absence of human voice, or rather the voice's dissolution into the noise and vibrations of the sound mix, compounds the effect of spatial destruction achieved through the camera's auditory movements. *Irréversible's* opening leaves the spectator and the images overwhelmed by noise. The effect is of listening and seeing, before we know what we are seeing or listening to. As viewers and auditors we are exposed to a permeable, open relationality with other singularities we cannot name, or position ourselves as perceiving subject against, or alongside.

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the *mise-en-scène* contributes to the notion of gay men as irredeemably lost souls with no thought in their minds but the 'gratifications' of extreme sado-masochism' (2011).

The scene is one in which we perceive through our auditory sense, appealed to as vibrating, listening bodies traversed by sounds and left unmoored, without attachment to perceptible, intelligible objects or secure meanings. The space of the nightclub, as it is presented, is consistent with Nancy's wider thinking of space as a temporal unfolding, prior to a logic of the subject. James summarises how we come to think of space through Nancy 'not as an objectifiable, mathematizable extension or presence, but as a temporal unfolding in which singularities, prior to any logic of a subject, expose themselves to each other' (2006, 61). Whereas Breillat preserved a Cartesian mapping of space in order to re-anchor noise to the female body, Noé departs from it entirely. This departure is what Nancy claims is privileged in the sonorous, which opens its own space-time, spreading in space through a series of referrals, a relation between singularities which, through their relation and spacing, open up the structure of a self, not as a subject, but as a place of resonance.

Cusick's discussion of sound in torture alerts us to the parallels of Noé's use of noise, which destroys an anthropocentric framework of subjectivity that would allow a subject to constitute a world, a relationship with a diegetic spatial environment onscreen, leaving us instead exposed to Nancy's vibratory model, dissolving the body's integrity and stable boundaries through the penetration of resonance and re-sounding. Thus, Noé solicits a listening body, rather than a listening subject, before his film. This resonant body, exposed to Noé's auditory and visual strategies, approaches Nancy's account of the *corps sonore* as a membrane or channel through which vibrations and sensations pass, dissolved in a mutual feedback of resonance between a self and world, listening body and film, with unfixed boundaries.

TEMPORAL SOUND

Just as Noé employs noise to destroy intelligible space, the affective force of noise as a temporal event is also used to unsettle temporality, allowing us to experience the film backwards and forwards, in a way that *Irréversible*, as a whole, is explicitly concerned with. What is truly 'irreversible' in Noé's film, and in fact more broadly in film itself as a medium, is sound. For Chion, sound on screen is always vectorised. Inventing an imagined scene composed first of images, then of added (clinking) sounds, Chion theorises the possibility of playing this scene backwards. Reversability is not possible for sounds, as it is for images:

> Parce que chacun de ces entrechoquements, constitué d'un choc et d'une petite résonance décroissante, est une histoire finie, orientée dans le temps d'une manière précise et irréversible. Renversé, il se repère tout de suite comme 'à l'envers'. Les sons

> sont vectorisés […] mais dans des cas cinématographiques très fréquents, un personnage qui parle, sourit, joue du piano…, offre une image périodique et réversible, dans laquelle le sens passé-futur ne se marque pas comme il le fait dans le son, lequel est au contraire bien souvent un égrènement de petits phénomènes tous orientés dans le temps: la musique de piano, par exemple, n'est-elle pas constituée de milliers petits indices de temps réel vectorisé, puisque chaque note aussitôt née commence à s'éteindre? (2017 [1990], 26)

This attack and fading resonance, the finite temporality of each individual sound outlined as unique to the sonorous by Chion, is used to great extent to grate upon the reversed narrative structure of *Irréversible*. In a film that otherwise negates its title by indeed being reversible (reversed narrative structure, reversed images, as well as images of shattered bodies put back together on screen) it is sound that emerges as the formal element that is truly irreversible in Noé's film. Thus the trauma of irreversibility is presented formally through sound. The film's reversal of the rape-revenge genre, moving instead from revenge to rape to its bittersweet, utopian image of a 'happy ending', plays deliberately on the affectivity of sound, its attack and fading resonance, to produce an affective resonance that works backwards and forwards across the film and destabilises its temporal segments. This is achieved particularly through the sound bridges. New sections of narrative necessarily begin with the fading resonance of events that have come previously, the details of which we do not yet know. As such, viewer-auditors are exposed to the resonance of fading sounds, before experiencing their 'attack', almost exposed to post-traumatic shocks before knowing what that trauma is. At the same time, a spectator still suffers the fading resonance of the future sonorous attacks that, through the film's organisation of plot, have already been heard.

For example, the section which commences the rape scene, begins with Alex walking out of the entrance of the building where the party is still occurring upstairs. In the film's chronology, we do not yet know the space she is exiting, nor what has taken place there, but the scene begins nonetheless with the fading sonic presence of the party she is leaving. We hear the sound of thumping music, seemingly 'behind us' as the camera follows Alex out. The music grows quieter as Alex walks away towards the noisy road to hail a taxi, but the beat of the music remains subtly thumping below in sound track. In this way, the image of the present scene, Alex exiting and hailing a taxi, is sonorously infused with the presence of its past which marks it. At the same time, we as auditors are still experiencing the fading resonance of the future sonorous attacks we have already been exposed to: the *Rectum*, the shattering of space,

of subjectivity, of a man's face, or the thumping non-diegetic heartbeat heard at the end of the previous segment, attached to an image of Alex's beaten face as it is wheeled into an ambulance. Each individual frame of Noé's film simultaneously and at once inscribes a past, a present, and a future through sound. This recalls Chion's assertion that non-diegetic music is cinema's *passe-muraille* whereby 'hors-temps et hors-espace, la musique communique avec tous les temps et tous les espaces du film, mais laisse exister ceux-ci séparément et distinctement' (89). In *Irréversible*, this is true for other non-musical, auditory elements. Previous sounds, their fading resonances and affective vibrations apply their pressure upon each of *Irréversible's* images, entering into this non-relational relationality and reflecting what Palmer has noted of *Irréversible's* narrative structure, claiming 'endless internal echoes have external counterparts' (2015, 75).

If the listening body is, as it is for Nancy, nothing more than a channel of communication, a membrane through which the world, self and others vibrate, Noé's film leaves us particularly vulnerable to sounds' sonorous attacks and fading resonances in the traumatic experience of watching and listening. Noé makes of noise an agent in its own terms that challenges and competes with the violence enacted by human agencies across his film's temporal organisation. The film transitions from the aural chaos of noise in its opening, through to a stabilised space of more conventional sound in the later party scene, to finally, furthest from noise, the classical, non-diegetic music of the second movement of Beethoven's seventh symphony at the film's idyllic close. While staging a sense of 'progress' through its transition from noise to classical music, the listener before the film is traversed by sounds' own irreversible events and competing temporal vectors. The film's dissolve back into noise, auditory and visual, after the titles 'le temps détruit tout' appears to add its own statement: that through Noé's use of noise, time, as a sense of direction, is equally destroyed. The film's final return to noise can be considered similar to what Chion terms 'bruits anempathiques'. He relates this to cinema's mechanical nature:

> Tout film procède en effet d'un déroulement indifférent et automatique, celui de sa projection ou de sa lecture, qui provoque sur l'écran et dans les haut-parleurs des simulacres de mouvements et de vie – et ce processus mécanique doit se cacher et être oublié. Que fait la musique anempathique, sinon en dévoiler la vérité, la face robotique. (2017 [1990], 17)

Irréversible's dissolution back into auditory and visual noise at the film's close recalls the noise of a mechanical projector, a violence that has been subtending the image's comforting moves backward through time, not allowing us to forget where events end up. Distilling the image into the pure noise of cinema's material elements, it explicitly recalls cinema as machine, its indifferent and unrelenting march forwards through time, that *Irréversible's* narrative forestalls, while also exposing and rendering unbearable.

ASSAULT

Noé's earlier *Seul contre tous* also employs sonorous attack through the film's insistent use of loud non-diegetic gunshots. These are inserted between editing cuts of whip-pans, jump-zooms and skip frames throughout the film. It is not necessarily the fact that they sound like gunshots that they assault. Rather it is for the way they are integrated as loud, unexpected sounds that themselves disturb, through their volume and their disruption to the stable framing of the film. The gunshots are also sonically matched elsewhere by loud and brief musical attacks gutted from the film's soundtrack. This produces what sound theorist and DJ, Steve Goodman, terms 'virtualized fear' in his own discussion of the use of sonic bombs on the Gaza Strip. Virtualised fear is what is produced in the undecidability between an actual attack or a sonic attack:

> Fear induced purely by sound effects, or at least in the undecidability between an actual or sonic attack, is a virtualized fear. The threat becomes autonomous from the need to back it up. And yet the sonically induced fear is no less real. The same dread of an unwanted, possible future is activated, perhaps all the more powerful for its spectral presence. (Goodman 2009, xiv)

In the case of *Seul contre tous*, the gunshots do not represent an actualised violence, though they possibly stand in for a murderous or violent thought. In their pure form, they represent a sonic attack, a violence enacted through form that Noé understands as constituting the real violence of his film. To experience the sound itself and for itself as a noise, prior to assigning it any identity or signification, is to be exposed to its sonic attack. The gunshots are timed to sound exactly between the jarring edits, accompanying these whip pans and jump zooms. Rather than this drawing attention in a formalist fashion to the structural making of film as object, however, as *Irréversible's* dissolve into noise arguably does, it serves rather to flesh out the image as a *corps sonore,* subjected to the sonic dominance of Noé's noise. The results are not so much 'jump cuts', but *images that jump*. This is similar to the way the non-diegetic throbbing of the

soundtrack in *Irréversible* can be seen as producing the images strobing instability. Noé's formal violence is therefore not just directed at spectators, but at the body of the film itself. His image appears to suffer a somatic reaction to acoustic violence and it is in this way that we might imagine Noé's images as resonant bodies that spectators' bodies can identify with.

This approach to Noe's work is in harmony with the phenomenological approach to film outlined by Barker in her book *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (2009a). According to Barker, who also understands the film image as its own kind of body, phenomenological film analysis 'approaches the film and the viewer as acting together, correlationally, along an axis that would constitute itself as the object of study' (18). Barker's work does not think in particularly auditory terms, conceiving of a viewer who is a fleshy subject attached to a pair of eyes. As already mentioned, this approach has been criticised by Hainge for its 'retention […] of a primarily scopic regime (2017, 192). My own approach has drawn out a more radical account of spectatorship that understands the spectator as a diffused, fleshy, spaced structure of bone, organs, cavities and stretched skin that appendages a pair of ears. The *corps sonore* unsettles the subject-object positions between spectator and film, and constructs both image and the spectator's body as two *corps sonores* acting, resonating and responding together, as channels though which these triggers, sensations and impressions pass and whose resonance might, as Barker suggests, be the axis that constitutes the object of study.

Nancy, in drawing out the specificities of the sonorous, asserts that 'le visuel serait tendanciellement mimétique, et le sonore tendanciellement méthexique (c'est-à-dire dans l'ordre de la participation, du partage ou de la contagion)' (2002, 27). It is this methexic participation with sound that Cusick sees as being problematic. Sound at a certain, dominating volume, takes over the body. It ensures, as the Kubark report outlines, that the interrogated subject see their pain 'as not inflicted from outside […] but inflicted by the subject on him or herself' (Counter Intelligence Agency 1963, 94). Through being reduced to a state of 'vibrating object', bodies participate in and become unwillingly complicit with the sonic violence they are supposedly victims of. It is in this sense that noise might disturb the very identity of violence, which is not directed from a source to a target, but rather dissolves these distinctions, in which the *corps sonore* is a channel that re-sounds and multiplies sonic violence's vibratory power.

In bringing a discussion of sonic torture to Noé, we see how his deployment of noise and its somatic effects seeks out the involuntary sounding of the body. This reflects the problematic

identifications with power itself and the destruction of acoustic agency produced through torture's deployment of sound, though here within the terms of spectatorship. As I have shown, Noé seeks to produce an identification with the butcher of *Seul contre tous* himself, and drive his spectator towards seeking comfort in his voice and words. Likewise, noise produces an identification at the vibratory level with noise itself through the use of the low frequency tone. The spectator, appealed to as a *corps sonore* before the film, thus vibrates involuntarily and in sympathetic complicity with sound itself. What Nancy determines as the methexic participatory nature of sound is here revealed as the risk of the *corps sonore*; that it also be a betrayed body, one that participates unwillingly with the violence the film engages at the formal level.

CONCLUSIONS

Nancy's *corps sonore* dissolves the traditional boundaries of the body, rethinking its familiar integrity. As has been seen with Cusick's discussion of torture, moving away from ideas of the body and its integrity have potentially devastating consequences for thinking about agency, subjectivity and interiority for those subjects whose agency, subjectivity and interiority is violated, or not given. In which case what does thinking about Noé's spectator as a betrayed, listening body before the film mean when brought into dialogue with the actual, violated body of *Irréversible,* Alex, who is raped in the subway? Alex's rape is an unlistenable moment which remains unlistenable as we are exposed to trauma's breaking down of language through her cries. It is hard to reconcile either Nancy's *corps sonore* alongside hers, or the *corps sonore* Noé creates of his spectator. Diane Perpich has raised the question of how Nancy's broader philosophy and thinking of the body might be at odds with feminist discourse. She asks 'is Nancy's ontology a theory practical only for bodies that enjoy the luxury of already being seen and treated as self-identical and whole? And is it, as such, a luxury that feminist theory can ill-afford' (2005, 87). In using Noé's films to raise questions about the limits of Nancy's *corps sonore*, it is clear that his model of listening falters as it is taken away from the properties of the musical, or Titian's *Venus and Cupid with an Organist*, and exposed instead to the unpleasant, assaultive or unlistenable sounds of the *cinéma du corps*. On the other hand, Perpich explores what Nancy's move away from the humanist ideal of bodily integrity might offer gender politics. Perpich argues that while notions of integrity serve as an ideal against various levels of violence against women, it 'simultaneously reinforces fantasies of women that underwrite the violence it seeks to address and redress. Social myths surrounding women's virginity depend on a discourse of unviolated integrity that works as surely to control women's sexuality as it

does to protect women from sexual violation' (88). As we have seen with Breillat, this discourse of unviolated integrity is something her films seek to undo.

During *Irréversible's* rape scene, Noé moves away from his dizzying formal techniques to settle on an agonisingly stable image, and an absence of other sounds, except for Alex's cries. Endless commentaries on this scene have focussed on a spectator's position as a witness to the rape. But as I have shown, Noé's films pose not only the question of the onlooker as a problem, but demand also that we think further about our position as listeners too. Alex's cries go unheard. The moment remains utterly unwatchable and unlistenable. While Noé's *corps sonore* has elsewhere been a betrayed, open, vulnerable body, it is not Alex's body, as the formal composition of this scene, with its immobile camera and framing, allows for an established position of proximate distance.

Following Nancy, listening, as opposed to hearing, implies a different way of being in and with the world. It is the active state of audition that presupposes acknowledgement. Lisbeth Lipari, in developing an ethics of listening, writes that listening is 'not about 'feeling' what the other is 'feeling' or knowing what it 'feels like to be you'. Rather it is to stand in proximity to your pain […] fully present to the ongoing expression of you' (2010, 351). Lipari's positioning of listening seems apt for thinking about the way both Breillat and Noé's films position our sensorium, at once with distance, but also as close, attentive, painfully present to experiences themselves that do not give up their unlistenability. Noé's films arguably dissolve distance through the dominance of the sonic over the visual, while Breillat's engage noise at a limit of audibility to create a cinematic 'intimité sonore'. Both filmmakers exploit the medium as a space or channel in which various correspondences between sound and image reconfigure the sensory hierarchies of cinema and reshape a spectators' experience such that they become all ears. Constructing both spectator and image as *corps sonores,* these filmmakers play upon and bring to the fore the border listening occupies between the proximate and the distant senses, using the auditory as a way of instigating a non-relational relationality. Through noise, these filmmakers display an infinite sensitivity to the body in film, but as Noé's cinema demonstrates, this sensitivity also opens onto questions of damage, fragility and vulnerability.

Noise has been shown as able to disrupt identity, both of pleasure and of violence, and thus produce new questions about complicity and spectatorship with regards to these films that seek out bodies through noise. The unlistenable reflects, in a different sensory register, the desire identified by Palmer of films that fall within the *cinéma du corps* for 'the medium itself to generate profound, often challenging sensorial experiences' (2011, 58). In bringing attention specifically to Breillat and Noé's use of unpleasant sound, this chapter has explored extreme cinema's ability to engage its spectator as a listening body before the film and how conceiving

of these films as a *cinéma du corps sonore* brings to the fore other affective extremities that demand forms of extreme attention or involuntary participation. These extremities themselves reflect on the limits of filmic form, tuning us to the senseless or insensible in order to reflect on what can be articulated or known, shown or heard, without itself suggesting that this limit can always be reached. Thus as much as I have explored the way these films use noise to take us towards the body in extreme ways, this approach is nevertheless suspended, breached by an inevitable distance beyond which sense absents itself. This sense of distance and unknowability becomes more marked as I now turn to consider the use of noise by filmmakers reflecting on different geographic and national identities, under conditions of migration.

CHAPTER 2

MIGRATORY NOISE IN *EXILS* (TONY GATLIF, 2004) AND *ADIEU* (ARNAUD DES PALLIÈRES, 2004)

> Les *échos-monde* nous permettent ainsi de pressentir et d'illustrer les rencontres turbulentes des cultures des peuples, dont la globalité organise notre chaos-monde
>
> Glissant *La poétique de la relation*, 108

INTRODUCTION: ÉCHO MONDE

Édouard Glissant begins his *Poétique de la relation* (2007 [1990]) in a womb-like structure of a different kind to the natal *matrice* which gives birth to Nancy's listening subject:

> Le terrifiant est du gouffre, trois fois noué à l'inconnu. Une fois donc, inaugurale, quand tu tombes dans le ventre de la barque. Une barque, selon ta poétique, n'a pas de ventre, une barque n'engloutit pas, ne dévore pas, une barque se dirige à plein ciel. Le ventre de cette barque-ci te dissout, te précipite, dans un non-monde où tu cries. *Cette barque est une matrice, le gouffre-matrice. Génératrice de ta clameur. Productrice aussi de toute unanimité à venir.* Car si tu es seul dans cette souffrance, *tu partages l'inconnu avec quelques-uns, que tu ne connais pas encore*. Cette barque est ta matrice, une moule, qui t'expulse pourtant. Enceinte d'autant de morts que de vivants en sursis. (18, emphasis mine)

This terrifying origin that generates the clamour of such cries where Glissant begins his text is the boat of the Middle Passage, transporting African slaves towards the Americas. Whereas for Nancy, the womb is the origin in which a subject begins listening, where 'l'oreille ouvre sur la caverne sonore que nous devenons alors' (2002, 73), for Glissant this traumatic origin in the boat's womb is the point from which a future collective identity opens, one subtended by the unknown terror of the experience and this initial sonorous mixing, giving way to a coming unanimity. This clamour opens out, as Glissant goes on to develop through his text, into an *écho-monde*: a way of conceiving identity not as substance but generated from the many contaminations, feedbacks and echoes of the Middle Passage. John E. Dabrinski situates Glissant's intellectual project between two forces: these are 'intellectual work as the formation of identity and the enigmatic situation of thinking after, and in the wake of, catastrophic trauma' (2010, 293). For Glissant, this boat and the ocean grave that subtends it is the

groundless ground from which an *écho-monde* resonates forth, expanding and diffusing outwards, across space and time.

In an article thinking about Atlantic soundscapes, Danielle Skeehan argues that:

> call and response soundings allowed men and women speaking different languages to communicate about the conditions of their captivity. In fact, on board the *Hubridas*, what began as murmurs and morphed into song erupted before long into the shouts and cries of coordinated revolt. (Skeehan 2013)

No first-hand accounts or records of these sounds and songs exist from the boat's interior, and so their reimagining is inevitably drawn from the records of slave captors: 'this record seems to only confirm the unrepresentable nature of enslaved voices and experiences: the sounds produced by captives are recorded as mere *noise* – as 'murmurs,' 'cries,' 'complaints,' 'shrieks,' 'groans,' 'bursts,' 'uproars' (Skeehan 2013). Like Glissant's image of the belly-matrix-womb, Skeehan argues that the acoustic architecture of the ships was essential in creating this sound for they were 'a space that was, if unintentionally, designed to resonate and carry sound: wooden ships were gigantic, migrating percussionist instruments that carried voices, rhythms, and sounds beyond ship holds and deck barricades'. Any notion of the Romantic sublime, so often elicited by images of the sea, is forcefully negated in the terrifying noise and quaking darkness of the ship's belly.

Parallels between migration and slavery have recently been made by Patrick Chamoiseau in his short text *Frères Migrants* (2017), taking up Glissant's thought in response to the contemporary migrant crisis. Likewise, biopolitical theorist Roberto Esposito asks 'what is the difference between the Roman creditor and that of migrants stowed away in makeshift boats who accept to pay for years for a journey that often ends in their death?' (2016, 29). Today's perilous journeys and detentions on the way to the West shared by different peoples from Syria, from Afghanistan, from Iraq, from Eritrea, or other elsewheres are not so much a choice, but a desperate decision exploited by various groups, gangs and governments along the way in what has been described as 'modern slavery' (Graham-Harrison, 2017). Contemporary filmmakers capturing the experience of migration such as Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval in their film *La Blessure* (2004) or Gianfranco Rosi in his outstanding *Fuocoammare/Fire at Sea* (2016) have used their cinematic technology to preserve and create a

document of the noises – the sounds, songs and cries – that express the shared conditions of pain forged on the migrants' journey, recalling Glissant's *Barque ouverte.*

I want to expand my enquiry to thinking about how films dealing with the experience of migration engage with worldly feedbacks and echoes and in doing so, open a space for listening that addresses the geopolitical. My argument moves outwards with sound, as resonance becomes depersonalised, away from a particular body, and is dissolved into what Glissant terms the *écho-monde*. That is, an identity of the world based on feedback, mutual contaminations and expressions that exist on the margins of formal relations. As such, my discussion moves away from the position of extreme proximity with which cinema tunes us to a localised, identifiable body at close range, as explored in chapter one through Breillat and Noé's use of the unlistenable. Here, I explore the potential for cinema to orient us out towards the world and instigate more distant and radical forms of encounter or intrusion through noise. The chapter considers two filmmakers, Tony Gatlif and Arnaud des Pallières, who have drawn on the faceless, restless and echoing aspects of noise in relation to their images to think about migration in the afterlife of colonial intervention. Gatlif and des Pallières allow noise to migrate within their filmic spaces and disturb the security and positionality of bodies on screen.[30] Both filmmakers draw on noise as a mode of interference and intrusion, lacking in secure origin, as a means to problematise identity (in the case of Tony Gatlif) or a logic of filiation (in the case of des Pallières) and think instead according to the logic of relation, mobilising noise to resound within the world of their film. This shift in attention, from viewing to listening, allows us to consider the ways these directors are moving filmic practice forwards through their attention to the auditory, and how this might in turn expand our understanding of the kinds of experiences and relations that cinema can express through noise – this less sociable, less domesticated form of sound.

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 Serres, noise is the 'trace d'altérité dans l'appartenance, bruit ou déchet dans la langue, mon accent projette mon lieu propre dans le lieu commun' (2008, 58). Following Serres, noise can thus be considered a means of throwing into question what constitutes identity in ways that, as

[30] Throughout the chapter, migration is evoked both as a specific subject and political situation, as well as used in a metaphorical sense (such as 'migratory noise') as a term to designate the restless, mobile properties of the sonic and its movement through cinematic space. In doing so, I wish to draw attention to the range of meanings migration carries, as well as the potential dialogue an aesthetics of mobility might have with films focussing on the subject of displacement. However, it is important to acknowledge that doing so risks drawing on the term too loosely, severing it from the reality of this experience. I have been mindful throughout to keep a certain distance between the migratory in its metaphorical evocations, and migration as a human experience.

I show, have been harnessed to explore questions surrounding migration, exile and alterity. Identity as 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 they 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, attending instead to its errantry and movement. Noise, taken as a generally unpleasant phenomenon equally reckons with the risk of romanticising nomadic restlessness and separating it from the experience of the living migrant, a criticism which has been levelled at Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual figure of the nomad (1980). Noise is constantly on the move, propagating 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.

It is this faceless aspect of noise, its restless movements through and across space and its transformational quality, that make it a particularly interesting event to think about in relation to cinema as an audio-visual medium. Noise comes into continual contact with the image, arriving and departing, transforming it, transformed by it, instigating a relational dynamic that annoys our sense of place, rather than securing us in the world of the image. In film, migratory noise can be considered a shifting placement of sound that draws attention to its movement and unfixed nature. As I show, filmmakers have drawn on noise as a restless, migratory event within the layered construction of film in order to reflect on the experience of migration, the uprooting it entails and orders of visibility it delimits. This produces, for a listener, a feeling of cinematic space open to the unknown, where we sense without necessarily being able to see. Migratory noise calls forth cinema's world, an *écho-monde*, palpable beyond its images.

My shift in emphasis from Nancy's *corps sonore,* explored in the previous chapter, to Glissant's *écho-monde* is inspired by a passing remark made in an essay by sound-theorist Brandon LaBelle (2016). LaBelle suggests that 'through the itinerant movements of global relations, culture gains in its ability to create powerful forms of dialogue, sharing echoes – an *écho-monde* as Glissant states, which may expand Nancy's resonance to questions of national borders and post-colonial bodies' (281). In this essay, LaBelle argues that the restless, mobile properties of

the acoustic, its production of space as a space *between* bodies, might be used to think alternative forms of publicness that are *emergent*. While suspicious of LaBelle's notions of 'dialogue', I take up his notion of restless acoustics to think about noise, but move on from his thinking by engaging more closely with Glissant's thought which provides a different way of thinking relationality; one that remains more radically strange and opaque, less sociable than the emergent public LaBelle posits. Through Glissant, I ask how the cinematic *corps sonore* might explore geopolitical relations across national borders and be sensitive to their various feedbacks, their passing through individual, unidentified bodies that do not integrate into forms of sociality. To think about the geopolitical with Glissant, whose 'poetics of relation' are at once political and aesthetic, allows us to consider the role film's audio-visual aesthetics might play in transforming, articulating and making concrete the lived realities of the encounters and extreme experiences that desperate displacement entails.

Nancy himself has thought about the question of immigration through the figure of bodily intrusion in his well-known essay *L'Intrus* (2000). Yet despite drawing attention to sound's penetrating quality in *À l'écoute*, the geopolitical dimension of the sonic is not something Nancy explores. This is despite the reference he makes to the the global dimension of music, whereby the resonance or feedback of the sonic provides a particularly fluid way to think about the movements and relations at work in the world between bodies of various kinds. Nancy explicitly opposes this to the visual which he suggests cannot contain hybridity and simultaneity to the same degree. This emphasis on the globality of the acoustic is evident in an infrequently cited passage of *À l'écoute* where Nancy imagines 'la création d'un espace ou d'une scène sonore mondiale dont la nature extraordinairement mêlée – populaire et raffinée, religieuse et profane, ancienne et récente, issue de tous les continents à la fois – n'a pas d'équivalent véritable dans d'autres domaines' (2002, 29).

Nancy's text fails to fully explore this globality in its extraordinarily mixed nature and this is another criticism Janus has levelled at Nancy: 'How much does his description rely on examples taken from the classical music tradition? How much does the relative suppression of noise in his space of listening resemble a nineteenth century concert hall?' (2011, 200). These are criticisms that my own project and its privileging of noise is in full sympathy with. And yet, Nancy's concept of resonance, though limited in the way Janus discusses, nonetheless demands thinking beyond the territorialised body and thus propels itself beyond the nineteenth-century concert hall. There is already something in approaching bodies through the figure of resonance that is de-hierarchised as resonance is indifferent to identity or

locations of individuation, passing through everything. Nancy's theory of the *corps sonore* is therefore not so much 'expanded' by any critical discourse as it necessitates this expansion. In Glissant's *écho-monde*, Nancy's thinking of resonance is productively distorted.

As established, the *écho-monde,* for Glissant, is an identity of the world based on feedback, remarkably like Nancy's concept of the *renvoi* of resonance. Though Glissant is writing with specific reference to the particularities of the Caribbean, his work nonetheless is explicit in claiming to offer an identity of transformation for the world more broadly, beyond the Caribbean, and even postcolonial, context. His writing attempts a broader affirmation and reclaiming of positions of exile, up-rootedness and errantry against the totalising thought of territory, identity and filiation. For Glissant, the *écho-monde* becomes a productive way of imagining various feedbacks across geographic borders, rarefied cultural spheres and identity positions. His writing seeks a poetics that would express the confluence of cultures and produce encounters or echoes that exist on the margins of sanctioned expressions and formal relations. For Glissant, these informal echoes find their most privileged expression within the artwork which is able to make audible these sharing echoes at work within the matter of the world: 'l'œuvre de William Faulkner, le chant de Bob Marley, les théories de Benoît Mandelbrot sont des échos-monde' (2007 [1990], 107). *Échos-monde* are not, according to Glissant, 'des exacerbations provenues directement des états convulsifs de la Relation' but, he clarifies, 'ils travaillent dans la matière du monde, la prophétisent ou l'éclairent, la détournent ou, à l'opposé, y prennent force' (107). *Échos-monde* are worlds that expand forth from the sites between cultures. It is the very materiality and resonance of the sonic at work within the world that makes it (for Glissant) the figure through which to express relation, feedback, movement and those experiences caught in the cracks of globalisation. Throughout Glissant's work, the sonic becomes a way to articulate the dynamics of multiplicity, errantry and poetics of relation at work in worldly relations. His writing is full of murmurings, clamours and stirrings in the background. In expressing the orality (a writing characterised by oral qualities) of the poet Saint-John Perse, for example, Glissant argues Perse's poetry is an instance when 'les échos lointains se mêlent déjà aux bruits familiers' (51). *Échos-monde* are a means to express (and in some cases cope with) the confluences and clamours between cultures: 'Les *échos-monde* nous permettent ainsi de pressentir et d'illustrer les rencontres turbulentes des cultures des peuples, dont la globalité organise notre chaos-monde' (108). As expressions of relation, *échos-monde* cannot be objects of knowledge for they are not fixed, but are something we sense: 'Ce qui ressort le mieux de la Relation, c'est ce qu'on en pressent' (188). For Glissant, the artwork and

the way it combines sense and meaning, indeed meaning as sense, is a privileged site for this expression.

Glissant's thought allows me to conceive how film, as a multi-sensory, sensuous medium which opens up spaces of relation between sound and image, might thus produce palpable *échos-monde*. Glissant's emphasis on language, orality and poetics has overshadowed potential dialogues his thought might have with cinema as a medium, despite the fact that a central question of the medium's specificity since its inception has centred around whether cinema constitutes a mode of writing, or even a form of poetry.[31] Nor has Glissant's writing been particularly taken up by film theory, despite the fact that his writings and figures of thought are heavily influenced by Deleuze. Glissant is recorded (anecdotally) by filmmaker and academic Manthia Diawara as dismissing the cinematic medium. Over lunch, Glissant criticised:

> what he called the transparency of the cinematic image, and the systematic and dogmatic stitching together of shots to make meaning. For him, what was left out of the frame was as important as what was revealed. Good films are those that self-consciously play with showing as a form of disguising, those that reveal by deferring meaning, as if to show that by giving an identity, they were deliberately hiding its otherness. (Diawara 2015)

This statement would seem to describe and critique the principles of classical narrative cinema, articulating the medium as a strictly visual phenomenon. The filmmakers I discuss here, Gatlif and des Pallières, both use the auditory within their filmic practice in such a way that displays a self-conscious resistance to the 'transparency of the cinematic image' that Glissant identifies, opting for more poetic and opaque modes of expression in order to reflect on the subject matter of displacement and offer more capacious spaces for identity or the presence of strangers. For example, des Pallières claims his filmmaking is a form of lyricism that comes from the disjunction between sound and image: 'dans mes films, le lyrisme vient, je crois, de la disjonction entre l'image et le son' (Marre, Neyrat, and L'Artaud 2005, 41). This desire to tend towards more poetic modes of expression makes Glissant still more apt as an interlocutor to bring to these filmmakers' work.

[31] For a recent discussion exploring the relationship and crossovers between cinema and poetry see P. Adams Sitney (2015).

I focus on two films from a particular moment in contemporary French cinema, *Exils* (2004) and *Adieu* (2004). Released in the same year, both films take up issues of movement between Algeria and France, albeit in different directions, with *Exils* accompanying a journey from France to Algeria, while *Adieu* moves in the opposite direction, tracking the enforced exile of Ismaël, fleeing Algeria for France. Beyond their respective focus on different trajectories of migration between the two continents, my work draws out the rigorous and singular attention both Gatlif and des Pallières pay to the auditory within their filmic practice and demonstrates how sound and noise form a crucial part of their representational aesthetics and means for thinking through migration and the interaction between cultures. Considered together, they reveal the different degrees of belonging that sound can inscribe, as each filmmaker opens up a different degree of disjunction and non-coincidence between sound and image. Both, within their filmmaking, employ soundscapes that hover between music and noise, musicalising noises and noisifying music, drawing on the acousmatic principles of *musique concrète*.[32] Yet, both filmmakers also move away from music, favouring an aesthetics of displacement and movement that noise, in particular, brings to the fore. Closely followed by Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) which also explores the persistence of colonial guilt within the French psyche with reference to the Paris Massacre of 1961, these films can be seen to constellate as part of a moment in contemporary French cinema keen to interrogate the afterlives of France's colonial intervention in Algeria through innovative cinematic forms.[33]

Both *Exils* and *Adieu* have been considered under the heading of 'journey films', which Will Higbee identifies as an emergent narrative form in French cinema since the late 1990s:

> the emergence of a cluster of these return narratives in the 2000s in fact continues a representational shift that has been taking place since the late 1990s, whereby French cinema has witnessed a reconfiguration of the representational politics of place and space in Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmaking. (2013, 131-132)

This chapter positions noise as part of this reconfiguration. Higbee describes these films as wishing to 'bring into question supposedly fixed notions of here and there, host and homeland in the diasporic imaginary' (132). Noise, as the 'trace d'altérité dans l'appartenance' (2008,

[32] This is a form of music theorised by Pierre Schaeffer from the beginning of the 1940s through to the 1960s. Schaeffer himself was influenced by cinema, particularly Jean Epstein, and the techniques of recording and montage.

[33] On the 17th October 1961, following the orders of the head of Parisian police, Maurice Papon, the French National Police attacked a demonstration of 30,000 pro-National Liberation Front (FLN) Algerians. The event was denied for 37 years until 1998 when the French government acknowledged 40 deaths. Historians' estimates fall between 100-300 victims. (Willsher 2011).

58), as suggested by Serres, necessitates a more critical engagement with Hamid Naficy's framework of 'accented cinema' with which 'exilic', 'diasporic' or 'ethnic' filmmaking has been approached in the past (2001). For Naficy, an 'accent' is that which emanates from the displacement of filmmakers and their artisanal production modes. Yet, Naficy's approach is to provide a comprehensive taxonomy that rigidly pairs particular aesthetics, tropes or themes with particular 'accents', positions of exile or diasporic identity. Noise provides a way of displacing and operating beyond Naficy's taxonomy which risks ossifying these categories. For my purposes, it is important that des Pallières' and Gatlif's identities do not over-determine my readings of them, for both have stated that their films seek to enact a shift from the personal to the universal.

Des Pallières, for example, has consistently claimed he wishes to make films about experiences that do not 'belong' to him. Speaking of *Drancy Avenir* (1999), a film he made prior to *Adieu,* he said:

> Je dis que je ne suis pas juif parce que force est de constater que l'énorme travail qu'il y a à faire pour se tenir devant cet événement fondamental de notre histoire qu'est la destruction des Juifs d'Europe, que cet énorme travail est pour sa plus grande part abandonné aux Juifs eux-mêmes, qu'il y a là un scandale parce qu'un tel travail devrait être partagé par la communauté des hommes toute entière. C'est donc à ce titre de non-juif, bien qu'il puisse sonner comme une imposture, que je m'autorise à en proposer une vision cinématographique de mon temps. (2008)

The politics of des Pallières' filmmaking, as he positions them, arise precisely from the way he provides a 'cinematographic vision' of subjects he has no direct experience of. 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 attitude towards filmmaking as a stance and responsibility towards a subject is carried forth into *Adieu* where the demand of the stranger entering France, Ismaël, is continual and remains unknown. Though des Pallières speaks of his work as offering a 'cinematographic vision', as I show, his use of noise undercuts the mastery of this vision, allowing for a more incommensurable relation to the lived experiences he cannot claim.

Gatlif, on the other hand, carries a highly hyphenated identity that each time exceeds the geographic and ethnic designations of his specific texts. A 'French' film director of Romani ethnicity, born and raised in Algeria until 1960, most of his cinematic output takes gypsy life

and the experiences of the Roma people as its subject. *Exils* departs from this subject matter. The film constitutes the first time Gatlif deals with Algeria (as both geographic and imaginary space) within his filmmaking and the film's production accompanied Gatlif's own return to Algeria: the first time he visited the country since leaving in his childhood. But while this personal investment is anecdotally important to an understanding of *Exils*, Gatlif is nonetheless adamant that the politics of his filmmaking are not to be found in this personal investment, but in the shift his film enacts from the personal to the universal. Gatlif explains, 'Je n'ai pas eu la prétention de faire un film sur l'Algérie, car je ne connais pas ce pays. J'ai fait un film sur les enfants d'exilés à la recherche de leurs origines' (Marsaud 2004).

Both filmmakers thus position cinema as offering a wider 'vision' beyond the limitations or specificities of their own experience. The issue of converting the personal to the universal raises questions about the political potentials of noise in cinema as a medium and its ability to bring together bodies as different publics in ways that resonate with LaBelle's notion of an *emergent public*. Yet, as I show, thinking Gatlif alongside des Pallières reveals ways cinema may act as an *écho-monde*, making palpable through noise those relations that do not bring us into forms of proximity and nearness with strangers but instead figure the incommensurable strangeness of our relations. While *Exils* mobilises noise alongside music as a means to think through the problem of identity as substance for the second-generation immigrant, the stakes in *Adieu*'s case of Ismaël's enforced exile are far more fraught. Thus *Adieu* takes us further in the direction of noise than *Exils,* tuning us to still less localisable bodies that exist at the periphery of expression. Both films seek less knowing, less socialised senses of the world through their modes of expression, using noise and feedbacks to suggest *échos-monde* that are open to contaminations, relations and alterity. Through this, these films address the political by opening up a space for directing the attention of a viewer and listener towards strangers who remain strange.

TONY GATLIF'S *EXILS* (2004): ÉTRANGÈRE DE PARTOUT

Upon arriving in Algeria, Naïma, a second-generation immigrant of Algerian descent who had hoped to find a sense of affiliation and homecoming in her journey to North Africa, proclaims she is 'une étrangère de partout'. This expression is apt for describing the way *Exils* engages the sonic as 'migratory noise' which also manifests itself within the film as un *étranger de partout,* drawing attention to its movement and unfixed nature. This is not achieved through stark asynchronicity between sound and image, as I go on to show with des Pallières' *Adieu*, but by loosening the security of the relationship between sound and image to create more

capacious relations between a sound's origin and its identity. Whereas *Adieu* is committed to exploring the incommensurability between its two parallel narratives, and employs a radical split between image and sound as a means to do so, the stakes of displacement for *Exils'* Westernised protagonists are rather different. *Exils* instead favours a placement of sound that arises between diegetic and non-diegetic space, situated between a uniquely cinematic *here* and *there*. As it does so, the film takes up issues of origins, exile, roots and migration between Europe and Africa to think about the identities of second-generation migrants and the possibilities of identification with the places, people and past histories from this projected 'homeland'.

In the 2000s, Algeria literally opened up as a space of possibility for filmmaking and as a space for re-evaluating the identities of second-generation Maghrebi-French (or French-Maghrebi), as well as the relationship and opportunity for exchange between France and Northern Africa (Higbee 2013). In *Exils*, this notion of exchange is particularly pertinent as neither of the two protagonists possess a history of their own in Algeria. Zano (Romain Duris) is the French son of *pieds-noirs* exiles, while Naïma (Lubna Azabal) is the French descendent of Algerian immigrant parents; like Gatlif himself, neither has set foot in Algeria before. With their French passports, they make their journey through Spain, Morocco and Algeria with relative ease. As they do, Naïma and Zano move against more urgent flows of migration heading towards France. Throughout the film, a viewer is made acutely aware that they are travelling in the 'wrong' direction. While both Naïma and Zano possess French passports and their mobility appears un-impinged, other differences of class, race, gender (as well as their own personal histories) intersect with their differing identity positions.

It must be acknowledged that, being a composer, Gatlif's output demonstrates a strong preoccupation with music and the nuance of identity articulated through music is something Gatlif appears keenly aware of. For example, in Gatlif's documentary-style feature *Latcho Drom* (1993) the musical numbers are taken up as a formal issue by the film. It is made up of a succession of musical numbers, charting the journey of the Romani people from Northwest India to Spain. Each musical number is associated with a different country and arranged in chronological order, following the Roma's historical migration. Gatlif ensures therefore that he pays attention, through music, to the specificity and historicity of the gypsies, mindful to not present one homogenous 'gypsy sound'. Nonetheless, the often overstated soundtrack in the construction of what Nikolina Dobreva calls the 'celluloid Gypsy' (2007) potentially risks a fetishisation of the Gypsy people and their relationship with music that approaches stereotype.

Such is the danger of soundtrack within film. As mentioned in my introduction, Higbee has argued that non-diegetic soundtrack can present 'Eurocentric associations of music in film as an ethnic marker' and perform a homogenising function, overlaying the image in a way that smoothes over any nuance of identity (2009, 225). These are some of the issues thrown up by Gatlif's earlier work that *Exils* can be seen as responding to. I want to suggest that *Exils* necessitates an expanded consideration of the auditory, for music is presented alongside noise as a zone of displacement, an *écho-monde* in which to lose oneself rather than find oneself.

Exils marks a turning point from Gatlif's earlier work, it being the first time he explored this other (Algerian) facet of his composite identity, even though Gatlif claims the film works against such a personal reading. While *Exils* explores a fictional narrative, the film equally stands in as a document of Gatlif's own journey which is hard to ignore. Speaking of the conditions of filming, one of the ways Gatlif measures the distances the film charts is in metres of film stock:

> Ce film n'est pas né d'une idée, mais du désir de me pencher sur mes propres cicatrices. Il m'a fallu 43 ans pour retourner sur la terre de mon enfance, l'Algérie,
> 7 000 kilomètres sur la route, en train, en voiture, en bateau, à pied et 55 000 mètres de pellicule. (Marsaud 2004)

Gatlif's statement is highly suggestive of the questions that films exploring migration often pose: how far should we consider the cinematic medium a mode of transport? How might the medium participate in, or facilitate, a search for origins, identifications, identity and the communication of such experience? As well as what kind of emotions and sensations might 55,000 metres of film stock carry? While Gatlif's personal investment is anecdotally important to an understanding of *Exils*, Gatlif is nonetheless adamant that the politics of his filmmaking can be located in the shift his film enacts from the personal to the universal. *Exils* allows this shift to be heard rather than seen, specifically through its placement of noise that continually migrates between being collectively audible or privately experienced.

In some ways, the very contingency of making *Exils* is suggestive of the film allowing a space in which noise can arise. Gatlif planned very little when setting out to make the film, claiming it was put together haphazardly along the way, often with Gatlif inserting new scenes according to the situation he and his small crew found themselves in. In order to remain faithful to the notion of 'return' in the way the film was put together, Gatlif acknowledged he could not

travel by plane and simply *land* in Algeria, but needed to make the journey *on foot*. Thus the process of making the film reflects the film's broader interest in thinking return less in terms of destination, and more in terms of journey, or of thinking identity as process rather than position. However, Gatlif's remark is also suggestive of duration, and the need to feel distance through and within the body. As I show, the body emerges as a unique site for sensing and receiving the world as an *écho-monde* of feedbacks that occur in the gaps between formal relations and expressions. Sound and noise are revealed to open spaces that envelop the body, transporting it while also being produced by it. Likewise, the film as sensuous cinematic experience, attaches to and mimics the sensations of the body and its ways of making meaning through audition, drawing attention to the body and the ear as an interface of mediation between self and world, one that stages a unique relation between inside and outside, interiority and exteriority and their continual feedbacks. If it is through the body that the film makes the mutual contaminations and encounters of an *écho-monde* palpable, this is reflected in spectatorship; *Exils* aims at the spectator's body too, shaping our listening, in order to make us sensitive to the film as *écho-monde*.

Thus, I demonstrate how Gatlif uses the auditory in complex and nuanced ways that reflect rather on the body's un-homing in experiences of exile. Such a positioning is close to Nancy's comparison of the experience of migration with the estrangement felt from his own body when he underwent a heart transplant (2000). For Nancy, this extreme experience placed him outside of himself, revealing to him his own multiple, internal strangers or foreigners. *Exils* reflects this exposure of the self to the outside, its exteriorisation, through its engagement with music, sound and noise, as the sonic becomes a vessel for such expropriations. The audio track of *Exils* neither belongs to Gatlif's images, nor is it wholly other. As such, it constitutes a form of noise, expressive of an alterity which inhabits or insinuates itself within media, within Gatlif's images, within belonging. In the film, the auditory creates a space of departure, for being elsewhere by taking the body and its openness as *corps sonore* beyond itself into the more uncertain boundaries of an *écho-monde*.

UNFOLDING AND ENFOLDING: SOUND, SPACE, TRANSPORT

LaBelle's notion of an 'itinerant listening' (2016, 284) is useful to our understanding of how *Exils* appeals to listening in spectatorship through migratory noise. The film sets up sound as a space in which Zano enters and that contours his world. In LaBelle's terms, it is a space in which he at once *unfolds* himself, as he is simultaneously *enfolded*. This is evident from the film's

opening scene, in what is usually described as a haptic image. The film opens with an extreme close-up, hovering over an unidentifiable surface. We have music, a definite and steady beat pounding from the screen. We notice this surface is moving, somehow and only slightly (Figure 7). Before we make out anything therefore, our auditory sense seems to have made sense, while our eyes are catching up. The hierarchy between the audio and the visual is inverted here, as we negotiate this moving surface alongside the vibrating intensity of the pounding rhythm. The camera begins to draw back and we discover this is resonant flesh, a man's back. He stands at the window, looking out over the city from the top of his tower block. The diegetic noises from the city are suppressed; we are wholly *in* music which appears to be part of the musical soundtrack of the credit sequence. Yet from our first hearing of this music as soundtrack, we are subsequently made to re-evaluate our encounter with it as on-the-air sound, as Zano suddenly moves to the music's source and switches it off. Thus, we are also deceived by our ears, not just by our eyes. The music recommences again and the camera pans to the pounding speaker. Zano announces that he himself no longer plays music, as he leans in close towards the speaker to not just hear but *feel* the music (Figure 8). At this point, the film transitions into slow motion, temporally isolating Zano's head in a cinematic rhythm of its own as his head bops in accordance to the rhythms emitted by this speaker. Cinematic time dilates, spaced out by his entering into sound.

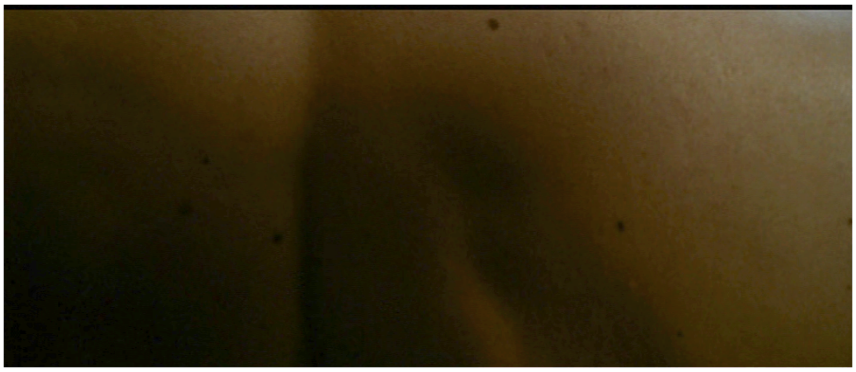


Figure 7. An obscure moving surface



Figure 8. Zano unfolds into and is enfolded by the music

This moment recalls the dual operation of the sonic of *enfolding* and *unfolding* that LaBelle beautifully describes. This is where 'one is *enfolded* by sound, with each wave an event that brushes over our corporeal figure; we are touched, or hit by sound – *it is all over me*'. And simultaneously 'I equally step *toward* sound; it may rush into me, yet it equally requires my attention: my body cannot help but respond; I cringe, shudder; I let it pass, or I draw myself into it – I lean into sound as it occupies and teases this place, this moment; I *unfold* myself, even if to turn the other way' (277). Between a *here* and a *there,* music is a space in which Zano dwells. Rather than offering a fixed site, music opens up a movement of migration between sites, a kind of 'tonal motion' that musicologist Victor Zuckerkandl describes as follows:

> listening to music, then, we are not first *in* one tone, then in the next, and so forth. We are, rather, always *between* the tones, *on the way* from tone to tone; our hearing does not remain with the tone, it reaches through it and beyond it. [...] And the motion we hear is not at all the "tone|tone" of the lower level; it is the "between" of the upper level, pure betweenness, pure passing over. (1969, 137).

This unfolding and enfolding into the between space of sound in *Exils* does not reinforce identity however, even for Zano. LaBelle goes on to query the production of subjectivity through audition: 'I would venture to say that in moments of audition I am *less* myself; if sound enfolds me, delivering so many impressionable forces onto *and* into me, and if I unfold myself, drawing my attention to what takes place, so as to await what may happen next, then what I understand as "myself" is always already displaced. *Sound takes me away*' (277). LaBelle therefore positions sound as a means of transport, not just of geographic displacement, but also as a transport away from self. As Zano's head bops over the speaker the image transitions to an overhead, overexposed shot of a dusty road with a throng of people walking into the frame (Figure 9). The music is joined by another instrument (possibly a tadghtita, a type of Berber bagpipe) bringing in new ethnic, geographic, as well as nomadic connotations, as the music picks up and acquires these new foreign resonances, layered into the hybrid sound that accompanies the image's transport.



Figure 9. the currents of migration against which Zano and Naïma travel

Sound's transport away from self that LaBelle identifies is nowhere so clear than in Naïma's participation in the Sufi trance ritual in the film's penultimate scene. Higbee claims this is a moment of 'reconciliation and reconnection' to the Maghreb. Naïma, in her participation, 'seems able to exorcise the ghosts of her past' (2014, 146). Yet this reading seems to read too much into Naïma's participation, for Gatlif complicates the relationship between music and belonging, dance and participation. We are not privy to her thoughts or any hint of the past she is excising. Rather, she appears lost in sound in ways that are suggested formally rather than narratively through the framing and image. Naïma participates in the Sufi trance ritual, yet this does not locate her roots in Algeria. Right before she dances, she is told by one of the elder women 'il faut que tu trouves tes repères'. Yet it is in the disorientation of the dance, its dizzying release and total absence of 'repères' that she enters into. As a figure, she is even hard to recognise or identify in the frame. The camerawork is erratic and restless, itself attempting to participate in the ritual and attach itself to the sensations, movements and transports that Naïma's body is feeling. At this moment, the film seems to have departed from any logic of stable subjectivity.[34] The frame is open to all the textures, rhythms and movements that cross its path and in attaching itself to Naïma's experience, figures her as an open subjectivity through which such triggers and sensations are passing.

Crucially, this sense of unfolding and enfolding in sound is not limited to music but also to other acoustic phenomena. For example, as Zano walks listlessly along, frustrated with Naïma who abandoned him at a Flamenco concert, he pushes out into the world with his body, kicking bottles along the ground. As he does so, he sets the tinkling sounds of their glass impact in motion (Figure 10). It is as though his gestures are unfolding into noise. The noise of

[34] The camerawork could indeed be compared to the cinematography used in the descent into the nightclub *Rectum* in Gaspar Noé's *Irréversible* (discussed in the previous chapter) which also acts to destroy any stable spectatorial subjectivity, though to very different ends.

these bottles is highly expressive, hovering on the edge of something musical. At the same time, the sound quality also renders the tinkling of the bottles so clearly at this point that it appears non-diegetic. This produces an expressive sound coming from beyond the world of the film that is loosely resonating with the imagery on screen and enfolding it. The production of an in-between, here hovering between naturalism and abstraction, is something the film uses throughout in its continual placement and displacement of sound. With its lack of secure origin, these noises arise in and between gaps, operating between soundtrack and image track in ways that take on a particularly spatial force. Positioned on this border, sound becomes a site of, as LaBelle puts it, 'dwelling in difference' (276), between a here and there. Yet as much as it sets up a site of dwelling, a home (or even a religion as Zano claims at one point in the film), in its migratory movement through the film, it also becomes a site through which to articulate exilic experience. Caught between this here and a there, exiled from any origin, the sound is, like Naïma pronounces of herself 'une étrangère de partout'.



Figure 10. Zano's gestures unfold into musicalised noises

SOUND AS CONNECTIVE HINGE: IMAGINATION, MEMORY

This use of meta-diegetic sound opens up sites within the film that pertain to narration at one remove. These are sensed most acutely through sound's filtering through other technologies, such as headphones. Here the source of sound is not just continually unstable, as we are made to constantly renegotiate its positioning, but also carries traces of a body. When Naïma and Zano are working on the fruit-picking farm, the audio quality of the music is rendered 'pure' when it is heard by one of the characters through headphones; we hear music emitted from the headphones as soundtrack only when a character is listening to them. When the headphones are passed between characters, the audio-quality becomes a tinny emanation of the private, exclusive listening experience that headphones usually entail. Thus the image also

feels to be acting like the physical organ of an ear, as the sound design of *Exils* migrates between different points or places of audition. Our listening is itinerant. We hear as one ear, then as another, reflecting on the way sound is intimate, yet belongs to no one. At the film's close, Zano places his headphones onto his grandfather's tombstone and here we hear as if we are the responsive material of the stone (Figure 11). In much the same way as Gatlif's camera occupies different non-human viewing positions, at times looking through the eyes of a mosquito or occupying the position of a vegetable, sound is shown to be resonating across different bodies. The sonic becomes an inter-relational connective hinge, bringing together bodies across the border of life and death, human and non-human, mineral, vegetable or animal. As viewers and listeners, the film transports us continuously between these distributed identity positions that are themselves unstable. Gatlif, exploiting the multiple channels that bring together the film as an assemblage of components that make sense, turns a private (listening) experience, through headphones, into a social, communal and inter-relational one between different bodies, on screen and off. The viewer-auditor of the film thus senses, and more specifically hears, the film's articulation between the private and the collective, the personal and the universal, occurring in these listening shifts, sensing and citing the various feedbacks and echoes of relations.



Figure 11. Headphones on the headstone, hearing as responsive mineral

Sound's lack of a secure source is made more complex by the additional layering of subjective noises, suggesting we not only hear what a character hears, but also what they imagine, within and alongside what they hear. When Naïma borrows Zano's headphones one morning and dances around a field where they camped the previous night in a spirited way, the music she listens to is mixed in with the noise of a crowd cheering. Naïma, we see, has begun miming to play football; she scores a goal – we hear the crowd erupt. The liminal position of the soundtrack, between the diegetic and non-diegetic world of the film, is joined by the use of sound effect here to signal imagination and subjective sound. We are perhaps hearing what

Naïma's body is feeling. This shifting positioning of sound thus asks us to re-evaluate the reality of the music; imaginative investment has summoned sounds into audibility. We are asked to hear between image and imagination. This positioning points to the role images and sound might play in imagination, in ways that are suggestive of the cinematic medium and the sites it sets up for imagination or memory.

Memory too is articulated through the indeterminacy of sound. In the final scene, when Zano and Naïma are seen walking away from the grandfather's headstone on which Zano has left his headphones, a recognisable song begins to play. It is a song we have heard before in *Exils* but in a live context, during an earlier scene of a flamenco performance in Seville. This song is one of *Exils'* only instances of truly diegetic music, except for the Sufi trance ritual in the penultimate scene. The live(d) experience of Zano and Naïma's journey has therefore somehow been recorded by audio-technology, and in this final image, is reproduced and transmitted. We cannot suppose that Zano recorded the Flamenco performance; the relationship between audio recording and live performance is not so direct. The song could rather be heard as the memory they carry with them of their journey, filtered through audio technology to take up a 'real' diegetic existence in the film. As such, Gatlif combines memory, imagination and music and filters them through technology, locating them between the diegetic and non-diegetic world of the film. This could be read as self-reflexively re-enacting the process of making the film itself, which also functions as a cinematic document of the journey made by Gatlif, in which fiction, imagination and technology productively interfere. It is equally suggestive of the role technology can play as a prosthesis and mode of relation – connecting us across distances, geographic, temporal, virtual. Across the connective hinge of the flamenco song, Gatlif creates a place for the auditor-viewer – they are also invited to remember at this moment – as well as for himself and the biographical inscription of his own return. The song can thus be understood at once as text and paratext. Headphones here provide a form of sonorous interstice, a tear in the narrative fabric of the film, in its diegetic integrity, through which the world outside the film, the conditions of its production, and ideas about the film medium itself, are allowed to resonate.

LIQUID MEDIUMS

The notion of medium and of listening or looking through different mediums is most explicitly explored in *Exils* through the presence of water, even bodily liquids such as the liquid that lubricates our eyes, or the fluid that transports the vibrations of sounds in the ear and

translates them into signals our nerve receptors can process. Water is everywhere: as water, as rain, as sweat, as tears, as eye drops, as drips. These different manifestations suggest transparency or life-giving properties (water), clarity of vision (eye drops), an affective film (tears), as well as the distortion and the troubling of vision. When Zano and Naïma splash in fountains, water droplets fall on the camera, their transparent curves calling attention to the camera's own transparent lens. Higbee identifies in *Exils* an interest in exploring the fluidity of identity through cinematic aesthetics of displacement and movement (145). This is certainly true, and my own discussion of the film's placement of sound and its restless properties has reinforced this claim. Yet, I want to foreground that it is also through *Exils'* repeated attention to water and liquid in various guises that it articulates the idea of fluidity, as well as mediation. These notions of fluidity and mediation are notions which the sonic, in particular, responds to in the way it seeps across borders and reconfigures the relation between inside and out, self and other, subject and object.

As I mentioned, water draws attention to the lens of the camera. In doing so it asks us to reflect on the mediums through which we not only look at, but also listen to the world, suggesting that the passage of sense itself is not direct or unmediated by objects, technologies or bodies. Gatlif's film draws attention to the body, itself a liquid medium, as a sensory receptor, an interface that processes our experience of the world and his film continually lingers on and within the various mediums through which we sense. Zano observes Naïma through the water bottle, her image is distorted. Naïma looks at Zano through a film of tears. We see Zano as an interrupted reflection in a dirty puddle of water as he recounts to Naïma details of his own personal history. Zano and Naïma's first view of the North African landscape is through a dirty window, obscuring their view of this landscape and their projections onto it. Not only this, but their bus actually draws up alongside the mirrored façade of a truck, reflecting their own image back at them. Through the troubling of these 'transparent mediums', which extends to Gatlif's own camera lens too, there is the suggestion that what we see or seek, in and from each other, is always obscured in some way. Gatlif thus strives towards a certain opacity in the image, one made all the more manifest through its arising in, and interruption of, the transparency of mediums. For Zano and Naïma, there is no romantic or exotic vista of the North African landscape, instead what they get is a solipsistic reflection of themselves. However, this structure of separation in the relation between self and other, subject and object, is broken down in the auditory register.

As well as enabling us to listen through various bodies, the film suggests we listen through various mediums, at certain points rendering our sense of hearing 'blurry' as if we were hearing underwater. Normally, we hear through air conduction but audition underwater, as well as a foetus in the womb, requires a different process of sensing. Our bodies bypass the eardrum and instead use bone conduction, transmitting signals directly to the inner ear. Bone conduction is one of the reasons our voices sound foreign to us when we hear them played back, for bone conduction causes our voices to sound lower and fuller than they actually are. *Exils* emulates this mode of underwater listening at two instances during Zano and Naïma's eventual arrival in Algeria, each time with slightly different implications. First, when a bead of sweat falls on Naïma's shoulder from beneath the headscarf of a veiled Algerian woman positioned above her in the train. This is one of a number of scenes where *Exils* employs cross-cutting between close-ups of Naïma's face and the faces of other Algerian women. This cross-cutting suggests a face-to-face logic of separation and distance; it never holds both gazes within the same frame at the same time. Yet the bead of sweat bridges this distance, it becomes a form of contact and spaced touching that the film makes sonorous. When the bead of sweat makes contact, all diegetic sound, such as the rattling of the train, is suspended so that we hear uniquely the reverberating echo of this drop of sweat. It is as though we have been completely submerged in it. The sounds of the train encroach, but they are muffled as if heard underwater, and then we surface suddenly, affronted once again by the train's diegetic clamour. Sound's immersive qualities thus suspend the distance between the two women to submerge the moment of contact in a form of simultaneity that the auditory can achieve, as opposed to the logic of the shot-reverse-shot and its reinforcing of subject-object relations. The second instance of underwater listening occurs as the train enters the tunnel. The sound changes, as if our ears have become blocked, we hear muffled noises. The image cuts to Zano and Naïma wading through a throng of people, the same throng pictured in the opening of *Exils* (Figure 12). They are travelling in the opposite direction. A roaring indeterminate noise combines with watery sounds. The sound arguably connotes some of the metaphors of migration, such as that of 'flows' and 'currents'. Naïma and Zano are travelling against these currents, from Europe to Algeria. Yet the images and sounds of the film remind us also of the sub-currents of migration, the background of desperation against which Naïma and Zano's own journey is often so casually taking place. Now they are overwhelmed by it. In taking on the quality of hearing as if submerged underwater, we are invited into an intimate mode of sensing that reroutes the relation between a perceiving subject and the world around them. Bone conduction, as physiological process, brings the idea of worldly resonances and their passing through individual bodies most audibly to the fore as the body responds intimately

from the inside, as a channel through which the outside passes. This is a moment where the film brings these geopolitical forces and currents into visibility and audibility. Naïma and Zano are plunged into them, while our senses are flooded by them.



Figure 12. Zano and Naïma travel against the currents

ERROR, ERRING, EXILE

Conn Holohan has argued that *Exils* is a road movie based on error and 'wrong turns' (2011, 29). Zano and Naïma's decision to embark on their journey is presented without context and without strong or clear motivation. 'Et si on allait en Algérie?' are the first words in the French language spoken in the film, the 'et' a conjunction that draws attention to an absence of any logic with what precedes it.[35] On their journey, Zano and Naïma are often shown as small figures in overhead shots, dwarfed by the landscape, on roads that bisect the frame off-centre or in quirky irregular directions. For spectators, accompanying them on their journey is a disorientating experience as we are given few direct signposts of where they are or where they are going, often deducing from subtle cultural markers captured by the camera and microphone. The pauses the two characters make on their journey seem whimsical and again, arrive without introduction. Scenes begin with these new blocks of experience – working as orange pickers on a farm, watching a flamenco concert or celebrating Naïma's birthday in a forest – as if the film were edited and put together according to the workings of memory. The most significant error on their journey is when the pair board a boat they believe will take them to Algiers – telos at last! The soundtrack of the film strikes up with the soulful *cante* flamenco voice of Jose Perez Silva, fervently pronouncing 'Algeria'. Yet the boat is the wrong one, headed, they are informed by an amused man, to Nador in Morocco. Once they finally

[35] Prior to these words, a Spanish text is delivered by a soft male voice in voiceover which is not subtitled for a non-Spanish speaker.

reach the African continent, their bus breaks down and they must trade in their passports for being smuggled across the border into Algeria on foot.

The structure of error in *Exils* that Holohan identifies is compared to Giuliana Bruno's link between error and the notion of erring: 'An error implies a departure from a defined path; the semiotics of the term incorporates the notion of erring, or wandering. Error – the deviation from a route, a departure from principles – is bound to such wanderings' (2007, 15). This takes error very close to the logic of *errance* that Glissant attaches to exile: 'de l'exil à l'errance, la mesure commune est la racine, qui en l'occurrence fait défaut. C'est par là qu'il faut commencer' (Glissant 2007 [1990], 23). Taking his language from Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, Glissant affirms the positive rootlessness of errantry as opposed to exile. 'Si l'exil peut effriter le sens d'identité, la pensée de l'errance, qui est pensée du relatif, le renforce le plus souvent' (32). We might instead position *Exils* as a road movie based on *errance* rather than error, *errance* rather than exile. This positive rootlessness, is expressed through the formal forcefulness of migratory noise and its errant wandering which allows for the articulation of relation. The idea of *errance* also affirms the notion of identity in flux, as a process rather than as a position, that many such as Higbee or Kaya Davies Hayon have identified in their readings of *Exils*, particularly through questions of embodiment and the haptic drawn from Marks (Davies Hayon 2017, Higbee 2014). My own desire to approach the film by attending to migratory noise has not contradicted these insightful readings. Nonetheless, my focus on the sonic has allowed me to think about some of the more radically distributed and de-territorialised identity positions the film inhabits, to think with its movement, and within the temporal and spatial dimensions the film opens up through sound to create space for these inter-relational experiences.

Exils turns to this migratory and indeterminate placement of sound in order to complicate the notion of any single origin or fixed identity position. In its indeterminacy, the film favours a use of sound that operates beyond what we can place, recognise or name in ways that work against any attempt to secure stable categories. Yet beyond this, through its indeterminate positioning, constantly rerouting its degrees of belonging to the film's images, or exile from them, Gatlif makes palpable the spatialising properties of the sonic in order to open up new, uniquely cinematic sites within the film. These sites may articulate an exilic positioning, or become spaces of memory or imagination, as well as offering expression for what lies between the personal and the universal. Thus Gatlif expands our sense of the kinds of spaces cinema

offers for such expressions, between the verbal and the visual or between the image track and the sound track.

There is a tendency within film theory and criticism to figure these sites of in-betweenness, what Deleuze has called cinema's 'interstices', as 'gaps'. These 'gaps' (between frames, or image track and soundtrack) have been understood as privileged sites for the articulation of ineffable experiences, such as trauma, for example. Yet what I have shown through tracking the movement of noise throughout *Exils* is that in his approach to the sonic, which produces an experience of space as well as an experience of time, Gatlif spatialises these 'gaps', giving them dimensions so that they become rather more hospitable sites, animated through the auditory which produces them as an invisible but palpable presence. And so if experiences such as exile and the politics of displacement do become attached to such sites, it is not in the negative sense of a void or gap, implied as lack, but in this fuller dimension, which, at once animated and produced by sound, becomes a presence that captures and pays attention to what lies beyond film's visual domain. This move parallels Glissant's distinction between exile and errance, between a concept that speaks to the erosion of identity and a concept that instead moves towards its reinforcement. These palpable sites, animated by the restless movement of sound, are what I would like to offer as one example of cinema's *échos-monde*, sites in excess of image that our ears and the networks of sense attached to them, become attuned to.

However, we must also be wary about the apparent 'hospitality' offered by such sites created through the indeterminate placement of sound. *Adieu,* the film I now turn to consider, goes much further in its split between image and sound in its exploration of migration to resist what might risk becoming a blithely accommodating hospitality, one that erases the strangeness of strangers. Like *Exils*, the film uses sound as a connective hinge. But rather than the *écho-monde* emerging as a site between a *here* and a *there* in which one might 'dwell', *Adieu's* unique use of the acoustic in its address to us as listeners feeds back to us the echoing presences and absences of strangers carried in the restless passage of sound, those global movements that murmur in the backdrop of our immediate world. *Adieu* was released in the same year as *Exils* and focusses on a journey made in the opposite direction, from Algeria to France. The film's direction of travel dramatically shifts its implications, as the journey inscribes very different positions of privilege, mobility and visibility in the way we accompany Ismaël than how we accompany Zano and Naïma in *Exils*. As a film, it is less about identity, about finding oneself or losing oneself. To describe Ismaël's enforced exile from Algeria in any terms that suggest a voyage of

selfhood is not only crass, but completely mischaracterises the delicate focus on the relations between 'host' nation and intruder, community and stranger, that *Adieu* chooses to articulate through the auditory. As such, *Adieu* is far less concerned with exploring exilic identity positions, than it is with using the auditory to register the presence of strangers beyond the visual, and to think through the politics of visibility and audibility that Ismaël, a clandestine migrant fleeing Algeria, is permitted. Those gaps between sound and image that I argued *Exils* spatialised into palpable *échos-monde* take on yet more political weight and texture in *Adieu's* radical split between sound and image and its exploration of asynchronicity between soundtrack and image-track.

ARNAUD DES PALLIÈRES: *ADIEU* (2004)

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 McMahon, who reads *Adieu* through Nancy and 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. (2011, 14)

Through these two principle stories, Ismaël's and the family of pig farmers', *Adieu* explores common themes of mourning, faith, hospitality, exile and migration across borders, though never allows the two simultaneous storylines to integrate into a meaningful totality. The film is interested instead in exploring their indifference towards 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.[36] Des Pallières' statements in interview regarding the issue of hospitality are revealing. Speaking of *Adieu*, des Pallières explains 'Si je n'avais fait que

[36] These words are uttered by a god-like voiceover in the film's final shot.

raconter l'histoire d'Ismaël, je n'aurais que prêché pour des convertis. Je ne voulais pas être "avec" Ismaël, je voulais qu'on le redécouvre à chaque fois comme un étranger, l'étranger qui pose problème' (Kaganski 2004b). The film thus takes up a relational structure where each narrative sounds out against the other. In the same interview, des Pallières states that 'tout l'enjeu d'*Adieu* était de produire le raccord entre ces deux histoires aveugles l'une à l'autre'. Des Pallières' visual metaphor, impressing the two stories' blindness to each other, is then immediately followed by an acoustic one: 'Avec *Adieu*' he says 'ne me demandez pas des propositions politiques, ce n'est pas mon rôle. Mon rôle, c'est de faire sonner le scandale'. By insisting on not 'showing' these two stories to one another, des Pallières wished to reflect on the contemporaneous occurrence of each reality which does not integrate into a form of sociality. The one does not know the other.[37] 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 exploring, 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 of relations that implicate these different spheres, but it does allow these relations to be heard, and in doing so, draws us into a stranger form of sociability and encounter that exploits the inherently restless and mobile properties of the acoustic between the film's two storylines.

UNITY, COMMUNITY: DES ÊTRES JAMAIS VUS

Early on in *Adieu*, the scene cuts to a woman reading aloud a passage from a book. She is framed in an intimate close-up. We cannot 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 Nancy's *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1999 [1986]) from the beginning of the second section *Mythe Interrompu*, 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 she is positioned at, her back facing the outside world, and the sound of soft strings from a Vivaldi concerto accompany her voice as she continues to read. 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:

[37] Jacques Rancière, in a brief text offered to the accompanying DVD booklet for *Drancy Avenir* suggests a similar approach of displacing meaning to the sonic realm: 'Or les images ne donnent pas à voir ce que disent les textes, elles le donnent à l'entendre' (Rancière 2008)

> L'histoire n'est pas toujours facile à comprendre, souvent elle fait peur à ceux qui l'écoutent, elle évoque des pouvoirs étranges, des transformations effrayantes. Elle invente des noms inconnus, des êtres jamais vus. Mais ceux qui sont rassemblés pour l'écouter se souviendront de tout. Ils comprendront pourquoi il fallait se rassembler, pourquoi il fallait que l'histoire soit racontée.[38]

An intimate realm of the mythic and of ritual is created in this close-up, accentuated by the softness of the lighting, the measured pace of her reading; there is nothing to interrupt or mediate the seeming direct transmission in this image between the book she holds before her, and her reading face (Figure 13). Except for the non-diegetic concerto, the sound is direct, it is synchronous. 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 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. We have jump-cuts between frames, suggesting her personal and devastating experience of temporality in that moment. The film, as integral object, has cracked.



Figure 13. Aurore Clement reading about a community of listeners, *Adieu*

Speaking in interview with Emmanuel Marre and Cyril Neyrat, des Pallières compares his editing practice to that of a sculptor, but not one working with marble, like Michelangelo, rather one working with dust or found objects, like the British-sculptor Tony Cragg: 'Mais moi je n'ai pas de bloc de marbre, je n'ai que des poussières. Et si je suis sculpteur, c'est à la

[38] Originally, Nancy's text read: 'le récit paraît souvent confus, il n'est pas toujours cohérent, il parle de pouvoirs étranges, de métamorphoses multiples, il est cruel aussi, sauvage, impitoyable, mais parfois il fait rire. Il nomme des noms inconnus, des êtres jamais vus. Mais ceux qui se sont rassemblés comprennent tout, ils se comprennent eux-mêmes et le monde en écoutant, et ils comprennent pourquoi il leur fallait s'assembler, et pourquoi il fallait que ceci leur fût conté' (1999 [1986], 111).

manière de Tony Cragg: je glane des objets épars, et je les assemble' (Marre, Neyrat, and L'Artaud 2005, 39). Marre and Neyret offer their impression of this scene starring Aurore Clément: 'En quelque sorte, le film ne fait que déployer l'onde de choc de cette séquence, de ce son brisé. Tout le reste s'immisce dans les ruptures de ce son'. Des Pallières agrees, saying 'je trouve ça très bien dit. Quelque chose est cassé et le film, au fond, produit des variations sur la rupture' (44). From this moment on, and in this more fragmentary and interruptive mode, sites of noise between images will proliferate.

This early scene thus enacts a transition, or trauma, that will be a definitive break from unity and synchronicity between image and sound, an integral block of marble, to a more interruptive, asynchronous, diffused and scattered mode that marks the remainder of *Adieu*. The choice of this particular passage from Nancy's *La communauté désœuvrée* for the film's initial unity, 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 own address to us as listeners. The film incorporates Nancy's image of a listening community but this is, as McMahon has argued, 'a myth which it will seek to stage and destabilise simultaneously, in an echo of Nancy's own questioning of communitarian bonds' (2011, 10).

For Nancy, 'le mythe est avant tout une parole pleine, originelle, tantôt révélatrice et tantôt fondatrice de l'être intime d'une communauté' (1999 [1986], 122). It is for this reason that myth allows for the construction of communities: 'le mythe est la parole unique de plusieurs, qui se reconnaissent ainsi, qui communiquent et qui communient dans le mythe' (128). Glissant puts forward an even more problematic conception of myth: 'Il y a donc dans le Mythe une violence cachée, qui se prend aux mailles de la filiation et qui récuse en absolu l'existence de l'Autre comme élément de relation' (2007 [1990], 62). As I will argue, through des Pallières' use of migratory noise that is always interruptive and restlessly on the move, *Adieu* moves from a structure of filiation to one of relation. From here on in, the film will address us as listeners indirectly, through noises always arriving 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 (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 such as in *Lacombe, Lucien* (Louis Malle 1974) or across four of Chantal Akerman's films, thus tying her into a 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: 'Origines', 'Peuple', 'Histoire' 'Monde'. 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 'dictée'. Here too, the terms are those such as 'Dieu', 'frère', 'fils'…Filiation, in short. For Glissant, dictation is a form of decree. It is 'ainsi une pratique d'apprentissage, dont le succès tenait à sa répétition jour après jour' (2007 [1990], 115). This, he goes on 'tentent de former barrage: contre les fragilités des langues, les contaminations, le laisser-aller, contre la barbarie' (115). Glissant's indictment of dictation as an anechoic chamber against the contamination of language is rather like Serres' comment on the disappearance of noise from the French language, from the desire, he claims, to make it a prim and proper language of precise communication (Serres 1982, 31-32). Dictation and formal language learning in the service of clarity are not, for Glissant, sensitive to the echoes of the world that can manifest themselves through poetics. 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 simultaneously of the auditory dimensions of spectatorship and film as a potentially didactic medium. However, des Pallières' use of asynchronicity between sound and image for much of the rest of the film suggests an alternative pedagogy, one which involves us with the film as an *écho-monde* of feedbacks that we sense and are tuned to, without it becoming an object for our knowing.

As established, 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.[39] 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 first, before composing the image track and this approach can be found during the production process too. In *Adieu's* lunch scene between the priest and the funeral congregation, the placement of the camera was dictated by the

[39] Des Pallières' own cinematic corpus is anything but homogenous in style or theme and extends broadly in many directions, ranging from his exploration of the Shoah in his first essayistic-feature *Drancy Avenir* (1996), to medium-length television films on subjects as diverse as the life of Gertrude Stein (*Is Dead, Incomplete Portrait of the Life of Gertrude Stein* (1999)) or a day out in Disneyland (*Disneyland, mon vieux pays natal* (2000)).

placement of the boom, depending on the proximity or distance from which he wanted to capture the sound. From these approaches to his filmmaking, it appears that des Pallières' images are in some sense suppressed, summoned to the sounds in ways that remain strangely avisual. His unique cinematic expressivity is therefore well placed to open up questions about how we relate to sound and cinema's address to listening in spectatorship.[40] I ask how noise in particular contributes to *Adieu's* presentation of a relation that remains a non-relation and what alternative or more radical forms of sociability, or indeed strangeness, through noise the film posits. *Adieu* draws on noise to think about exchange and resonance across distances, the indifference of its propagation, and opens out to the geopolitical as an *écho-monde* of feedback, relations and contaminations. *Adieu* denies any visual encounter between its two narratives, refusing to show the webs of relations that implicate these different spheres, but it does allow these relations to be heard, and in doing so, draws us into a stranger form of sociability and encounter that exploits the inherently restless and mobile properties of the acoustic between the film's two storylines.

SOUNDSCAPING: EMPLACEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Adieu employs two different approaches to soundscaping between its parallel stories. These two soundscapes 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 the one within the other. The rural French location, where the family are burying their youngest brother Simon, is full of ambient noises that are rendered in a 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 soft tinkling of china in their homes. Conversely, in the story that recounts 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, while he looks from his window at the city below him, not unlike Zano at the start of *Exils,* that any ambient sound is included.

[40] His reliance on asynchronicity between sound and image places des Pallières within the lineage of another essayistic filmmaker, Marguerite Duras, whose work also interrogates the cinematic form through its reliance on a radical split between image and sound, most extensively in a film like *La Femme du Gange* (1973). Des Pallières explicitly cites Duras' film *Le Camion* (1977) as a reference point for the images of the lorry that run through *Adieu*. For Martin Crowley, the blind spot created by Duras' fracture between sound and image in *Le Camion* expresses an 'invisible *non-lieu':* 'Holding up scraps of narrative that might have been, *Le camion* – happily – goes nowhere, dumps us in utopia: no place, no time from which to shape a recognisable future' (Crowley 2016, 127). The disjuncture between sound and image articulates a similar sense of negativity felt in *Adieu,* marking its refusal to integrate its two narratives into any kind of sociality and pointing towards this impossibility.

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.[41] 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 non-identified 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, an attention to 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 *écho-monde* of the Middle Passage that Glissant explores at the commencement of *La poétique de la relation*. We hear the overbearingly present creaking of the boat, the crack of the rigging, its 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 instead 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 today 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

[41] Significantly, though perhaps incidentally, the name Ishmael is theophoric in Hebrew, meaning 'God has hearkened' or 'God has heard'. This carries interesting connotations within *Adieu* which deals with God's (or the state's) omniscience, the desire to escape God's vision, God's silence, as well as reflecting on different orders of invisibility like death and faith.

the Jews were transported from the Vel d'Hiv to Drancy. 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 non-relation between sound and image through his use of asynchronous sound. Instead, his use of 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 at once disorientating, as well as the conditions of our traumatic recollection.

The same principles of rootedness and up-rootedness used in *Adieu's* two soundscapes were applied to the recording of the actors' voices for the 'voix intérieures'. Like *Exils,* which employed cinematographic techniques that, with their appeal to the sensory, appeared to carry a trace of the body, *Adieu* likewise employs an acousmatic voice that either does or does not contain traces of a body, but does so in a way that reflects the film's exploration of the tension between the territorialised and the de-territorialised, and the geopolitical forces that traverse and pass through each individuated body. Ismaël's voice was cleansed of any bodily noises, the sounds of his mouth and throat, because des Pallières claimed he did not wish the voice of Ismaël to carry a body (Marre, Neyrat, and L'Artaud 2005). This notion of a voice carrying traces of the body that produced it has been explored by Cavarero (2005) to think about the singularity of identity that the voice raises. In removing any trace of bodily noise from the voice of Ismaël, he is not only disembodied, but de-territorialised, both from his own body but also from territory and his right to occupy space visibly. Des Pallières creates a voice that is expropriated even from its body. By contrast, the material grain was kept on the voice of Axel Bogousslavsky, for des Pallières wanted to suggest an incessant relation between inside and out, self and surroundings, the body as one acoustic perimeter to the world outside, thus also reflecting Nancean resonance which is at once rooted in the materiality of the body even as it resonates beyond itself.

It is this idea of perimeter between ourselves and the world around us, and sound's incessant migration across and over this perimeter, that des Pallières' film seems to be thinking across. Recalling the viewpoints of impressionist paintings, throughout *Adieu* we find characters placed at windows, orienting towards the contouring of their worlds, immediate and beyond. Ismaël's looking out onto the city (Figure 14), the father being dressed at the window (Figure 15) the priest pouring coffee (Figure 16). Des Pallières shows them pivoted *towards* a world that they

(or we) hear, without necessarily paying attention. However, these viewpoints are given cinematic dimensions, as the auditory sense is stressed through the frequent inclusion of the ear in close-up.



Figure 14. Ismaël listens to the city



Figure 15. Outside sounds and proximate sounds are co-present



Figure 16. Listening to a world of overheard sounds in *Adieu*

Des Pallières' placement of his technology in the creation of these scenes reflects this concern about an orientation towards a world of overheard sounds. For the scene featuring the family's father being dressed 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 the window, capturing the ambient sounds of birds. Des Pallières describes how he wanted both these sounds simultaneously, as direct sound:

> Ce n'est pas un principe religieux vis-à-vis du son direct. C'était juste le son qu'il fallait à ce moment-là […] Dans le film, ces petits oiseaux du matin sont mixés hyper présents, même violents, et c'est du son synchrone, ce n'est pas une ambiance rajoutée. (Marre, Neyrat, and L'Artaud 2005, 43)

Like Glissant's description of orality containing faraway echoes that mix with familiar sounds, 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 and interrupt in such a way that bends foreground and background, ungrounding the stability of the body on screen, placing it in a more exposed relation with its surroundings. In this way, the film demonstrates parallels with the way sound in *Exils* acts as a vessel for the body's expropriations, such as in Naïma's participation in the Sufi trance ritual.

FEEDBACK, ECHOES, SOUND BRIDGES

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? (Burdeau 2004, 15)

What is this noise that comes to parasitise the sermon? Is it sacrilegious? The intrusion of the 'one, two' between the words of the official transmission, a sound test that draws attention also to technology – its staging and its potential failure – is highly subversive. The listeners at the actual congregation that takes place later are also 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 (Figure 17). 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. Recalling the earlier 'one, two', at this moment, we also get the manifestation of actual feedback from technology within the church. For this, des Pallières and his sound editor set up three microphones to produce 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.



Figure 17. Erring movement of attention from the sermon

While this example of feedback provides a perhaps too literal instance of an *écho-monde* (in relation to Glissant's own evocation) it explicitly illustrates the way *Adieu* incorporates an aesthetics of feedback and displays a deliberate openness to noise by letting official discourses acquire 'parasites'. As Hainge has argued in relation to the noise of the feedback piece *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969) by Alvin Lucier, it 'links together subject, space and technology' (2013, 161). It arises out of the 'specific relations of expressive assemblages' and 'tells us something specific about the ontology of those assemblages' and how they come to pass (161). In *Adieu*, the subversive feedback within the sermon becomes a means of sensing and citing what Hainge terms these 'expressive assemblages'. It is the bringing into earshot and making audible of the *écho-monde* and its relation, the ushering in of what does not respect boundaries and what subtends our organisation of the world.

Another instance that cites the *écho-monde*, one that is a less literal instance of feedback and closer to Glissant's original conceptualisation of it, can be heard in des Pallières' inclusion of Vivaldi's concerto. Martin Wheeler, des Pallières' longstanding collaborator and composer on *Adieu*, worked on the Vivaldi, looping it, and then brought in parasitic noises. Speaking of this move, des Pallières explains his intention to invoke the beauty of how our listening situations, even the concert hall, are never pure and free of extraneous noise:

> J'ai fait un geste assez iconoclaste, j'ai tenté de parasiter Vivaldi, qui était une musique du passé, avec quelque chose d'extrêmement contemporain, de très agressif, mais qui dans une certaine manière, dans le côté désaccordé, déchiré, était à mon sens en accord avec cette musique, la réactualisait pour ainsi dire, tout simplement parce que, mis à part dans une salle de concert, quel que soit l'endroit où je veux écouter de la musique, il y a des bruits de klaxons, ou de trains. J'ai toujours trouvé très beau ce choc entre le passé et le présent, dans ces histoires d'écoute de la musique. Là, l'idée était de le faire jouer dans le geste musical global. (des Pallières 2004)

What does *Adieu's* address to listening in spectatorship 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 the 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 through 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 sounds 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-as-whale that *Adieu* later constructs, but also, more immediately, draws our attention to the distances sound connect us across, the bodies it brings into forms of proximity. This mixing of sound recalls the *écho-monde* Glissant describes in the poetry of Saint-John Perse where 'les échos lointains se mêlent déjà aux bruits familiers' (51).

Adieu is thus full of noises that do not speak to us, but rather around us. For example, the insistence of a dog's barking, a rooster's crowing and the banging noises of construction during the funeral lunch scene, while the priest delivers the theological proofs for the existence of God. Insistently our listening is pricked and stirred elsewhere, animated by acoustic spaces that are constituted by exchange. The relation to the world that des Pallières claims he achieves through editing could then be understood as a horizon of expanded immersion, which we inhabit in the form of distracted encounter. *We are*, as listeners, 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. Des Pallières' commitment to noise and his shift of emphasis between our sensory connections from the visual to the auditory suggest new ways we can think cinematic expressivity and the different ways cinema might resonate and tune us to a world and others. This tuning to a world of others we do not know reflects the film's themes of relation, alterity, displacement, yet in ways that depart from LaBelle's notion of an emergent public as a 'bringing together of bodies (human and nonhuman, objects and things) that do not necessarily search for each other, forcing them into proximity, into a form of nearness' (LaBelle 2016, 276).

Adieu remains a little more doubting than LaBelle, even as it is the restless properties of the acoustic that the film seems to mobilise in order to explore the relation between the 'strangers' it puts into contact. Yet this contact remains unknowing, rather than positing any 'sociality of strangers' (278). Instead the film presents a more radical form of strangeness. Filmmaker and critic Jean Louis Comolli lent his own voice to a commentary over a segment of the film, available on *Adieu's* DVD bonus material. Comolli's voiceover enacts a performative gesture:

> Parler maintenant sur ce film...si je parle sur ces images c'est le son qui change. Alors ce n'est plus le même film. Il y a une altération, une intrusion, un corps étrange, une voix étrangère. Un langage qui n'est pas celui d'origine s'empare du corps du film, s'y glisse, comme pour le faire sien.

He goes on: 'J'aime ce film parce qu'il affronte l'une des questions obsédantes, sur quoi butte depuis longtemps le cinéma – Dreyer, Rossellini…comment faire de l'autre avec de l'autre, et non pas toujours du même avec de l'autre?' For Comolli, a radical alterity is not possible in cinema for 'l'autre au cinéma est domestiqué par la relation filmée, par la mise en cadre, par la mise en lumière, toute l'opération cinématographique'.

Adieu's articulation of alterity is not through its *mise en cadre*, its cinematography, but in noise's undomesticated migration across and between its frames, and alongside what the film chooses to not articulate through the visual. Noise remains faithful to Ismaël's invisible intrusion into France. It captures the restlessness and expropriation of his journey, its fragile and contingent moments of pause, rest, stability while also functioning to alert the viewer-auditor to the traces of migrants' presences, without delivering this presence over to capture, to knowledge, to commensurability. It is worth noting that *Adieu*, like *Exils*, at times also strives towards visual opacity with images that are never explained (the truck), scenes shot in near darkness, and the use of visual noise through superimposition that trembles and obscures the stability of the image, as if the ground were shaking beneath our feet. 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 made to resonate by each as an animating presence. Following LaBelle, we can conceive how *Adieu* creates a sonic body (rather than a social 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 at the start in the paraphrased text from Nancy's *La Communauté désœuvrée*. *Adieu* invites us to listen differently to that which we do not know. It reflects on roots, origins, filiations, 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, without claiming fusion between them.

Adieu thus opens itself up as an *écho-monde*, a cinematic body 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 is felt as a migratory noise, one that brushes against and intrudes upon the security of its images, un-grounds the stability and rootedness of its bodies and ushers in material feedbacks, stirrings and interruptions. Migratory noise is used throughout *Adieu* to put the two worlds it explores in

distant contact, and is positioned in ways that affect a spectator's own listening, collecting us within different groupings that annoy our sense of place. We are tuned to strangers whose resonances pass through us, catching our attention from the periphery of our immediate world, but fundamentally, the film 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 to come beyond the image in which there are no more 'zones d'attentes' in international airports, no more camps guarded by police with machine guns. Yet, as the voiceover imagines this future without borders over the image of an empty horizon, empty as it is of signifiers except for the tiny scale of the plane in the mass of blue, it is not an unknown future, but a certain and bounded return for Ismaël to Algeria. In the voiceover's articulation, the incommensurable strangeness and separation between our experience and Ismaël's is reinforced. The voiceover, emulating a voice of God, tells us this future will be a world where 'we' (and suddenly this 'we' fixes us as a Western viewer), understand that Ismaël never meant 'us' any harm, that he never did anything, except arouse our curiosity. The film locates us within this 'we' in this address, identifying its spectator as belonging to a 'host' nation, which it aligns with a Godlike position. Yet if these final words suggest our curiosity was aroused by Ismaël, at this point the film takes up a different language and mode of address. Here the film opens up a space that addresses the political; in 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. The scandal sounds out between the hopeless disappearing image of Ismaël's plane and the acousmatic voice that exists completely cut off from it.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering noise and how its migratory properties have been drawn upon in various manifestations across *Exils* and *Adieu* has revealed how the sonic has a potential to spatialise and give density to the gaps that exist between sound and image, image and image, exposing the cinematic medium as a series of channels, a place of resonance, where various relations come to sound.

In its migration through the layers of *Exils,* the placement and displacement of noise exposes the film medium itself as an *écho monde*, one that can contain sound and feed back those informal relations without secure origin that are produced between official identity positions

or categories. Likewise, through asynchronicity, *Adieu* draws on the restless properties of noise to open itself up as an *écho-monde*, a cinematic body in which the passings and presences of others are registered, without resolving these impressions and triggers into forms of sociality. In both cases, we can see how the *écho-monde* revises and extends Nancy's conception of the *corps sonore*, keeping its structure of referral and feedback, yet attending more explicitly to a dissolve of the subject against the ground of worldly feedbacks, opening out onto the histories, times and spaces of others.

The passing presences registered through noise work to sharpen our responses and open our listening in a necessary vulnerability that might itself be open to the traumatic nature of migration as an experience. It is this attention to alterity brought about through noise, within the space of contested or threatened identities, that des Pallières and Gatlif use to great effect. Noise constitutes a site of sensuous opening within their films that tunes a spectator to an *echo-monde* that captures not only the passing presences of the present, but simultaneously registers them against the ground of historical echoes of past abuses. Such is the case with des Pallières' lorry-boat-whale which recalls the nightmarish devastation of Glissant's *Barque ouverte*.

Yet while displaying this attention to alterity, noise as unidentified sound allows these filmmakers to also mark out their own distances from their subjects, and underscore the impossibility of fully attending to, or knowing, the restless movements of others carried in the susurrations, rustling and peripheral disturbances that the medium can register. It is such nonhuman noise, implied by rustling, that I now to turn to consider. Does noise provide a spectrum that attends to nonhuman bodies sounding in our environment? Or, do these most radically depersonalised of bodies constitute a limit for the extent to which cinema can truly pay attention?

CHAPTER 3

NONHUMAN NOISE: LISTENING AT THE LIMIT

Mais ce 'dehors' – tout entier excrit dans le texte – est l'infini retrait de sens par lequel chaque existence existe

Nancy Une pensée finie, 61

INTRODUCTION: AN IMPOSSIBLE EAR

Throughout this thesis, the ear has been emerging as a receiver we imagine to be open. Derrida, recalling Freud, describes this openness of the ear beautifully:

> *Unheimlich* est l'oreille, *unheimlich* ce qu'elle est, double, ce qu'elle peut devenir, grande ou petite, ce qu'elle peut faire ou laisser faire (laisser, n'est-ce pas, puisque c'est l'organe le plus offert, le plus ouvert, rappelle Freud, celui que le nourrisson ne peut fermer), la manière dont on peut la tendre ou la prêter'. (2005, 103)

But how open is the ear really? Without eyelids, the ear does not open or close, contract or expand. Capturing or filtering is a question of attention or distraction, of lending, of tuning, of burning, of being all ears or within range. In its ability to shape our listening, I have shown how cinema is an important medium for tuning us to the politics and ethics of listening to different bodies. But can the sonic sensitise us to a rich variety of existence beyond the limits of our anthropocentric assumptions? If disposed, is the ear ready to receive the world, or could we always be hearing more?

The previous chapter, through des Pallières, began to mark some hesitation over the degree to which noise might tune us to bodies we do not or cannot know. This chapter takes this further by moving to yet more unfamiliar territory. Here, I address the possibility of indicating cinematically through noise an exposure to a radical outside of human world projection. Specifically, I investigate the filmic and sonic means that are engaged in attempts to present, attend to and register, nonhuman bodies. In turning to consider the nonhuman, I attempt to break away from a relationally defined exterior to ask whether noise offers or implies a more radical exteriority, an outside that would not just be the opposite or other side of interiority. Previously, I positioned contemporary filmmakers optimistically as becoming ever-more prehensile in their attention to the body through noise. Yet this infinite new sensitivity also contained the possibility of violence, opening out to something more nightmarish, traumatic

or threatening. This is carried forward in this chapter's exploration of the nonhuman. However, nonhuman noise and its audible or inaudible emissions from these most de*person*alised of bodies also threatens to disrupt the seeming ever-increasing sensitivity that I have developed across the previous chapters. I address this threat now to think about the limits of filmic attention.

Hainge ends his book-length study discussing the sonic properties of auteur-filmmaker Phillippe Grandrieux's cinema by invoking Deleuze's image of the *oreille impossible*. In this essay, Deleuze presents the image (or the fantasy) of an ear that can hear beyond the limits of perception, tuning into inaudible forces such as time, duration, intensity. Hainge quotes the following moment in Deleuze's paper:

> Il n'y a pas d'oreille absolue, le problème c'est d'avoir une oreille impossible – rendre audibles des forces qui ne sont pas audibles en elles-mêmes. En philosophie, il s'agit d'une pensée impossible, c'est à dire rendre pensable par un matériau de pensée très complexe des forces qui ne sont pas pensables. (Deleuze 1977)

Deleuze's concept of *l'oreille impossible* at first seems a productive one to bring to an exploration of nonhuman noise and the possibility of indicating the nonhuman cinematically through sound. How film might construct an impossible ear is a question this chapter is interested in exploring. Deleuze's text stages the question of perception, of perceiving the imperceptible, and suggests a path through sound and the auditory towards articulating the unthinkable. This question of perceiving the imperceptible has been a foundational question motivating experiments in cinematic form since the medium's inception. For Deleuze, the inaudible forces he speaks of are not made of sound themselves, but become audible through sound, which is the material that makes them substantial. Thus sound is not a *translation* of duration, intensity or time; rather, it brings these forces into the perceptible realm through 'un matériau de pensée très complexe des forces qui ne sont pas pensables'. Following Deleuze's precision here, noise – harnessed by filmmakers as a means to approach the nonhuman – would not be a mere translation of the nonhuman into sound *for us*, but would be a means to bring into the realm of perception the unthinkable, withdrawn essence of what might be exterior to human world-projection.

I take the *oreille impossible* as a more uncertain starting point than Hainge in my own interrogation. Hainge claims that the cinematic medium, handled by a filmmaker like Grandrieux, is an instantiation of this task of impossible thought; Grandrieux's cinema constitutes an impossible ear. His cinema, Hainge writes:

> not only presents us with bodies on screen that resonate and pulse with each other and to the rhythms of all that surrounds them, but itself becomes the medium through which the unthinkable forces of life itself is amplified into perception, not so much *camera obscura* as resonance chamber. (2017, 267)

Hainge's formulation of cinema as a resonance chamber is close to my own formulation of the *corps sonore* in the cinematic medium that I have been developing throughout this thesis. And Hainge's alliance between the sonic and the cinematic, as both substances through which forces become perceptible, is an inspired comparison. What Hainge does not interrogate (and is indeed complicit with), however, is the extent to which the *oreille impossible* that Deleuze posits is a human fantasy of perception with regards to the 'unthinkable'. One could argue that in Deleuze and Hainge's case, the auditory is at risk of being instrumentalised in order to secure the paradoxical possibility of philosophical thought's ability to reckon with and think this unthinkable limit. The auditory is used as a metaphor or image for a thought that it is not. Hainge's monograph and Deleuze's paper both begin with a concern for the auditory, but all too quickly move on to claiming its usefulness for phenomena that are not sonic. Deleuze's transition from sound to thought is rather like Nancy's move from listening to his desire to '*tendre l'oreille* philosophique' (2002, 15) in *À l'écoute* and posit a mode of philosophical enquiry akin to listening, rather than hearing. Deleuze says his method 'concerne la musique, mais peut aussi concerner mille autres choses' while Hainge in his introduction to *Sonic Cinema* tells us 'the use of the term "sonic" here extends it beyond the realm of sound' (13).[42] My own argument wishes to interrogate more closely what the specificity of the sonorous is. In this chapter, I remain closer than Deleuze and Hainge to auditory phenomena themselves as I explore the possibility of indicating cinematically through noise (Foley, sound design etc.) an exposure to a radical outside and how cinema might express the nonhuman through noise in ways that can account for its existence, in all its true weirdness. Still departing from Deleuze's *oreille impossible*, I remain more sceptical than Hainge, and reckon with the impossibility of the impossible ear, the impossibility of getting beyond the human towards what is 'outside'. The

[42] I would argue Nancy's text is less guilty in this respect, for though sound offers him a means of departure for reconceptualising the self, he is precise in outlining the shared space between meaning, sound and sense.

chapter asks whether we can ever really hear the nonhuman? Do we imagine its inaudible murmuring, and is this murmuring, imagined or not, one that our ears might nonetheless be open to?

NONHUMAN NOISE

The term 'nonhuman noise', as I develop it here, is indebted to various strands of thought that have been grouped under the umbrella of the nonhuman turn. What this 'turn' encompasses is vast: the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour, Animal studies, Affect theory, Assemblage theory, New Brain Science, New Materialism, New Media theories, Systems theory and Speculative Realism all fall within its purview whose common aim is to decentre the human. My use of the term is invested particularly in film's capacity to amplify the noises of those things we do not consider to make noise, those aliens within the everyday who have been silent for us. Attention to noise, within the nonhuman turn, has arguably been underdeveloped. Animal noise, for example, is a potentially rich field of enquiry with political and ethical stakes that has not been addressed with nearly the same interest by Animal Screen studies as has the visual. In their introduction to an edited volume on the presentation of animal life within the moving image, Laura McMahon and Michael Lawrence highlight an audio-visual economy at work whereby films tend to further entrench the 'human animal power relation, relegating the animal to its conventional status as mute, lacking in language and – following a lineage of Western philosophical thought – devoid of consciousness too' (2015, 3). Their insight highlights the immediate political and ethical stakes in noise that considerations of the animal might have. Yet despite drawing attention to this inequitable distribution between the visual and the auditory in their introduction, the volume considers only one text *The Cove* (Louie Psihoyos 2009) where sound is given more sustained attention. Here, Nicole Shukin and Sarah O'Brien argue that *The Cove* 'locates sound as a potential site of sensuous opening that would give voice to animals within the political community' (2015, 199).

While I also explore noise as the possible site of sensuous opening, in this chapter I argue that the act of 'giving voice' is something we should be wary of for it all too quickly might collapse into a kind of ventriloquism, appealing once more to a human-centric framework of understanding. The political community Shukin and O'Brien speak of seems implicitly to be our (human) political community, thereby inserting the animal's voice into our own frameworks of intelligibility and understanding. My own enquiry follows the speculative

realists for whom a focus limited to the animal is too zoomorphic to vastly expand the empire of things whose existences we could contemplate. Engaging with their thought allows another variation on Nancy's thinking and the questions of attention he raises. While cinema might assemble and amplify voices such that we might perceive them, we should be careful that this perception does not become a translation that once again makes these existences available for appropriation. To explore this bind, I move from an exploration of typically silent entities in nature, a highly intra-anthropological correlate of the human that I have deliberately selected, to 'things' or objects, whose perceived silence has rendered them the mute tools of human use.

Why is the auditory such a resonant figure for the unthinkable? The ambition of hearing the nonhuman and the sonic vocabulary that is frequently drawn on in critical theory situated within the 'nonhuman turn' rehearses some of the orthodoxies inherent in the anti-ocular turn as I explored in my introduction. This appeal to the auditory would appear to be another instantiation of the sensory hierarchy whereby vision is maligned through its alignment with mastery, knowledge and appropriation while hearing is celebrated as vision's less knowing, more immersive counterpart. As vision inscribes clear relations between perceiving subject and perceived object, it seems too bound up with the creation of object-worlds *for* human consciousness to approach the nonhuman in any way that might get away from its being *for us*. Yet where does noise lie with regards to the creation of object-worlds?

Noise and an auditory vocabulary have a resounding presence in work falling within speculative realism. Graham Harman uses the term 'black noise' to think about the soundings of objects on the periphery of our human perception. Harman chooses the term noise for several reasons; first, noise signals the perceptibility of an object's own qualities, withdrawn but subtly audible; second, it evokes the idea of signals that are not always optimal for apprehension (unlike the way we think of their being a 'right time' for a swim in the river) but remain constant emissions from an object nonetheless; third, it includes the chaos that surrounds an object without affecting it. Harman's example for this last reason is the way 'a jazz ensemble seen through a plate-glass window is vaguely surrounded by street traffic and snowball fights that are somehow present for us, but which do not affect the sensory apparition of the band itself' (2005, 183). Noise thus designates the sensory ether that we can apprehend which surrounds objects, while the adjective black suggests its 'muffled' nature.

Ian Bogost, taking up Harman's terms, aims to practice an alien phenomenology. This consists, he claims, in '*amplify*[ing] the black noise of objects to make the resonant frequencies

of the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways' (2012, 34, emphasis my own).[43] While these *frequencies, notes* (another term of Harman's), *noises* of nonhuman objects or agents that we *assemble*, *amplify* or *attune to* may speak primarily of a human fantasy of perceiving the nonhuman, they nonetheless testify to the different disposition noise is thought to inscribe.[44] How might cinema partake in this assembly and amplification and what might the specific interplay between image and sound instantiate with regards to an object and our apprehension of it? Though cinema constitutes a form of literal world-projection *par excellence*, by remaining faithful to auditory phenomena rather than drawing on them metaphorically in my own discussion, I demonstrate how sound and noise in the cinematic medium might nonetheless provide a locus for indicating a spectrum (albeit a short one) of an outside of human world-projection.

The problematic nature of what comes to be designated or thought of as 'outside' is helpfully refined through Quentin Meillassoux's use of the term and his distinction between *dehors* and a *Grand Dehors*. In *Après la finitude* (2006), Meillassoux posits what could be thought of as a hierarchy for different degrees of outside-ness. He shows how the outside as exteriority or absolute as it is commonly deployed in philosophical discourse, is a false outside. Posited as 'outside' but relationally defined, this outside is only ever an outside *for us,* and as such, another object of human world-projection, rather than an outside that exists for itself. For Meillassoux, this outside is symptomatic of *correlationism*, a position he sets out to critique. Meillassoux defines correlationism as 'l'idée suivant laquelle nous n'avons accès qu'à la corrélation de la pensée et de l'être, et jamais à l'un de ces termes pris isolément' (2006, 18). Meillassoux wants to suggest another relation between thought and being. Like other speculative realists, he is positioning himself against Immanuel Kant's influential notion that we cannot have direct or unmediated knowledge of the world around us, a position that privileges the human-world relation. Meillassoux argues that this correlational outside imprisons us in a transparent cage because it is 'relatif à nous-mêmes' (2006, 21). As soon as we define something as 'outside', as Meillassoux shows, it become relative to us. Yet Meillassoux's ambition is to posit a philosophical proof of an existence that could attest to existence independent of thought and thus that exists outside of what he considers a

[43] Bogost's language might beg the question 'credible' for who?

[44] Science too participates in this process of 'amplification'. In an article entitled 'Screaming Yeast: Sonocytology, Cytoplasmic Milieus, and Cellular Subjectivities' published in *Critical Inquiry*, documenting the amplification of the vibrations produced by yeast cells, the author asks: 'How are raw cellular vibrations converted into cellular sounds that scientists interpret as conveying meaningful information regarding the dynamism of cellular interiors? What are the conditions that enable scientists to describe cells as actors capable of "speaking" or "screaming," and how might listening to cellular sounds eventually change how scientists think about cells?' (Roosth 2009, 333).

correlationist circle. He refers to this as *le Grand Dehors*: a radical exterior that would not just be the opposite of an inside, or defined relationally, but that would instead just *be*. Meillassoux describes the *Grand Dehors* as:

> le Dehors *absolu* des penseurs précritiques: ce Dehors qui n'était pas relatif à nous, qui se donnait comme indifférent à sa donation pour être ce qu'il est, existant tel qu'en lui-même, que nous le pensions ou non; ce Dehors que la pensée pouvait parcourir avec le sentiment justifié d'être en terre étrangère – d'être, cette fois, pleinement ailleurs. (21-22)

Meillassoux's vocabulary is productive for bearing in mind the potential pitfalls that may present themselves in this chapter's attempts to tune into a spectrum that implies a more radical exterior. The areas of inquiry I consider in this chapter each posit a hierarchy of exteriority, offering possible outsides, or movements towards an outside, that are then undercut. Meillassoux's opposition between the relationally defined exterior and a wilder *Grand Dehors* is useful to me for conceiving how cinema's filmic and sonic means might enter into different relation with the possibility of a *Grand Dehors*. We can use Meillassoux's framing to ask how cinema might provide 'le sentiment justifié d'être en terre étrangère – d'être, cette fois, pleinement ailleurs'?[45] Meillassoux's affirmation of a radical outside differs from Deleuze, one of his principle interlocutors, who Meillassoux reads as a strong correlationist. This is because Deleuze, for Meillassoux, makes the correlation itself the absolute. For example, in the above discussion of the *oreille impossible*, Deleuze argues that our access to the inaudible passes through the audible and that this relation between the actual and the virtual is the only absolute. This actual-virtual logic makes Deleuze, for Meillassoux, a dualist. Nancy, who operates within a post-phenomenological framework but one nonetheless tied to a Kantian schema, can too be compared and contrasted with Meillassoux's thought. Like Meillassoux, Nancy entertains the possibility of an access to the real, though through very different means. Rather than thinking finitude as a kind of prison, like Meillassoux's 'cage transparente' (20) which would place Nancy in the position of relativism or perspectivalism, Nancy thinks of limits as exposing us to the outside, to what is in excess of the limit. As mentioned, for Nancy, limits always imply delimitation. It is through this exposure to excess at the limit that the real presents itself. For Nancy, art holds a privileged place in this exposure to an outside for it

[45] In many ways, such a question resembles other moments when thinkers and theorists have attempted to articulate cinema's relationship to the real, whether this be in Deleuze's appeal to movement and time via Bergson's philosophy or Nancy's claim that cinema opens onto the real through the gaze in *L'évidence du film* (2001).

proceeds through non-mimetic means and is thus not an instance of representation but the presentation of presentation. This anti-mimetic thinking finds its greatest articulation in the methexic, participatory properties of the sonic.

Meillassoux, by contrast and in less helpful ways for my purposes, tackles the possibility of a *Grand Dehors* through mathematics. Having defined the *Grand Dehors* he proceeds to provide examples of what might truly take us 'pleinement ailleurs'. These are beings that indicate a *Grand Dehors* such as isotopes with an age so great they attest to a time before any human consciousness could perceive them. Meillassoux calls them *arché-fossils*, objects whose momentous age evidences their existence as wholly independent of any human existence or projection that could apprehend their manifestation.[46] While Meillassoux's affirmation of mathematical logic is not productive to my own exploration of film considered in this chapter, his articulation of the problem of correlationism and his distinction between the terms *dehors* and *Grand Dehors* are nevertheless useful to bear in mind when asking if cinema can ever really indicate a non-relational outside. Breaking from the correlationist circle to offer a statement about being, independent of mind, is something that Meillassoux and other speculative realists have made their controversial project. This chapter engages with their thought, ambitions and fantasies and the otocentric language they privilege to place new question marks over the possibilities cinema might yield for thinking this outside through noise.

Speculative thought has been fruitfully, though not extensively, thought alongside the cinematic medium by others who have highlighted cinema's ability to present a de-hierarchised attention to the material world. Remarking on its absence from screen studies, Volker Pantenberg explains that '[t]he list of disciplines and discourses involved in the "return of things" is long and keeps getting longer. It is therefore striking to see that film and media studies has been largely absent from these discussions' (2015, 10-11). From my own point of view, the comparison between speculative thought's attention to 'things' and cinema is fruitful for two reasons. First, as mentioned, the question of perceiving the imperceptible has been bound up with the cinematic medium from its inception. Its various promises to see the unseen, to show us the world through a nonhuman, mechanical eye or to capture 'la nature prise sur le fait' (Sadoul 1948, 291) in the form of the cinematic index have each suggested

[46] The term fossil, within the context of film theory, evokes Deleuze's reference to the 'fossil image' and its subsequent take-up and elaboration by Marks in *The Skin of the Film* (2000). Though not within the remit of this chapter, an exploration of Meillassoux's definition of the arché-fossil and Deleuze's elaboration of images that manifest themselves like 'fossiles étrangement actifs, radio-actifs, inexplicables dans le présent où ils surgissent, d'autant plus nocifs et autonomes' (1985, 148) would be a fruitful inquiry for theorising cinema's temporal dimension in relation to Meillassoux's thought and the possibility of a cinematic ancestrality.

that in some way cinema entertains a privileged relationship to the real.[47] Second, I am inspired by the tendency to deploy a sonic vocabulary to reckon with the difficulty of 'access' and to explore how cinema might allow for this, particularly through its unique interplay between the visual and the auditory, an object and its sensuous emissions. Applications of object-oriented ontology or philosophy to the cinematic medium have focussed on film as a visual and material medium, its re-presentation of objects, emphasising the indexical properties of the image and cinema's capacity for a de-hierarchised visual attention to the material world surrounding us. Yet these explorations seem too preoccupied with the visual nature of the cinematic medium, failing to account for the sonic vocabulary present in the work of thinkers situated within an object-oriented critical turn. What forms of attention might cinema ascribe to the nonhuman through noise? This chapter, through a consideration of Foley, both within filmic texts but also in considering the practice of the Foley artist themselves, thinks through the question of nonhuman noise in cinema and its relation to the real.

First, I consider the way Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) uses noise as a means of tuning a viewer-auditor to various nonhuman bodies sounding in the environment of the forest in which the film is set. In particular, I pay attention to von Trier's self-imposed formal constraint in his approach to the Foley work on the film. Every noise present in *Antichrist* is made from something (sticks, grass, flora, fauna) that would be found in the forest where the film is set. This constraint, I argue, breaks down the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, working to create a scattered structure of dynamic relation between species and things by materially eliciting new relationships between different bodies – human and nonhuman. I have chosen *Antichrist* deliberately as an intra-anthropological film, one that takes up nature as its problematic nonhuman interlocutor. I ask to what extent this might be something the film displays a degree of self-consciousness towards, reckoning with the problem of approaching the nonhuman and reflecting the way ascribing it any kind of voice on film might be fraught with problems.

This detailed consideration of *Antichrist* and the issues it develops allows me to move into questions about the practice of the Foley artist more broadly and their own attention to nonhuman noise. I ask whether Foley's inscriptive strategy can be thought of as a form of 'ontography', a term popularised recently by speculative realists such as Bogost and Harman

[47] Such a position is in evidence in numerous early film-theoretical formulations throughout the first part of the twentieth century, such as in the work of Dziga Vertov, Jean Epstein, Bela Belázs or Siegfried Kracauer.

to designate a human work that describes the rich variety of being. These concerns, raised by examining the work of the Foley artist, are then reconsidered once more in a filmic text through a shorter coda on Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012). This film itself foregrounds the process of sound production, Foley and sound technology in ways that attempt to domesticate noise (containing it by making it visual). However, the film's audio-visual economy is exceeded by the wildness of noise that nonetheless escapes the film's reversals and schemas. Like with *Antichrist*, the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound is broken down to productively think through the different degrees of belonging sound propagates across. Considering the use, production of, and attention to nonhuman noise across these three areas of inquiry demonstrates the difficulty of listening to the independent being of a thing and getting beyond entrenched cultural conceptions of the 'outside'. Nonetheless, I suggest that nonhuman noise may indicate a spectrum of the outside by attending to the independent being of a thing as an *excess* beyond what noise inscribes.

ANTICHRIST: HEARING WHAT WE COULD NOT HEAR BEFORE

Antichrist is by all means a horrendous film – even for established enfant-terrible Lars von Trier. Its scenes of extreme and explicit sexual violence, including a brutally visible episode of genital self-mutilation, caused popular critics to dismiss the film as a joke, attributing it one or two stars. One of its more sympathetic reviewers, Rob White – former editor of Film Quarterly – more supportively located the film as follows:

> There are comparisons to be made with the current vogue for "torture porn" horror, but a better initial reference point is a group of 1970s films: *The Night Porter*, *In the Realm of the Senses*, and *Salò*, all of which relate sexual violence to mid-century fascism. *Antichrist*'s concerns are contemporary – gender, ecology, science – and its accomplishment, easy to recognize so long as one is not too distracted by the gore, is to explore these philosophical themes cinematically. (White and Power 2009)

Such common references as In the Realm of the Senses and Salò with Breillat and Noé means that Antichrist could easily sit within the mode of filmmaking I explored in this thesis's first chapter. However, rather than drawing in at close range to a particular, localised body, I am interested in the way Antichrist performs the idea of Deleuze's oreille impossible and makes possible operations of amplification and attunement towards more diffused, deterritorialised bodies, through the film's formal placement of sound.

Scholarly engagements with the film, particularly from feminist critics such as Lori J. Marso, Lisa Downing and Rosalind Galt, have tackled the concern with gender identified by White, reading the film in psychosexual terms and asking whether we should take von Trier's misogyny, sexual violence and problematically gendered narratives at face value. My reading, by contrast, pays attention to the other contemporary concern White identifies, that is, Antichrist's concern with ecology: the relations between different organisms, bodies and their environment which Nancy's vibratory account of the listening subject as corps sonore brings to the fore. My claim is that the film explores this issue through an exploration of listening, itself understood as an ecology of attention, that the film participates in shaping. The film presents different modes of listening as forms of attention, pitting psychoanalytic listening against Charlotte Gainsbourg's character's more immersive, excessive and extreme ear, tuned to nonhuman bodies sounding in the environment.

This attunement to what is outside reflects the film's more local exploration of trauma within the diegesis, itself understood as a kind of interior exteriority. However, it is through the film's attention to nonhuman rustling (Rauschen) through noise, that Antichrist opens onto the possibility of a wilder outside of foreign existences, reaching towards what Meillassoux terms as being 'pleinement ailleurs' (22). From this attention to rustling, I want to ask whether von Trier explores these questions of attunement to the nonhuman 'cinematically' as White claims, by offering a self-reflexive reading of the film that argues that the mode of attention *Antichrist* presents can be compared to cinephilia, itself a form of attention that attends richly to images, movements and details in ways that constitute a particular *way* of perceiving. This turn to cinephilia resonates with the questions regarding spectatorship and attention that I have explored elsewhere in this thesis. By claiming that cinephilia might constitute a way of watching films that is akin to listening, I finally explore *Antichrist's* synaesthetic appeal to us as as listeners through the visual, comparing its use of the close-up with Barker's elaboration of the cosmic zoom (2009b). *However, I query the extent to which the ecology of attention the film shapes can* truly tune us to the nonhuman on its own terms and whether it can escape a human-centred approach. This is not a pitfall that the film falls into blindly. Just as von Trier's clichés of gender should not be taken at face value, nor should his clichés of nature. Within the horror genre, *Antichrist* pushes clichés about women and nature to an extreme, and in doing so, denaturalises the discourses surrounding them.

Antichrist concerns a couple who tragically lose their son in an accident. The opening prologue sequence shows the infant, lured by a floating balloon from which a teddy bear artfully hangs, wandering from his cot and falling from the window while his parents are preoccupied having sex.[48] *In the sequence, we see a shot revealing*

[48] Bonnie Honig and Lori J. Marso have remarked on von Trier's reliance on and abuse of cliché, both cinematic and social, to inhabit and deconstruct discourses from the inside (2016). Galt in her own discussion of *Antichrist*, identifies this moment as one of cliché: 'The association of an imperiled infant with balloon and teddy bear also

that the sound on his baby monitor is muted. Likewise, there is no diegetic sound present in the prologue. Instead, the soundtrack is filled with the celestial tones of a soprano voice singing Georg Frederick Handel's 'Lascia ch'io pianga' from Rinaldo. Attention is clearly elsewhere, signalled through this formal suppression of sound. The sequence is shot in extreme slow motion, using a high-speed camera that shoots between 600-1000 frames per second. The bodies are lit beautifully in black and white. Von Trier refers to this sequence in the DVD commentary as the film's 'Monumental Style'. Its high aestheticism and extreme beauty makes the sequence appallingly watchable, such that, as viewers and listeners, we might not quite register what we are seeing or hearing in ways that recall the delayed processing of traumatic experience.

From this traumatic vision, the film moves into its 'realist style' which resembles von Trier's more well-known, rougher mode, with diegetic sound, close-miking, time cuts and a handheld camera. It follows the attempts of the husband (Willem Dafoe), a psychiatrist, trying to cure the mother, his wife, (Charlotte Gainsbourg) of her grief. The characters have no names but appear in the credits as He and She. Believing he should expose the woman to the place where she feels fear, they go to 'Eden', a forest, to stay in the cabin where she spent the previous summer with their son trying to write up her thesis on Gynocide. He believes that exposing her to her fears will help her overcome her depression, anxiety and grief. In the woods, relations unravel as the husband makes discoveries about their child's death and her thesis.

The film draws attention to noise and listening through the woman's heightened sensitivity to the forest around her: 'Now I can hear what I could not hear before' Gainsbourg's character announces at one point as the noise of falling acorns patter on the roof above their heads 'the sound of all the things that are dying'. In a similar vein to this sensitivity, she also describes a tree on route to the cabin as having 'some strange kind of personality, I've always felt that'. Her tuning-in to the vibrant sounding of the forest around her is opposed to the man's psychoanalytic listening predicated on distance which the camera participates in constructing by playing with and reconfiguring the distances between patient and listener, husband and wife, with shifting focus and framing. Such a moment occurs strikingly as the couple lie in bed and the camera shifts focus during their discussion to mark the transition from the two of them addressing each other as intimate partners to them adopting the new identities of patient and listening psychoanalyst. Antichrist consciously works to undermine his rational approach, and his suspicious form of psychoanalytic listening under the sign of Hermes – deaf to the noises she tunes in to – is one of the ways the film does so. Rather, Antichrist seems keen to elicit a mode of spectatorship in the listener that aligns with the attention of Iris, goddess of the iridescent and overflowing excess. Indeed, Galt argues that this is something von Trier is keen to do across the Depression Trilogy, whereby the spectator is punished for at times identifying with von Trier's male characters' rationalism, liberalism or humanist positions. In Nymphomaniac, for example, Seligman who has been the sympathetic listener to Joe's story of nymphomania

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mocks the visual clichés of news media tragedy, so that our straightforward narrative concern is undermined by our ironic awareness of its 'think of the children' manipulation' (2016, 82).

throughout the film and inserted her behaviour into an intelligible sex-positive feminist reading 'proves to be the false face of misogyny, as he tries to rape her as she sleeps' (Galt 2016, 79). By contrast, von Trier frequently uses his female protagonists and their engagement with various media to reflect on the modes of spectatorship his films themselves demand. I have argued elsewhere how Selma's engagement with the musical and her way of listening to the world around her in *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), for example, provides a model for our own engagement with von Trier's revision of the musical genre (Talijan 2017). In *Antichrist*, Gainsbourg's extreme listening attention, and her ability to 'hear what I could not hear before' becomes the starting point for thinking about the way the film appeals to and constructs a spectator's own listening.

SOUNDING BODIES

The principle means through which Antichrist tunes our attention and opens out the relations between different bodies is through the work on Foley and creation of custom sound-effects for the film. Von Trier frequently likes working within formal constraints, as is clear from his involvement in founding the Dogme 95 manifesto, as well as his film The Five Obstructions made with Jørgen Leth (2003).[49] *In the DVD commentary to Antichrist, a section explaining the approach to the sound design tells of von Trier and* Kristian Eidnes Andersen*, his sound designer, creating sounds by running horse hairs along twigs, from blades of grass, from the sound of an anvil (which we later see in the workshop next to the couple's cabin) etc. The sounds of these nonhuman bodies are then attached to the body of something else on screen, creating a scattered structure of dynamic relations between things in the forest. Rather than sound pointing to its source, producing a coincident identity between body and sound, the sound design creates a less localisable and more diffused dispersal of noises of things across the body of the film. Here, it is not only that noises come from beyond the frame to produce an asynchronicity that evokes an 'elsewhere', as was the case in chapter two, but that Antichrist materially elicits new, unheard relationships between bodies existing in its environment, bringing them together within the shared space of the film.*

This approach to the sound design reconfigures the boundaries between what is traditionally considered diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Though the noises are (strictly speaking) non-diegetic, in that they do not emit from the scene itself, they are nonetheless an amplification of something located somewhere in the forest. And were the film taking the woman's ear as its point or place of audition, we would indeed be hearing the 'sound of what I could not hear before'. However, a particular point of audition is not intimated and we might consider it instead a mode of attention. It is in this manner that the film solicits us as listeners as our field of audition is expanded.

[49] Here, von Trier challenged fellow Danish-filmmaker Jørgen Leth to remake his film *The Perfect Human* (1967) five times, each time limited by a different aesthetic constraint or obstruction. These included remaking the film in Cuba with no shot lasting more than 12 frames, remaking the film in the worst place in the world but not showing that place on screen, and remaking the film as a cartoon.

What is interior to the film or exterior to it becomes unstable as everything begins to sound from beyond the horizon of the film's frame, between and across different bodies, human and nonhuman. Antichrist amplifies the bodies sounding in the forest, drawing these bodies into abstract de-territorialised relations, producing an assembly of voices as the noise of one thing is attached to the noise of another, reconfiguring the distribution of beings. Noise, once detached from its source body, is made either expressive or strange by the body it comes to attach to on screen.

This produces a flattened, de-hierarchised distribution of relations between humans and things – for the film does not construct sound according to a spatial field that would have a stable, Cartesian subjectivity at its centre, dictating things like spatial depth, proximity, distance etc.[50] *Rather, the sound design shapes our hearing according to an impossible ear, one that does not exist at a single point in space or time. The noises in Antichrist explode any mappable geography of the forest. This use of diegetic-non-diegetic sound does not indicate a space from beyond the frame that we could cognise without necessarily seeing – we do not know what it is we are listening to. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the sounds are offering us something pre-conceptual. In many ways, von Trier is playing with the conventions of the horror sound-track yet departing from them by remaining within the formal constraints that his cinema so often imposes on itself, producing the sounds of credibly local bodies to the forest. I shall return to von Trier's use of cliché and genre later.*

As such, the noises of Antichrist work to displace a human-centeredness that is arguably nonetheless retained in Gatlif and des Pallières' approaches to noise. The film immerses us in its dense massings of noises without making us conscious of their sources. Noises are dispersed across the film onto other bodies such that they become mixed up with one another. In this way, Antichrist also stages the way noise attests to different degrees of belonging – of various grouping and gatherings within an 'interior', in this case the interior is the image, as the film brings together, with different degrees of coincidence, bodies alongside one another. A striking instance of the spacelessness of sound occurs when the woman is asked to describe the moment she became scared in Eden. She says she 'heard a sound'... The film transitions to a flashback, or possibly a more Freudian screen-memory which covers over the actuality of what happened, showing recollections from the previous summer when she was at the cabin alone with their son Nick. Gainsbourg's character is sitting working at the table when she becomes alert to the sound of Nick crying. The sound is such that it appears to have no real location in the world of the film, but the world of the film itself appears spatialised, containing the child's cries. She runs around, searching for Nick, but when she discovers him, he is not making any noise. His cries echo through the forest from

[50] *Such a flattening of relation continues in von Trier's later film in the Depression Trilogy, Melancholia (2011). Christopher Peterson, in an article that examines Melancholia alongside Gravity (2013) to offer a critique of speculative realism, argues that both these films 'direct our attention toward the nonhuman things that inhabit our world. Although cinema always depicts things, these two films remarkably horizontalize the relation between human and thing, as well as call into question the privileged position from which the human judges the relative significance of things' (Peterson 2016, 390).*

nowhere, reverberating from frame to frame, shot to shot, as if the image itself were a resonant container in which the child's cries were bouncing about like an unanchored voice within its diegetic receptacle.

We can thus understand Antichrist as an example of the Nancean corps sonore – a place of resonance that spreads, in a 'double, quadruple ou sextuple ouverture' (2002, 33) across plural singular bodies in the logic of spacing that governs Nancy's thought more broadly. In Antichrist, spectator (and arguably the film itself) become a space of listening, absorbing without cognising, the frequencies and murmurings of those bodies sounding that make up the film's ecology. *As such, the film arguably instantiates Nancy's call to* understand as voice *'ce qui sonne d'une gorge humaine sans être langage, ce qui sort d'un gosier animal ou d'un instrument quel qu'il soit, voire du vent dans les branches: le bruissement auquel nous tendons ou prêtons l'oreille' (2002, 45). These named examples are interesting, as Antichrist elsewhere prioritises human sounds that have been stripped of recognisably human language as well as the rustling noise of the wind in the trees which I will consider in detail. In this space of resonance, human, animal and thing intermingle; they form the 'bruissement auquel nous tendons ou prêtons l'oreille'.*

For example, slightly extending the parameters of von Trier's formal constraint, Antichrist does not only use nonhuman noises in its sound design, but equally draws out noise from the interior of the human body. Andersen *swallowed a microphone to capture sounds from his body's interior. Hearing the interior of the body is arguably even stranger than seeing it. The relation between subject and object is so much more appropriable to seeing than to hearing. Thus the film creates a sense of the nonhuman within the human, evoking an alien interior that might suggest the possibility of an unknowable exteriority, or equally resonate with Antichrist's more local concern and exploration of trauma as a kind of interior exteriority. Another instance of the use of unrecognisable human sounds involves the voice of the soprano singer whose melodic tones were heard singing Handel's aria in Antichrist's black-and-white prologue. These are later taken down several octaves to create a voice that is 'not recognisable as a human voice' (*Andersen *2009) slowing the voice into abstract, unrecognisably human drones which manifest themselves in the soundtrack as Dafoe's character discovers the research material his wife had started collecting the previous summer. Noise is thus used in such a way that aims to move beyond a human-nonhuman binary – opening out towards a spectrum of the outside, be it trauma or some wilder exterior, creating a space of resonance that reveals the nonhuman in the human and the human in the nonhuman.*

NATURE, CLICHÉ

Yet through its forest setting, Antichrist by no means takes us away from the human, even if its formal placement of sound deterritorialises the bodies 'situated' in the forest. Clearly, the film's attunement towards the nonhuman as exteriority is not to be found by virtue of its setting but, as I outlined in the previous section, in its assembly

*and formal composition. While we may say that Antichrist makes palpable an aspect of the nonhuman by allowing us to perceive the voices of these bodies, the perception it offers is nonetheless a translation, one that does not offer a full path towards thinking or perceiving the nonhuman such that it does not become for us. The film manipulates these sounds. Its use of sound effects, its slowing down the speed of noises such that they change octave etc., may not be an intellectual translation of the nonhuman, but it is an affective one, communicating the simultaneous thrill and horror of the forest that has held the imagination since the eighteenth century. After all, the forest is a stereotype. It is a common setting for horror films or films borrowing from the horror genre such as The Blair Witch Project (*Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999*), Innocence (*Lucile Hadžihalilović, 2004*), Un Lac (Philippe Grandrieux, 2008). And von Trier even chose to remain in the forest for his subsequent film Melancholia (2011).*

Far more than a site of nature therefore, the forest is established by the film as a site of culture and of human-projection. The fear the forest inspires, for example, is firmly designated to be a psychological one. Early on in the film, the forest literally appears as a projection of the mind during a hypnotism sequence in which the man asks the woman to visualise being there. Likewise, the final scene where Dafoe's character stumbles out from the forest is shot using the same visual grammar as Gainsbourg's earlier vision, suggesting perhaps that he is stumbling around within her mental landscape. Antichrist's heavy-handed symbolism led film-critic Pablo Villaça, *writing for rogerebert.com, to describe the film as the 'wet dream of any psychiatrist'. Villa*ça *argues that* "'Antichrist" soon establishes the connection between the forest and the impulses and primal fears of human beings, in a logic comparison between human nature and Nature itself' *(2011). Yet the forest, as an exterior that the film so relationally establishes, nonetheless provides a productive counter-current against my attempts to explore how the film might work to amplify nonhuman noise. The discussion must contend with, and even be undercut by, this tension and in doing so, keeps faith with the difficulty and fraught project of tackling the nonhuman on its own terms.*

For both Marso and Downing, who contend with von Trier's use of cliché, stereotype and blatancy with regards to the portrayal of women and gender, argue this works to dismantle or make visible the discourses of gender implicit in culture. For example, Downing argues that:

> the focus in *Antichrist* on the ascription of sin and guilt to female sexuality through centuries of theologically enshrined misogyny is not naturalized in the film. Rather, misogyny appears at the *surface*, as an *object* of scrutiny, rather than as unconscious motive or motif. (2011, 56-57)

Similarly, Marso argues that the affect of cliché is ennui. She believes that von Trier's films work by 'intensifying clichés of gender, power, and politics in ways that ironize them and may

usefully press democratic and feminist theory in new directions, perhaps even releasing us from the ennui that is often associated with the practice of theory today' (2016, 2). Can this reading of von Trier's engagement of gender be extended to his engagement with nonhuman nature? Must the fact he chooses such an intra-anthropological nonhuman interlocutor necessarily mean we read *Antichrist* as a failed text in this respect? Or rather, might von Trier, by inhabiting the stereotypes of nature so sincerely, productively reveal and denaturalise the relationally-defined exterior of the forest, rebutting the film's own positing of the forest as a *Grand Dehors*?

Marso's reading of gender offers a pathway through to thinking the film's appeal to what she labels 'foreign existences' in a language that recalls Meillassoux's 'terre étrangère' (2006, 22). Taking Simone de Beauvoir's reading of Sade as her starting point, Marso argues that 'via a fascination with the feminine, von Trier seizes on foreign existences such as the aberrant, the grotesque, and the excessive as his film urges us to feel our way towards something else' (2016, 47). She goes on 'most important in the film, foreign existences move within, throughout, and beyond the human: they include women who are grotesque within the patriarchal frame, a vibrant and pulsing nature in which animals and plants morph with the human and attempt to communicate, and human bodies in the grips of excessive emotion and pain'. Following Marso's argument, it appears that it is precisely by inhabiting the clichés of the nonhuman contained in nature and the forest that von Trier opens out to these foreign existences and may indeed give us 'le sentiment justifié d'être en terre étrangère – d'être, cette fois, pleinement ailleurs' (2006, 21-22).

A brief elaboration concerning horror as a genre would be useful here. Von Trier's films frequently work by inhabiting and subverting popular genres. Dancer in the Dark (2000) inhabited the musical, Antichrist constituted his foray into horror, while his future project The House that Jack Built (2018) is his take on the serial-killer genre. What characterises von Trier's appeal to generic conventions is his lack of suture, his refusal to secure these conventions within the codes that stabilise their meanings.[51] *Von Trier claims he chose to work with horror for Antichrist because of the strangeness of the images and sounds that horror can accommodate within its principles. In interview he stated* 'the genre [is such] that you can put a lot of very, very strange images in a horror film' (Macaulay 2009). *If genre is considered to be a system of rules and principles that govern a text, then horror as a genre, accommodates and arguably necessitates images that are in some sense exterior to that system, that appear strange or foreign within it. As such, we might consider it a genre able to accommodate degrees of exteriority.*

[51] For a more developed discussion of this lack of code see Talijan 2017.

Galt, whose analysis also touches on von Trier's engagement with horror conventions, argues exactly this with regards to the scene of the woman's genital self-mutilation:

> In one sense, the shot follows horror conventions around graphic bodily violence but it also breaks convention by literalizing what is repeated over and again in horror cinema as metaphor but *never* shown so explicitly: the bodily punishment of desiring women. Instead of titillating audiences with the sexualized violence that punishes female pleasure, von Trier cuts to the chase, as it were, forcing us to look directly at the excision of female sexual pleasure by way of violence. (2016, 80)

Antichrist takes the strange images that von Trier sees as characteristic of the genre to an extreme, such that they become foreign. This has even led critics to question the film's sincerity. 'What genre does *Antichrist* belong in?' asks Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian* 'Scary movie? Extreme horror? Psychological drama? None of the above. It is a practical joke, an exquisitely malicious hoax, a superbly engineered wind-up – disguised as a film. Borat and Brüno have got nothing on Lars von Trier' (Bradshaw 2009). If horror is a loose and more accommodating genre, it seemingly cannot contain von Trier's 'strange images' or foreign existences which arguably operate as exterior to horror's system of codes and conventions. In rebuffing classification, *Antichrist* offended.

Dafoe's encounter with the talking fox could be thought to constitute the film's most notoriously 'foreign existence'.[52] *In the undergrowth, Dafoe's character discovers an autophagic fox who turns to the camera and speaks the words 'Chaos Reigns' in a comically slowed-down drawl. It was at this point that many audience members either laughed, booed or exited the cinema at its Cannes screening. Considered by many critics as ridiculous or a joke, the talking fox could be thought to have elicited nervous laughter in its audience. Yet for Galt, it is the tableau-like rendering of the fox's image that works to unsettle a spectator's viewing position:*

> The nature scenes transgress the picturesque, which is both an image defined by looking like an image and, historically, a mode of envisioning non-human nature designed to please and reassure the aristocratic spectator. These [von Trier's] tableaux retain the ability to look like an image, forcing the spectator to encounter them as embedded representations rather than as unmediated visions of the world, but rather than reassure they destabilize patriarchal visuality. (Galt 2016, 85)

[52] *Von Trier claims he met the talking fox on a shamanic journey and the fox demanded to have a line included in his next film (Crocker and von Trier 2009).*

Von Trier pushes the picturesque to excessive proportions. Rather than touching at the limit of exteriority simply by way of horror, it is arguably the moments in which Antichrist strays deepest into, and thus furthest from, the conventions of the horror genre that it comes closest to indicating an outside that truly impinges. As Galt puts it 'A talking fox is definitively not reassuring, but its portentous excess is also potentially funny, puncturing the seriousness of masculinist Nature discourse'.

While the setting of the forest may be a stereotype that undercuts the possibility of the film indicating a non-relational *Grand Dehors* in the way Meillassoux conceives, von Trier's deliberately intra-anthropological cliché and self-reflexive engagements with the image-making of horror and nature nonetheless work to transport a viewer to more foreign territories. It is this attention to von Trier's self-reflexivity and his cinematic self-consciousness that I take forward now. While the self-reflexivity of the image remains within cliché in order to undercut the possibility of attunement to the nonhuman on its own terms, making visible the discourses that surround the nonhuman, I argue that it is via the auditory index, particularly the rustling noise of the wind in the trees and its history in the place of cinema, that may constitute *Antichrist's* potential perforation of the image that would open out to such wilder existences.

RAUSCHEN, OR LEAVES + TREES

Like Meillassoux's hierarchy for different degrees of what might be 'dehors', Antichrist seems to inscribe and make image of a hierarchy of exteriority. This is diagrammed by the film itself in the form of a pyramid that the husband makes to represent her fears (Figure 18).

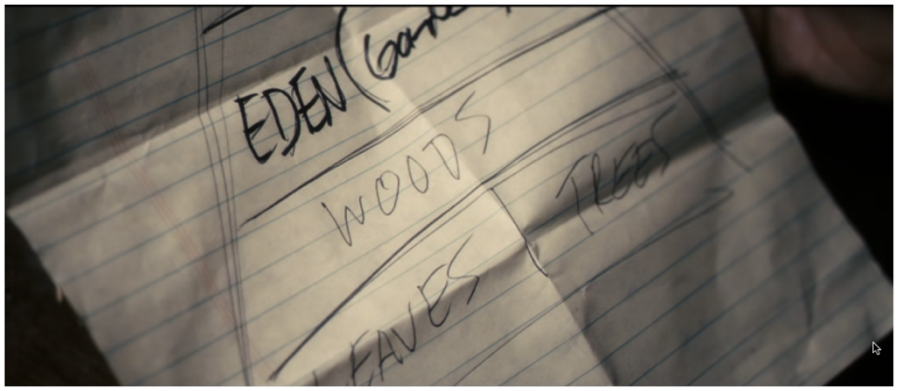


Figure 18. A diagram to represent the levels of the woman's fears

Though the diagram wants to imply that there is something 'greater' lurking behind or governing each fear, it might be at the material and primary level of 'leaves + trees' that

Antichrist comes closest to marking off an outside in excess of, or beyond, itself and what it presents. *Antichrist* restores the auditory dimension of the leaves in the trees by emphasising the rustling (*Rauschen*) noise of this phenomenon. Alongside her claim that the woman can now 'hear all the things she could not hear before', in several shot-reverse-shots we see Gainsbourg's character leaning into the world, captured by the image and sound of rustling, of the wind's sensuous ripple moving through the leaves in the trees (Figure 19).[53] Similarly, Dafoe's attention is also continuously caught by rustling noises in the tall grass before he encounters the animal omens: the doe and the fox (Figure 20). *Antichrist* continually tunes us to the sensuous and insignificant through the space it leaves for rustling.



Figure 19. Tuning us to the sensuous and insignificant



Figure 20. Dafoe's attention is led by the announcement of rustling

A concern for rustling (Rauschen), for noise, appears as an acoustic image in Hegel's encyclopaedia:

> Yet one can still hear the German language praised for its wealth of particular expressions for particular sounds – rustle, whiz, creak, etc. Possibly a hundred or more of these have been collected, and new ones can be coined at will on the spur of the

[53] This is carried forward in *Nymphomaniac* (2013) where father and daughter also seem to sensuously merge with the rustling fluttering of the trees above them.

> moment, but such a superabundance in respect of what is sensuous and insignificant ought not to be regarded as contributing to what constitutes the resources of a cultured language. (1978, 181).

Hegel believed that art and philosophy should excise the ramifications of the world: '[N]othing is to enter the work of art except what belongs to the appearance and essentially to the expression of this content alone; nothing is to be otiose or superfluous' (1998, 18). *Rauschen* – as it appears in Hegel's encyclopaedia – implies the idea that philosophy depends on silencing the residual noise of language.[54] Thomas Pfau argues that *Rauschen* was a frequent motif in Romantic poetry standing as a figure for the materiality of language. 'Eichendorff's primal "rustling" (rauschen) refuses to be partitioned according to Saussurean concepts of "acoustic image" and "concept." For here the acoustic image functions strictly on its own behalf, and not as the vehicle for some abstract sense' (Pfau 2005, 255). In a dual and paradoxical movement, *Rauschen* therefore marks out what is in excess of language at the same moment as it inscribes itself in meaning, as a simultaneous operation of presence and withdrawal. As such, rustling could be seen as testifying to the excess of the independent being of the thing, beyond the human, even as it manifests itself *for us* as language. Represented on screen (or in poetry in Eichendorff's case) rustling is domesticated into an image, but in its rendering as image, it nonetheless marks off as outside something in excess of that image.

Nancy calls this moment *exscription,* the process by which sense (as signification) marks off what is in excess of it. James lucidly summarises exscription as 'the relation of exteriority, or separation which is maintained between impenetrable matter and bodily sense, and between bodily sense and linguistic signification' (2006, 149). For Patrick ffrench, this is the 'relation between literature and the real, between language and the world, which can displace and interrupt the logic of mimesis' (2005, 111). Though Nancy is discussing writing in particular, exscription is a process at work in every image, including an acoustic one. His theory of exscription is useful for the way it allows us to account for how images themselves play a role in accounting for the independent being of a real that weighs behind the representations we have of it, outside writing. For Nancy, therefore, an image is opaque, but not completely. *Antichrist's* 'making-image' of exteriority – the tableau-like talking fox or the literal making-diagram in the pyramid above – exscribes the real exteriority of *Rauschen*. While we cannot see beyond the image, one of the things we can sense is an indication of its beyond.

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[54] As already mentioned, such silencing in favour of a pure and reasoned language is something those occupying or representing a humanist position (most often embodied by the male character) in von Trier's films are often punished for throughout the Depression trilogy.

The opposition between expression (art) and superfluous, otiose detail (nature) found in Hegel's entry has a rich history in film theory under the guise of the cinematic index. Cinema has been variously understood as breaking down the Kantian distinction between art and nature. Yet if film indexes or lets in the ramifications of the world, the rustling, sensuous and insignificant material superabundance, film theory (responding to silent film), perhaps cemented the cinematic index as visual, and the 'rustling' or '*bruissement auquel nous tendons ou prêtons l'oreille' (Nancy 2002, 45)* of the world that caused Hegel anxiety, lost its auditory quality.

Noise (as Chion claims) is the repressed part of film and outcast of theory. The visual nature of rustling is often taken as a representative case of the indexical nature of film. This is exemplified in the anecdote about audience reactions to the Lumières' film *Le Repas de Bébé* (1895), and their preoccupation with the visual rustling of leaves in the background of the image. The anecdote about the wind in the trees, so fruitful for theorising the cinematic index, seems to have been stripped of its acoustic nature, as nature found itself represented in the cinematic image 'prise sur le fait'. But ideas that the indexical quality of film did away with the Kantian distinction between nature and art, overlooks the way these early cinematic images repressed the real exteriority of *Rauschen*. The auditory impoverishment of cinema's inscription of the world is melancholically felt in Maxim Gorky's spooked observations as he exited from the screening in the Kingdom of shadows in 1986: 'Noiselessly, the ashen-grey foliage of the trees sways in the wind' (1996, 5). 'Leaves + Trees', marked at the bottom of the man's pyramid, would appear to hold a particular place in the history of cinema. As a film, *Antichrist* restores the auditory dimension to the wind in the trees; the film not only includes pointed images and sounds of the wind in the trees, it also references a nature without noise, recalling Gorky's anxious statements.

This occurs when the woman is asked to visualise arriving in the forest. Her mental projection manifests itself as a screen image. Her voice manifests itself as voiceover to the image which depicts the woman shot from long-distance, walking in slow motion through the forest. The colour palette of the shot is a blue-infused black and white; her skin looks pale, silvery and ghostly (Figure 21). The visual grammar of the scene – its speed and colour – strains towards the same visual grammar that characterised the prologue of *Antichrist*, a section which also saw the suppression of noise. 'No birds can be heard' she says 'the water is murmuring without a sound'. With its emphasis on the noiselessness of nature, the image feels like a spectral ghost of Gorky's early cinema, conjured through the image of a nature without noise.



Figure 21. The woman's vision of a nature without noise

What I wish to suggest by referencing all these instances of early cinema's attention to the rustling of leaves in trees is a sense of how this attention is bound up with the history of cinephilia. Rather than reading Gainsbourg's character as demonstrating an irrational and unreasoned portrayal of femininity, I would suggest rather that she represents a cinephilic subjectivity, an open channel who displays an extreme form of attention to the world around her. Cinephilia is a way of watching film that arises, in *Antichrist*, as way of being in the world. More specifically, it arises through the way the film tunes us to the nonhuman, though its spectrum is limited to the sensuous abundance of nature, such as the forest or the stems of flowers rotting in a vase. Gainsbourg's character has abandoned a distanced, meaning-directed stance toward the world, one seeking reason and order. Instead, she is in an indiscriminate, resonant relation with everything surrounding her, attuned to the voices and noises of the forest, a *corps sonore*, and the channel through which von Trier can create a cinephilic subjectivity in his spectator.

Christian Keathley, in his historicisation of cinephilia suggests a relationship of equivalence between cinephilia as a disposition (a love of marginal and fleeting details) and the cinematic anecdote of the wind in the trees that seems to exemplify it. These anecdotes and the mode by which this cinephilic disposition makes itself known involves noting tiny details in an image. Examining writings by cinephiles, Keathley's book outlines and theorises something called the 'cinephilic moment', which has helpfully been defined elsewhere by Paul Willeman as when 'what we see is in excess of what is being shown' (1994, 235). This language of excess – once again demonstrating film theory's time-honoured concern of cinema's perception of the imperceptible – resonates strongly with the fantasies of Deleuze's *oreille impossible*, or the ambitions of the speculative realists.

Object-oriented ontology argues objects and their 'real' essence withdraw from us interminably. We cannot know them as they are. Yet this does not mean that there is not a politics attached to attempting to expand the categories of existence and to grapple with what is in excess of our knowing. For the speculative realists, the value of this task lies in the very fact that we cannot know. Bogost describes it as follows:

> When we ask what it means to be something, we pose a question that exceeds our own grasp of the being of the world. These unknown unknowns characterize things about an object that may or may not be obvious – or even knowable. The accusations of 'naive realism' that sometimes accompany such a position – claims that the world is just how we perceive of or know it – manage little reproach, for the problem of the being of the udon noodle or the nuclear warhead consists precisely in the ways those objects exceed what we know or ever can know about them. (Bogost 2012, 30).

Both the cinephile and the speculative realist confront the surface of the world, obsessively noting the udon noodle, or Cary Grant's socks in *North by Northwest* (1959), with a disposition that strains towards something in excess of what we see.

Cinephilia would seem to name a moment of joying in the detail of an image (be it acoustic or visual) as an object *for* one's consciousness (thus making the disposition a highly correlational one). However, in the way Keathley analyses the language of the cinephilic anecdote, it becomes clear that it is also a disposition in which, while one attends to a detail, one is equally seized by it.[55] The cinephilic moment thus involves an abdication of will and is inexplicable in terms of representation, or traditional systems of consideration. In many ways, it also compares with LaBelle's dual operation of unfolding and enfolding that he identifies in the acoustic. The cinephilic moment, as a disposition of being in the world, is a kind of *leaning into the world* – a disposition reaching beyond its surface, seeing or hearing in excess of it – while also being *punctured or seized by* the force of a detail, a movement, a gesture. Both the cinephilic moment and speculative practice then involve a disposition of abdication and attentiveness, to the excess of the independent being of a thing. Cinephilia could name a way of watching and listening to films, of receiving the world, that would tune us to the nonhuman, not unlike the task Bogost outlines for the speculative realist: 'As philosophers, our job is to amplify the black noise of objects to make the resonant frequencies of the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways' (34).

[55] Keathley compares the cinephilic moment to Roland Barthes' *punctum.*

However, it is a mistake to be taken over by the visual emphasis Keathley bestows on cinema and the cinephilic moment. Instead, we should consider the different forms of attention that watching and listening imply. Listening names both *listening* and *perceiving* and as such speaks more broadly about forms of attention than in just the auditory register. As Nancy describes, listening names an attentiveness that involves being on the edge of meaning. It involves straining towards a 'sens possible, et par conséquent non immédiatement accessible' (2002, 19). As listening, in the way Nancy elaborates it, names a disposition that is characterised most readily in the auditory register but is not limited to it, we could consider cinephilia (even if it names a way of 'watching') a form of intense and excessive attention, and thus a form of listening. Nancy claims:

> Écouter, c'est entrer dans cette spatialité par laquelle, *en même temps,* je suis pénétré: car elle s'ouvre en moi tout autant qu'autour de moi, et de moi tout autant que vers moi: elle m'ouvre en moi autant qu'au dehors, et c'est par une telle double, quadruple ou sextuple ouverture qu'un 'soi' peut avoir lieu. (33, emphasis in original)

Thus the cinephilic subjectivity that von Trier places at the centre of his film might be a way of listening to the nonhuman. *Rauschen*'s auditory dimension is restored, both through foregrounding the noisiness of the 'Leaves + Trees', but also through eliciting listening as a mode of attention encapsulated in the woman's resonant relation to the world around her that recalls the cinephilic moment – exemplified by the anecdote of the wind in the trees. I now want to elaborate further the synaesthetic dimensions I have just touched on – showing how watching might constitute a form of listening – through close readings of several instances where *Antichrist* displays a mode of visuality that is more akin to listening.

CLOSE UPS AND ZOOMS

The final aspect in which von Trier's film seeks to tune us cinematically to the nonhuman is through his use of visual and auditory extreme close-ups. The close-up has, at many moments, been understood as a truly cinematic expression and von Trier's use of them could again point to a desire to engage with the fundamental building blocks of cinema. However, his use of extreme visual close-ups eschews traditional ways the close-up has been famously theorised by, for example, Deleuze. I argue that they operate in line with an auditory logic, with the close-up marking out the shifts in attention of the ear.

Here, I will discuss one close-up in detail, though others of a similar nature are found throughout *Antichrist*. A vase of flowers sits on the hospital bedside of the woman (Figure 22). They sit as part of the background, slightly to the left of the frame. Suddenly, the camera re-centres them, a new audio channel is opened in the sound mix and an indeterminate whorling noise enters the frame. The camera moves towards the vase. It moves from a relative distance, a mid-shot, to an extreme-close up, such that the object (the flowers' stems) become abstractions (Figure 23). Their surface seems to be sounding as the movement towards the stems is accompanied by a strange, grumbling low frequency tone that changes slightly in pitch and quality as we approach.



Figure 22. The vase before the film shifts attention



Figure 23. von Trier's image listens to the flowers' stems

The movement is both a zoom and a close-up, not purely optical but also kinetic. As such, we can consider it synaesthetic in the manner outlined by Barker with regards to what she calls the 'cosmic zoom' (2009b). The cosmic zoom hovers between optical and kinetic movement and thus, according to Barker, performs synaesthetic perception itself. She writes:

> indeed, the cosmic zoom's undulating movement makes a different kind of sense, phenomenologically, if we consider the cosmic zoom as an act of hearing rather than

> solely or primarily a visual experience for, as Dura describes it, 'sound requires motion, and, being so fluid, it is less amenable than is sight to representation, scrutiny, grasp. (318)

Von Trier's zoom is initiated alongside the opening of the noise channel. His plunge towards extreme close-up explores the surface of things and brings into audibility their inaudible sounding. His close-ups take us to the limit of the thing – a limit hovering between interiority and exteriority as the movement takes us towards the seeming sensuous emissions of the flowers' stems. At this extreme proximity, we no longer grasp what we see in ways that characterise the visual register. As already mentioned, such un-masterful modes of looking have typically been tied to the haptic, where the camera is likened to behaving like an organ of touch. However, as we see from Barker's argument, movement can equally translate a different sensory register, vision and movement become auditory. Von Trier's image is listening to the stems. In the example above, the zoom begins from a distance, and then takes us to an extreme proximity, in ways that destabilise the notion of a stable, human spectatorial subjectivity that the haptic still retains at its centre. Instead, we are drawn into the depths of, or mixed up with, the thing presented in the close-up through this movement that plays on the border listening occupies between the proximal and the distant senses. What von Trier's movement displays is a movement of attention – one that suddenly switches register to tune into and listen to the flowers' stems.

The idea of an auditory close-up, even one enacted through the visual, offers a potentially very different proposition from the objectifying operations of 'visagéification' of the visual close up. Deleuze claimed that every close-up works to faceify its object – thus suggesting the close-up performs a kind of anthropomorphism of its object (1983, 126). However, von Trier's close-up does not faceify. It gets *too close* to its material for the image to maintain the two poles of 'surface réfléchissante et micromouvements intensifs' that Deleuze argues produces the result of visagéification (126). It is as if the camera is seeking to push through the close-up, push through its personifying or objectifying stance, and reach beyond it. The zoom, as a type of close-up, is less about the object and more about the movement between subject and object – between kinetic and optical movement, between visual and proprioceptive perception. It 'makes palpable the transitive space and time that exists between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, between interiority and exteriority' (Barker 2009b, 313). Von Trier's close up makes palpable a space of attention between emitter and receiver. Or rather, the axis

or space between listening body and sounding body that makes up a *corps sonore,* as well as the uncertain boundaries between subject and object that sound inscribes.

Of course, we cannot actually see what is 'beyond' the surface of things in these close-up images, yet through noise and the cinematography's auditory intimations, we nonetheless sense an indication of this beyond. First, the auditory nature of the close-up brings a new dimension to the opaque flattened surface of the image. Second, through the behaviour of these zooms – the image's becoming-auditory, or behaving-auditory – the image displays an approach and attentiveness, a disposition or relation which also, through its operation, brings about an indication of this beyond.

In conclusion, *Antichrist* appears to indicate a spectrum of the outside through its appeal to and use of noise. The film constructs an *oreille impossible* through its sound design, one that tunes us to hearing what we could not hear before, rather like Bogost's practice of alien phenomenology that I now go on to discuss in more detail. Through its self-conscious cinematic self-reflexivity, the film restores the auditory quality to cinema's first cinephilic moments, purporting to let in the 'ramifications of the world' and tune into certain ideas of 'raw ungoverned nature', as well as cinema's ability to capture these ramifications. This would seem to suggest the forest is a vehicle that allows for the communication of a primary cinematicity. I have argued that this recalls the attentions and dispositions of cinephilia, an extreme mode of attention more akin to listening, which the film then displays through its synaesthetic operations and cinematography. And yet, all this is always undercut, or at least always at risk of being so.

I wish to return to the matter of the talking fox, already considered in terms of Galt's argument and the picturesque, but think more about its 'voice' on film which is what concerns me here. In a film that includes two instances of genital mutilation and numerous other psychological and sexual violences, it would appear unusual that the talking fox would capture such derided attention in criticism of the film. Does the fox carry a connection to violence? The violence of the fox, should we ascribe its image any, might best be understood under Nancy's definition of violence that I drew upon for thinking about Noé's use of the auditory. For Nancy, violence 'dénature ce qu'elle violente, elle le saccage, elle le massacre. Elle ne le transforme pas, elle lui ôte sa forme et son sens' (2003, 37). The fox certainly does work to denature the human-constructed discourse on the natural and our ways of looking at it. By remaining faithful to clichés, we have seen how von Trier does not transform what he sets out

to assault, rather he takes away its form and meaning. It is at this moment of extremity that we should linger to think about how close the film gets to indicating a *Grand Dehors*.

The fox is arguably central to understanding the film from the position of the nonhuman, for it fixes the problem of the outside as only ever being the outside of oneself. On the one hand, the fox's speaking on film certainly impinges, denatures, undoes, unsettles etc. Yet, like the self-reflexivity of the image asserting itself *as image* through its tableau-like composition, the fox's voice equally draws attention to the ventriloquising operations of the film. The amplification and assembly of voices *Antichrist* enacts, through its sound design or the space it leaves for rustling, is not just a making perceptible. Rather, the perceptibility of these nonhuman noises becomes a translation. This is arguably the fox's merit, for it makes audible *Antichrist's* ventriloquism that we might extend to its other amplifications and assemblages.

By making these operations audible through this hybrid act of VFX-animal training-prosthetic ventriloquism, it refuses us the possibility of naturalising any outside the film may attempt to position as authentic. Even more tellingly perhaps, despite the initial outrage that the fox provoked, it has since become a meme, a unit of cultural production.[56] It has become known through t-shirts, parodies, videos as well as being mixed with other memes of talking foxes, including Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009), released the same year. As such, if *Antichrist* did in any way tune us through noise to deterritorialised bodies, the fox's transition from an image that initially worked to unsettle a spectator to meme and intelligible unit of cultural grammar attests to the way operations of deterritorialisation, in the manner Deleuze outlines, are always followed by a subsequent reterritorialisation. The fox as meme speaks forcefully of the way what impinges can quickly re-embed itself within a new territory. Whatever outside the fox might indicate, once defined, identified, fixed, made image, it becomes incorporated, making a new recto of a verso in a logic that follows the impossible turns of a Möbius strip.

Antichrist, in taking on such a visibly intra-anthropological interlocutor, has revealed the way the noise of any nonhuman body on film risks becoming a translation, by virtue of its being *on film*. Now that this problem is fixed, we can move on to considering an expanded spectrum of things in thinking about the production of sound for film itself. What kind of attention is given to nonhuman bodies through noise before it becomes part of our viewing and listening experience on film? In the section that follows, I continue to pursue the question of whether

[56] Details documenting the fox's transition to the meme 'chaos reigns' can be found on the meme database knowyourmeme.com: http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/chaos-reigns [Last accessed 20 July 2018]

noise can reconfigure our attention to the nonhuman by considering the practice of the Foley artist herself. I ask whether Foley might constitute a practice of alien phenomenology. This speculative realist interrogation of Foley offers a variation on Nancy's thought and allows me a delicate readjustment of his concept of exscription. I argue that Foley, as a practice rather than a product, in its own way, testifies to the excess of the independent being of the thing that I have been exploring in *Antichrist*.

FOLEY, AS ALIEN PHENOMENOLOGY

The Foley artist's sound stage is an empire of things. Consider the following list of objects found in the studio of Roesch and his Foley partner Alyson Dee Moore, at Warner Bros.: 'eye glasses, hinges, can openers, nails, wallets, jewellery, seatbelts, mobile phones, dog chains, door knobs, guns and ammunition, cigarettes and lighters, bowls and plates, umbrellas, currencies, brushes, and a wide assortment of paper and books' (Wright 2014, 214). These things are not there for decoration, nor for use as their design might have intended, but for the way they might sound when brought into contact as one surface against another. As such, this collection of things that the Foley artist's studio contains, brings objects to exist alongside one another in a manner much like the list itself, without the logic of any connective power that would place them in definite or secure relationships.

Wright argues that 'modern Foley practice emphasizes the resonance of even the most pedestrian of props in a method known as adding "life" to objects and materials' (216). His language invites open comparison with that of the speculative realists whose work seeks to expand the categories of existence, and displace the human from its position of centrality. In the following section, I test the alignment between Foley as a mode of writing or describing the nonhuman through noise and 'ontography' as a practice or inscriptive strategy. Does the Foley artist's focus on the expressivity and search for the resonance of things and their interactions offer any kind of parallel to, or indeed constitute, a practice of ontography, as defined by Bogost?

Ontography is in fact just one of the ways Bogost identifies that one may practice an alien phenomenology. The term has dubious fictional origins in a ghost story by Montague Rhodes James but has been used seriously over the twentieth century as a term by a variety of fields including philosophers (Richard F. Kitchener), geographers (Michael Lynch), informaticists (Tobias Kuhn) etc. and was recently lifted from obscurity by Bogost and Harman. Ontography differs from its grand counterpart ontology. Kitschener explains the difference as

follows: 'Ontology is the theory of the nature of existence, and ontography is its description' (1988, 76). If ontography is just the description of existence, Bogost attributes it a political slant by subtitling his chapter on ontography as 'revealing the rich variety of being' (35). Bogost is interested in the way ontographs can underscore the interactions between units that human-centric approaches to the world too often ignore, the way 'pickle dangles across meat patty, salt scuttles from fry, ice milk clings to the inside of plastic straw' (50). He later expands the concept:

> Let's adopt *ontography* as a name for a general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of units and their interobjectivity. From the perspective of metaphysics, ontography involves the revelation of object relationships without necessarily offering clarification or description of any kind. Like a medieval bestiary, ontography can take the form of a compendium, a record of things juxtaposed to demonstrate their overlap and imply interaction through collocation. (38)

Ontographs underscore the rich variety of things, and remind us that humans are only one thing among them. Though it aims to account for things in themselves, without representing them for us, it is worth pointing out that an ontograph, or ontography, does not take place in the absence of a human. It is rather a human work that *accounts for*, *draws attention to*, *illuminates, reveals* or *speculates* on the existence and relationships between objects or entities. I believe Foley, as a kind of writing through noise, goes some way to doing this.

The examples Bogost gives of 'ontographs' are varied and compelling. For example, Bogost argues that the composition of objects found in the work of photographer Stephen Shore, such as *Beverly Boulevard and La Brea Avenue* (1975), 'posit objects, even the objects of human activity, in a world of mysterious relation with one another' (49). Bruno Latour's habit of listing, another example given by Bogost which he affectionately terms 'Latour Litanies', 'remind us that no matter how fluidly a system may operate, its members nevertheless remain utterly isolated, mutual aliens' (40). Lists bring things to exist alongside one another without offering the connective power of language that would place them in definite and secure relationships.

I began above with a list of objects contained in the Foley artist's studio. Lists catalogue, name, or produce a compendium of things as they exist or work in a situation. Listing is, in some ways, simply an act of taking note. The work of the Foley artist begins in this way. Watching a scene without sound, she might begin by cataloguing all the elements present in

that situation, seen or unseen, to which she might ascribe a presence through noise: Cloth on cloth, metal against leather, paper brushing wood – the Foley artist pays attention to things and their interactions. Bogost argues that lists do real philosophical work for they not only 'rebuff the connecting powers of language' – which would situate things in an outside object-world prescribed by language – but they also 'rebuff the connecting powers of being itself' (40). The comma lacks a syntax that would make the relations between things meaningful *for us*, and instead leaves each element to its distinct and separate existence. We can think of the Foley artist's sound stage as one that brings together unfamiliar objects implausibly, inscribing them within its walls like a physical catalogue without branding; yet the Foley artist's studio appears, for us, as a mountain of junk (Figure 24).



Figure 24. Example of a Foley Artist's Sound Stage
Sony Picture Studios Foley Stage B, Culver City, Evan T. Chen Gallery 2010

To practice ontography then, or to create an ontograph, is to account for the existence and relations between things. The notion that 'all things exist, yet they do not exist equally' is the starting point of Bogost's project to practice an alien phenomenology, a task (as I have already emphasised) that Bogost describes as 'amplifying the black noise of objects to make the resonant frequencies of the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways' even as these existences remain irreducibly withdrawn from human consciousness (34). This description seems to strike a chord when considered alongside the performance and work of the Foley artist, who might also be said to amplify the noises of objects, in excess of the way they appear to us, in order to give them a kind of life or resonance on screen.

The Foley artist's performance is one of reconfiguration. She overlooks the design of things, the way they were intended for human use, and connects them in new ways. Her practice relocates our interest to the interaction and relationship *between* things: the way dirt pushes back against a finger that presses slowly against it.[57] She displays a disposition of extreme attentiveness. Her ear searches for and pays attention to the way one handle on a pair of old pliers sounds against its other handle. In this example, the older the pliers the better, for what the Foley artist seeks to make use of is also a history of these pliers' interactions, their particular personality or resistant behaviour. She seeks a noise that contains a specific idea of metal on metal for which new pliers are not nearly noisy enough. An object may be old, it may be broken, but its value is reconfigured for the Foley artist for the ways it interacts and behaves against or with itself, or with something else.

The interactions of these things are eventually destined for another relationship on screen. Sometimes they will attach to the body of another object, sometimes they will attach to the body of a person, or an intentional interaction between the two. In *Antichrist*, for example, the sounding of bodies produced through Foley attach to other bodies on screen, producing new ontographs, unsettling clear distinctions between person and thing, as this positioning cuts across the human-nonhuman binary, redistributing the relations between species and things. Keys nuzzling up against the hide of leather gives life to a wider collection of units on screen which is the policeman's uniform, composed of myriad interactions between cloth, leather, keys, metal, as well as the individual joints and articulations of the moving body inside the uniform, causing cloth to brush against cloth. The dirt pressing back against the pressure of a finger is destined to become the sound of a burning cigarette. And the metal on metal taken from the old pair of pliers becomes the sound of a particular key turning in a particular kind of lock.

But the parallel between Foley artistry and Bogost's elaboration of ontography is extended and complicated when we consider this final stage of interaction that the use of *things* in Foley is destined for; that is, to interact with a third object on screen, which moves the work of the Foley artist closer towards the realm of representation. On the one hand, this third (virtual)

[57] Objects have long held an important role in the practice of performance art. Marina Abramović's piece *Rhythm 0* (1974) is an interesting example of how performance artists work with objects in the performance situation in ways that take us beyond typical subject-object relationships as the body becomes an object, or the performer collaborates with an object. In this piece, Abramović set out a 72 objects on a long table covered with white cloth. All objects entertained a more or less indirect relationship with either pain or pleasure. Observers were invited to 'deploy' any of the objects as they wanted on the artist who claimed 'I am the object. During this period I take full responsibility' (Wood 2010).

object (cop gear, cigarette, lock and key) could be considered simply another addition to the proximate cluster of things, now concrete and virtual, that the Foley artist brings into her orbit and reveals relationships between. In the photograph above of the Foley artist's sound stage, the screen is a visible part of the Foley studio, and the infinite possibility of things that could be projected onto it are also part of its empire. The Foley artist makes an ontograph '[dirt, finger, cigarette]' as one possible operation within the sound stage's walls. On the other hand, this interaction with a third virtual object that produces a syncresis between image and sound could be seen to erase the isolated, mutually alienated nature of each thing as it becomes a representation in which dirt + finger = cigarette. Thus we might say that Foley as a space (the sound stage) and as a practice and disposition (the bringing into contact of surfaces, an attention to the interaction between things) is ontographic, while what it produces as a work, is not.

INTERIORITY OR EXCESS?

This is not the only limitation in the comparison between Bogost's elaboration of ontography and the work of the Foley artist, however. Bogost, like other speculative realists, seeks out an indication of the interiority of things – the 'stuffs inside them'. Even as the ever-withdrawn nature of the thing is acknowledged, the alien phenomenologist might be said to want to have their cake and eat it: to acknowledge things as withdrawn but also 'make the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways' (34). As we have already seen, the practice of the Foley artist and the description of being that she inscribes through sound is less about interiors and more about exteriors and surfaces. Foley is percussive, in the medical sense as well as the musical, whereby a surface is tapped to bring into audibility its underlying structure. In contrast to the desires of the alien phenomenologist however, Foley does not implicate a closed-off but detectable interiority. However, Foley nonetheless attests to the independent being of a thing that is in excess of it.

This is particularly interesting when we consider how Foley is often used as a supplement to sound effects. Indeed, in her book on the craft, Vanessa Theme Amant establishes 'it [Foley] is intended to supplement the sound effects that are edited in' (2009, xiv). Foley can also be used as a 'sweetener' – that is to enhance – those sounds that typically fall under the jurisdiction of sound effects. The split between sound effects and Foley is generally organised as follows: Foley typically might 'be responsible for most footsteps, costume, cloth movement, props and ephemeral elements such as debris, water and dust' while 'doors, explosions, weapons fire and

vehicle engines constitute the domain of sound effects editorial' (Wright 2014, 213). However, Foley might '"sweeten" an explosion with sounds of cascading rubble and cracking concrete, or […] add leathery creaks to a vehicle's interior seating to help sell the age of the car' (213). Sweetening adds emotion and textural 'feel' to the sound effect. As Wright points out, Foley is both 'guarantor of reality' and has a 'role of expressive enhancement' (217). But if Foley, as supplement, sweetens and adds to the 'feel' of a thing, it also represents and makes an image of it, thus constituting a moment of exscription. Foley sound testifies to an excess beyond itself that it insinuates itself in-the-place-of as supplement. This does not mask being, but exscribes it outside of Foley's mode of writing. Being subsists as presence outside the limits of its signification. By exploring the way Foley posits itself as a supplement, we can see one of the ways in which it attests to the excess exscribed of the independent being of a thing.

As much as the sound stage is a weird empire of things brought together in non-intentional relationships, it could also be understood to put things in cages. Alongside its bits and bobs, the sound stage contains 'surface pits' arranged in grids. Small squares contain samples of hardwood floor, sand, water, dirt, linoleum, gravel, asphalt, sheet metal, carpet, tiles etc. Rather like the diagram in *Antichrist,* the grid here – a structure or system of containment of the Foley material – translates as an implication of an inappropriable excessive dimension that cannot be contained. Ament's discussion of the practical problem of dirt in the Foley studio prosaically reveals some measure of this inappropriable dimension:

> Foley stages get dirty. Walking in dirt pits puts dirt in the air. It is essential to have an air conditioner system that cleans the air. After walking in dirt pits for a few hours, the air is unhealthy to breathe, and chances are you cannot work with the air conditioner on because the noise will be recorded, so calculate in your plans how you will manage dirty air. Also, the dirt lands on surfaces, so stages need to be cleaned regularly. This is a real problem in the major film world. Often we are asked to use a stage that someone else is using during another shift. Because there is not enough time to clean between shifts, the dirt accumulates and an unhealthy work environment results. Also, dirt pits become full of bacteria, so the dirt needs to be removed and replaced regularly. (Ament 2009, 69)

However everyday, this draws attention to a disorderly threat within the sound stage's systematisation. The material can overspill its place in the grid. Once again, in the above

quote, we hear a call to manage the units Foley brings together, implying their excessive dimensions.

READY-TO-HAND OR PRESENT-AT-HAND

The language of presence over original design that has been hovering in the background of my discussion, the way the Foley artist repurposes objects for their sound or wishes to assert an object's presence within a scene above its use, can be helpfully separated out by Martin Heidegger's distinction between 'ready-to-hand' *(zuhanden)* and 'present-at-hand' (*vorhanden)*, a distinction that informed Harman's initial outline of Tool-Being in *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002). Heidegger's distinction puts pressure on the idea that the Foley artist's practice might be disinterestedly ontographic. For Heidegger, these terms describe two different attitudes to entities or things. Ready-to-hand characterises the way we usually interact with objects, unthinkingly deploying them in the way they exist for us as humans. The hammer is ready-to-hand in order to bang the nail into the wall. But when the hammer breaks, its *being* becomes apparent, independent of what it is or was for me. This is what Heidegger calls present-at-hand. A present-at-hand attitude is one attending to the being of the object. Its existence is suddenly asserted beyond its function.

The Foley artist's sound stage seems to bring things together in a manner that makes them present-at-hand, overlooking their original design, their existence for humans, to think about how they exist against or alongside and in interaction with each other. Research into the use of objects in performance art has similarly drawn attention to Heidegger's distinction, arguing that object theatre, of which Foley artistry is a kind (albeit being a performance that remains invisible):

> brings everyday objects before audiences to open up potentials beyond utility. We take in an object's duality, both its function in our everyday lives and transformed symbolic identity in performance. In this cultural arena, an object's identity as a hand tool is still intact even as an object is endowed with heightened presence through the hands of performers and apperception of spectators. (Song 2015, 5)

As such we could understand the work of the Foley artist to reveal a flickering oscillation in the object, one undecidably hovering between utility and presence. Often, the alien interactions between things that the Foley artist attends to are re-ascribed to more intentional

actions on screen, and thus their combinations are re-inscribed into a *ready-to-hand* virtual life on screen. Such is the case for the plier handle against the plier handle, which is destined to denote the *ready-to-hand* attitude of a key being turned in the lock.

However, the Foley artist's practice is not simply interested in bringing sound to a human actor's ready-to-hand interaction and extension into the world with things on screen. As Wright points out 'the Foley artist is doing more than simply reproducing a way of walking, or the way a prop is used by a character; they are performing the *feel* of an action' (2014, 215). She may also wish to amplify and bring a certain presence to these objects themselves, independent of any human touch within the scene that would make them speak or sound out. This is because the Foley artist seeks to add an *excess* of sounds to an object, even one we do not necessarily see within the frame, in order to draw attention to its presence. Sound thus opens and invites a disposition which is an attentiveness to the excess of a thing. An example given by Wright is 'chair life':

> a basic wooden chair may creak and bend as a character moves around in it; in a comedy, 'chair life' can be played for laughs to punctuate the weight of a character, while in an interrogation sequence the sound of the chair can be used to amplify the tense exchange between characters. (216)

'Chair life' makes more sound on screen that a real chair might, its existence is at once ready-to-hand but it also seeks to communicate a certain presence-at-hand. Another example given by Wright is the paper that was in fact the letter containing information about the serial killer in the film *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007). This paper needed a particularly customised sound to express its 'paper life', composed of two units interacting: a piece of information, the paper on which it is written. The Foley artist's task was to give a particular 'paper life' to these letters on screen, distinct from how a different letter might sound if it contained a different idea – a love letter for example.

A disposition of attentiveness to the excess of a thing recalls Nancy's own elaboration of film more broadly as structuring our way of looking at the world by providing a 'juste regard'. For Nancy 'la capture d'image est clairement un *ethos,* une disposition et une conduite à l'égard du monde' (2001, 17). Foley artistry is a performance of gestures, of the body, of objects etc. that involves them in a listening that is an extreme attentiveness to the being of things, independent

of their being ready-to-hand. This listening is a particular opening of the ear that demonstrates, following Nancy, a taking care of the real.

THE REAL OR THE RENDERED

The question of the real with regard to Foley is famously developed in Chion's distinction between the real and the rendered, the *réel* and the *rendu*. Chion gives several reasons for favouring a displaced connection between what produces a sound and its final suggested source within a scene. One reason might be practicality: a certain thing is cheaper, or easier to get hold of, or to record, or to contain, or to house on the sound stage. Another reason might be ethical: it is more ethical, Chion claims, to destroy the bulk of a watermelon's round globe-like sphere and tough skin, than to destroy a human head.[58] However, Chion argues that the primary reason is realism. He claims:

> Dans la question de la fonction réaliste et narrative des sons diégétiques (voix, musique, bruits), la notion de *rendu* se distingue de celle de *reproduction*.
>
> Autrement dit, au cinéma, le son est reconnu par le spectateur comme véritable, efficace et adapté, non s'il reproduit le son que fait dans la réalité le même type de situation ou de cause, mais s'il *rend* (c'est-à-dire traduit, exprime) les sensations associées à cette cause. (2017 [1990], 117)

Corn starch thus provides a more 'real' idea about footsteps on snow, than snow itself, while Nylon stockings provide a better rendering of the sound of silk, than silk itself. Referencing Leonardo da Vinci's marvel that sound does not render the fall of a human body, Chion explains:

> il pense non seulement au poids du corps, mais aussi à sa masse, ainsi qu'à la sensation de tomber, au choc que cela fait sur celui qui retombe, etc., bref, à quelque chose qui n'est pas réductible à un message sensoriel simple. (119)

Where, what or whose is the sensorium that Foley's rendering appeals to? What does the 'human touch' of the Foley artist imbue? Arguably, it is an authentication of the rendering.

[58] One might imagine Bogost would want to interject here and point out that 'when we theorise ethical codes, they are always ethics *for us*' (73).

The artist signs the rendering as 'authentic' in a kind of speech act, completing the implied sensorium that Chion describes rendering as appealing to.

Chion's claim that rendering belongs to no sensory channel in particular – that the sound of the fall would also need to contain an impression of weight, mass, the sensation of falling, the jolt of impact etc. – is consistent with the different passages and translations between the senses I have been exploring throughout this thesis. However, this rendering would appear, at least in the case of customised diegetic sounds for conventional narrative cinema, to not escape the bind of correlationism that Bogost suggests ontography reaches beyond. Sounds are *rendered* in Foley in order to correspond to our understanding of what *our* impression of the experience of the fall is. And yet, if the sound of the fall on screen is the sound of a fall *for us*, this nonetheless is suggestive of the way that sound itself indexes the world in ways that do not correspond to the way it appears. The real noise of the fall falls short of the representations we have of it. Or, as Chion puts it 'ce qui sonne vrai pour un spectateur d'un pays, d'un "profil" et d'une époque donnés, et le son qui est vrai sont deux choses différentes' (116). There is something alien to our understanding contained in sound. This is perhaps why anecdotes of the Foley artist's practice are so compelling; that the sound of a cigarette is produced by the sound of dirt pushing back against the pressure of a finger works in some way to undo the representations we have of the world. It brings in alien elements that disrupt our perceived causality between sound and source. In this respect, we can claim sound as an experience that takes us towards a spectrum of the nonhuman as an exterior we cannot relationally define. Nonhuman noise resists recuperation into the object-worlds of consciousness and language.

So perhaps we should trace the operation back in the other direction. Rather than following sound from its source in the Foley studio and moving out to consider its destination on screen, we trace instead sound's return, from this screen back to its source, which in the Foley artist's performance, is revealed as wholly other to it.

RENDERING AS CARICATURE

If the comparison between Foley and ontography doesn't quite flatten the human-nonhuman relation in the way Bogost outlines, it might be more usefully thought according to Bogost's second idea of how one might practice alien phenomenology, that is according to what he terms 'metaphorism'. Here, Bogost reckons with the idea that the only way one can perform 'alien phenomenology is by analogy' (64) and therefore allows a space for correlationism

within his thinking: 'the answer to correlationism is not the rejection of any correlate but the acknowledgement of endless ones, all self-absorbed, obsessed by givenness rather than turpitude' (78). Metaphorism embraces the anthropocentric prism from which we necessarily must encounter the world outside ourselves. In accepting that anthropocentrism is unavoidable, Bogost follows political theorist Jane Bennett in suggesting that anthropocentrism actually 'helps to underscore the differences between ourselves and the objects around us' (65). Bogost argues that metaphorism is useful, for it produces a caricature that helps us make sense of an aspect of something, without erasing the irreducible gap that isolates every object we live alongside in its own private, withdrawn vacuum. Here, Bogost's vocabulary draws extremely close to Chion's theorisation of sound:

> When one object caricatures another, the first grasps the second in the abstract, enough for one to make some sense of the other given its own internal properties. A caricature is a *rendering* that captures some aspects of something else at the cost of other aspects' (66, emphasis my own)

The Foley artist, in her emphasis on rendering, is also producing a caricature, and proceeding via metaphorism. Once again, following Bogost and Jane Bennet, we can see how anthropocentrism actually attests to an excess of the independent being of the thing by underscoring difference. The caricature reaches towards the independent being of the thing precisely in the way it is not represented but exscribed. The Foley artist produces a caricature of cloth life, a rendering. In doing so, she seeks to account for 'cloth life' through sound, in excess of cloth's life in reality. But this produces a caricature that nonetheless reaches towards the idea of the kind of life cloth may have, when we are not paying attention.

Having established how Foley sound might constitute a dimension that is alien to understanding (evidenced through the need to render and translate sound) I want to move back to thinking about the way these issues manifest themselves in a cinematic text and ask what happens when this 'underside' to the image (Foley, the sound studio) is itself taken up within a diegesis. Does noise once again become an object for our consciousness, or does Foley and the sound studio's representation within film retain some of its weird transport?

BERBERIAN SOUND STUDIO (PETER STRICKLAND, 2012)

How to get away from a relationally-defined exterior? This is the question that persists as a problem throughout this chapter in its consideration of noise as a means of attending to the

nonhuman. To communicate this problem structurally, Meillassoux uses the image of a coin, a face-à-face:

> Cet espace du dehors n'est donc que l'espace de ce qui nous fait face, de ce qui n'existe qu'à titre de vis-à-vis de notre existence propre. C'est pourquoi, en vérité, on ne se transcende pas bien loin en plongeant dans un tel monde: on se contente d'explorer les deux faces de ce qui demeure un face-à-face – telle une médaille qui ne connaîtrait que son revers. (2006, 21)

The *Berberian Sound Studio* takes up this structure through its reversal of cinema's audio-visual hierarchy and its use of mise-en-abîme. The film follows the work of a timid, freelance sound engineer from Dorking, England who is commissioned to create the Foley and sound for an Italian 'giallo' horror film 'Il Vortice Equestre' by Giancarlo Santini.[59] Mild-mannered, Gilderoy (Toby Jones) typically works as a sound-engineer on projects like idyllic nature documentaries of the English countryside. Gilderoy accepted the work in Italy believing he has been commissioned to work on a film about horses, but he is horrified to discover its grisly subject matter on the execution of witches. The viewer of *Berberian* does not see any images of the film 'Il Vortice Equestre' that is being made, except for the film's title credits which replace the expected titles of *Berberian,* such that a viewer might hesitate for a moment and question whether they are watching the film they thought. This decision also means that Peter Strickland and *Berberian's* actors are not credited in the opening title credits, only the fictional director Santini and the fictional actors and producers of *Il Vortice Equestre*.

Thematically, the film resonates strikingly with themes explored in *Antichrist*: the persecution of witches, violence against women, as well as a self-conscious awareness of discourses surrounding nature, likewise harnessed within a film exploring these questions through the generic conventions of horror. However, though *Antichrist* displayed an innovative approach to Foley sound, the formal constraint that von Trier and Andersen imposed on themselves is not something a spectator could be conscious of. It remained an invisible performance, an underside to the film's images that nonetheless affects a viewer-auditor. By contrast, *Berberian*, in taking up the work of Foley and sound production within the diegesis attempts to occupy the 'underside' of images and thus performs the problem of Meillassoux's coin and its recto-verso logic. As I will argue, in making sound its image, it makes a new inside of its outside,

[59] Santini is a made up director but it is likely that the character is heavily drawn on Dario Argento, a prominent 'giallo' director in Italy in the 1970s. In Interview, Strickland discusses how the film-within-a-film 'Il Vortice Equestre' is a simple rip-off of Argento's *Suspiria* (1977) and Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* (1960) (Strickland 2013, 7).

thus demonstrating the problem of there always being another verso. And yet, something mobile and uncontainable in the properties of noise – already explored in this thesis's second chapter – means that noise works against both the spatial logic of Meillassoux's coin and the logic of the film, collapsing the divisions between the diegetic and non-diegetic, the self-reflexivity of the film-within-a-film, and the eventual mise-en-abîme that the film attempts to stage.

VISUALISING SOUND

How does *Berberian* so radically reverse the audio-visual hierarchy of cinema? In film (broadly conceived) it is often the source of a sound that is masked – whether this be the Foley that creates it or simply through not disclosing or displaying the sound's source in the diegetic world of the film. In *Berberian,* however, it is the destination of the sound that is suppressed. We are left to imagine the bodies the various noises will attach to. These absent images weigh upon the sounds, such that they take on their own horror. To compensate for the missing images, the film provides an excess of sound and its visualisations: we are given Gilderoy's reactions to making the sounds, time coding sheets mapping the sync between sound and image, images of sound signals, close-ups of the magnetic tape spooling through machines, and an acousmatic voice that travels throughout the spaces of the studio announcing the content of the scene before the take (Figures 25-28). The resolutely avisual nature of the film, with all its absent images and substitutes for these images lead to a surplus of sound which is evoked in different dimensions: audio, visual, graphic, diagrams etc.



Figures 25-28. Visualising sound

In many ways, *Berberian* is a film about the domestication of sound versus the wildness of sound. Sound creates a regime of space within the studio – a who-can-hear-what-where-when. The studio is insulated to keep out noise, the sign 'Silenzio' hangs above the door and certain conversations are not audible in certain partitions of the studio, reflecting the film's interest in power and control between different agents: director, producer, freelancer, actresses etc. This division is also achieved through the film's use of two languages – Italian and English – a division that is then broken down disturbingly through dubbing as the two films begin to collapse into one another. The film is continually stopping and starting sound, halting its progress, rewinding or else opening and closing the various channels it is in – fanning them out and exploding the density of the soundtrack to get us to think about how sounds work or exist in the filmic situation. The film thus makes image of sound. This over-compensation and need to make image of sound, like the pyramid in *Antichrist* or the grid of surface pits in the Foley artist's studio, implicates its inappropriable excessive dimension as something which cannot be represented, only evoked through substitutes. As I go on to show, sound is visualised, named, time coded, diagrammed, plotted, played back, distorted and submitted to a regime which it then entirely exceeds.

Second, the film displaces the ethics of making 'visible' and what one should show or see onto the question of auditory production. What should one listen to? What sounds should one make? Gilderoy is unsettled in the sound studio and appears disturbed by the noises he is instructed to produce. He uses noises to remind him of the English countryside and the comfort of home. He plays tapes in his hotel room ('Dorking home reel') containing isolated noises of home ('mantle clock' 'mum's footsteps' 'a breeze' 'pantry tone') or else he crunches dried leaves and twigs underfoot and closes his eyes to transport him elsewhere in one of the studio's surface pits. The ethics of the horror film they are making are continually justified as a duty to *show*, for people to *see* etc. As Santini says 'it is not a horror film, it is a Santini film, with violence, but *questa è la vita*'. The ethics of sound are not thought about, except by Gilderoy. He is disturbed but told he should not be – 'It's just a film. You are part of it. You can see how all this is put together'. The production of sound reminds Gilderoy of the horrific scenes for which the sounds are destined. For example, he winces as he pours hot oil in a frying pan. This noise is destined for a scene in which a 'red hot poker' is inserted into a woman's vagina. Gilderoy breaks off the stems of radishes for the sound of hair being torn out. He does not want to do the Foley, preferring instead the less-involved role of mixing the sound. He claims Foley is not his 'forté' – and we see the necessary lending of the Foley artist's

body to the performance, which gives Gilderoy less and less imaginative distance on the noises, the film and its subject matter. Gilderoy is forced to 'get into it', just as the female actresses who are made to scream, develop a cough. The film points to how noise carries traces of the body that produced it. In interview, Strickland has talked about the physical aspects of lending voice to the film:

> Berberian is quite an abstract film also it's quite visceral in the realistic sense in that if you keep screaming and screaming there's a physical consequence to that. Your voice is going to go. You don't normally think of that when you see a horror film. I wanted to show that. (2013, 5)

His decision to *show* the productions and straining of the voice recall Caverero's inclusion of an Italo Calvino quote from 'The King Listens' in her philosophy of vocal expression: that 'a voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices' (2005, 1). *Berberian* re-anchors these voices back to their bodies – human, nonhuman – reminding us of the throat, chest, flesh and feelings that accompany our experience of film (Figure 29).



Figure 29. showing the body that lends itself to the voice

However, *Berberian* extends Cavarero's notion beyond the voice of the person to the voice of the things sacrificed in the sound studio. The film invites us to think and feel our way towards the nonhuman voices used for the making of the film. This is achieved through the film's extreme panning close-ups, not dissimilar to the cosmic zooms used in *Antichrist*. Chion's remark that it is more ethical to use a melon than a human head is made uncertain in *Berberian*, as images linger over the matter sacrificed for the production of sound (Figure 30-31). The camera, from extreme proximity, pans across the surface of the Foley material – primarily vegetables substituted for human flesh. Alongside this motion and image, we hear

what appears to be non-diegetic, eerie intimations of the interior of the vegetables, as if their decomposition and waste were audible. In fact, it is diegetic sound from beyond the frame that Gilderoy is looping on magnetic tape. In *Berberian*, where the relationship between the audio and visual is so overturned, the camera's movements lend an atmosphere to the sounds, once again causing the image to carry an auditory dimension rather than a visual one through its use of kinetic movement. The audio-track of the film appears to be giving the vegetables a voice, or the suggestion of a voice. Like *Antichrist* then, in the close-up image, the film seems to extend an *oreille impossible* to these nonhuman bodies that are called upon as sacrificial substitutes for the human. The film also employs zooms that begin from inscrutable proximity to matter and then slowly withdraw from it, bringing it into very close-range focus. These close-ups take us to the frontiers of things, and could be said to confront us with the limit of the thing's 'centrism'. The marrow, the cabbage, the film draws its 'notes' into an event horizon of human/filmic experience – suggesting certain sensuous qualities through the different sensory channels the close-up is appealing to – even as these qualities recede from us and remain withdrawn.



Figure 30-31. *Berberian*'s close ups of Foley matter

Like *Antichrist*, through the possibility of the *oreille impossible*, the film similarly does away with the distinction between non-diegetic and diegetic sound as we continually negotiate whether the sounds we hear are part of the film that is being made, or part of the world of the film we are watching. In the studio, every sound is possibly diegetic, spooling through some machine somewhere or else on-the-air in one of the studio's channels. Of this distinction, Strickland explained: 'The one rule I had was to make a diegetic soundtrack. When we were editing we knew it was very abstract, so we needed this sonic anchor to the film which is very realistic – even though we mixed this in a very non-diegetic way' (2013, 8). As much as *Berberian* appears to contain and harness the instability of sound, through the studio space itself, as well as the editing processes and visualisations of sound, the film also posits sound as its wild 'outside'. It suggests, like *Antichrist*, a hierarchy of exteriority, contrasting the quaint domesticated sounds

of nature and the soothing noises of the Dorking countryside – a great outdoors, but in the wrong sense – with the sound studio as a wilder 'outside', as a move towards a *Grand Dehors*.

OUTSIDE NOISE

This hierarchy of exteriority is suggested through the film's manipulation of space in editing. When Gilderoy steps outside his hotel room, he repeatedly steps (Narnia-like) directly into the sound studio. This is an elision of space enacted by the film, for we do see a garden and greenery surrounding Gilderoy's hotel room at other moments. Unlike *Antichrist* therefore, through this spatial arrangement, the film does not name nature or the forest as its outside, but the sound studio itself. It thus moves away from the intra-anthropological interlocutor of nature or objects to posit sound as exteriority. In naming, the film once again fixes the problem of this outside as being an outside 'for me' or 'for the film'. Yet the film's divisions are not so straightforward as the location of the film's horror is continually being displaced. Eventually, the boundaries between the film that the viewer is watching (*Berberian Sound Studio*) and the film that is being made (*Il Vortice Equestre*) become uncertain. This then stages a visual mise-en-abîme that sound works against.

Gilderoy wakes up in the middle of the night in his bed and hears a noise, the doorbell. 'Who's there' he calls out twice – 'I will call the police'. He fumbles at the door of his room and stumbles into the sound studio, holding a knife. The projector activates itself, throwing a bright light over Gilderoy. On the screen behind him, alongside the whirr of the projector, we see the same scene play again: Gilderoy wakes up in the middle of the night in his bed and hears a noise, the doorbell. 'Chi è' a dubbed voice synced with Gilderoy's screen image calls out twice – 'adesso chiama la polizia'. We hear a fumbling at the door of the sound studio and Gilderoy (the one we think of as concrete) leaps to block it, as one reality threatens to enter another. The image breaks down into a noisy, turbulent superimposition of grainy impressions, as if caught in an earthquake. It is as if image and sound are about to short circuit in this assault of noise and turbulence. And then, it is as if the photochemical surface burns through itself (Figure 32-33) revealing a pastoral green countryside, with some cows grazing in a field. A voiceover narrates: 'their survival depends on the grazing of the grassland'. We are in medias res, as well as lost in media. The image belongs, we presume, to one of Gilderoy's documentaries about the Dorking countryside. At this moment, the documentary images of Dorking, completely untethered to the world of *Berberian*, become its new outside. Though initially Dorking was presented as intimate, interior, familiar and domesticated, formally,

these documentary images appear as exterior to the system they enter into, disrupting the short circuit of the film's mise-en-abîme.



Figure 32-33. The mise-en-abîme short circuits

This implosion subsides, and it appears as though we can once again locate ourselves. Back with Gilderoy in his hotel room, as he reads a letter from his mother in bed. Very quickly however, the viewer is once again made uncertain, as a sequence from earlier in *Berberian* of Gilderoy and Francesco watching a screening of *Il Vortice Equestre* is re-presented. It contains the same dialogue as before, but once again with Italian dubbing and a slightly different camera angle that appears to be showing images from *Il Vortice Equestre*, in which (it turns out) Gilderoy is starring. In interview, Strickland revealed that 'There's definitely a theatrical element in the tape loop – that goes into the whole notion of the film – the loop is central to the whole idea of the film' (2013, 6). We see in this instance how the film begins to loop back on itself, picking up extra noises, extraneous elements, slight distortions. It is now clear how the film keeps creating a new verso from its recto. *Berberian* has not placed us cleverly on the 'underside' of images, in the secret reserve of cinema. Rather it makes us furiously try and keep pace with the turning of its loop which turns out to follow the logic of the Möbius strip– a surface with only one side and one boundary.

The film's disintegrations could be compared with those in David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983). However, in concerning itself with sound, the film does more than stage an intricate mise-en-abîme game for its viewer to decode. The sound cannot be contained in the relation between frame narrative and core narrative for it is not appropriable to the face-to-face logic of the coin that Meillassoux described. As Nancy describes it in *À L'écoute*, sound has no 'face cachée' and thus presents a challenge to the logic of phenomenological manifestation that characterises the correlationist bind (2002, 32). The noises we hear throughout *Berberian* could always belong either to the frame narrative or the core narrative at the same time, and continue to keep multiple possibilities of location in play after the film collapses in on itself.

Sound's restless movement and multiple degrees of belonging defies the recto-verso. It is not something that can be secured or kept track of. As such, it illustrates Chion's point that 'il n'y a pas de contenant sonore des sons' (2017 [1990], 76) and is thus not able to work within the figure of the mise-en-abîme which relies on operations of framing (in this case the cinematic frame) in order to become abyssal. The only arguable frame that exists for sound in film is the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic that, as I have already mentioned, *Berberian* does away with.

In conclusion, being so much a film about sound production that attempts to dialogue upon both noise's domestication and its inability to be contained, *Berberian* (unwittingly perhaps) draws attention to what truly remains beyond it – the invisible performance itself that never becomes apparent but sits alongside the film's images. Indeed, *Berberian* begins by exscribing sound, the very thing the film appears to inscribe. Following some ambiguous close-ups of the technology of cinema that recall the opening of Bergman's *Persona* (1966), the first shot in the 'diegetic' world of the film which includes synced sound opens at a low angle and tracks a pair of man's shoes walking down a long corridor (Figure 34). We hear the echoing sound they make within the space of the corridor. Footsteps are at the origin of Foley practice. The history goes that Jack Foley, the man who gave his name to the craft, got tired of editing in footsteps, so he began to perform them himself (Ament 2009). Footstepping is also an alternative name for the practice of Foley. The second prominent sound to pierce the soundtrack is the tapping of a typewriter – another Foley staple. The film thus opens out onto these seemingly narrative, visual images, but in doing so, inevitably reminds us of what remains secret: we feel the weight of the Foley performer, performing the body, its movement, weighing up against these images as an image that remains profoundly unseen. It is here that the film reaches towards its own exterior, the Foley performance, this intimate, invisible reserve sitting at the heart of the film that never becomes apparent, despite the film's moves to present sound to vision. In placing the issue of sound at its core, *Berberian* reveals an outside that is not just the opposite of an inside, but instead comes to be palpable, as felt or sensed, precisely in the avisual relation of sound to image that the film thematises.



Figure 34. Images that recall the work of the Foley artist

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout my discussion of *Antichrist*, the practice of the Foley artist and *Berberian Sound Studio*, noise emerges as a means through which to display an attentiveness to nonhuman bodies. The staging of cinema and its ability to shape our listening extends an *oreille impossible* to these usually inaudible soundings, bringing us into forms of relation with the diffused and distributed bodies that lurk in the background of our human world. I have identified that it is the practice of Foley in particular that lends this individuated attention to the nonhuman, both in the production of sound, but also for how a viewer-auditor becomes sensitised to new expressive relationships *between* bodies, generated through filmic means. These new relationships between bodies opened up through noise indicate possibilities for dissensus, through the way they trouble the distribution of species and things.

In bringing in thought from speculative realism, I have revealed the way cinema is able to display a disposition not unlike that of the speculative realist philosopher, 'amplifying the black noise of objects to make the resonant frequencies of the stuffs inside them hum in credibly satisfying ways' (Bogost 2012, 34). Their thought has equally allowed me to think through some of the political and ethical stakes of doing so. However, nonhuman noise in cinema falls short of indicating the interiority of things, and cannot attest to the being of a thing, independent of the human. Rather, I have argued that noise attests to the *excess* of the independent being of a thing, which is instead always exscribed at the moment of inscription.

The problem of what is 'outside' has persisted throughout. Noise indexes the world in ways that are not so appropriable to human consciousness, presenting something alien to our understanding as it works against phenomenological manifestation and the representations we have of things. In its engagement of the auditory and, in conjunction with images that noise

then works against, cinema constitutes a sensuous opening for the possibility of indicating a nonhuman outside. In the examples looked at here, such moments are posited but ultimately undercut, reflecting the difficulty in tackling the nonhuman on its own terms. Each area of my inquiry has attempted to feel its way out of the recto-verso logic of correlationism that Meillassoux identifies. *Berberian* came closest in the way noise works against the recto-verso logic of the film's images and instead models itself on the tape loop, using sound to escape the face-à-face turnings of the coin that continuously determines the identities of the film's images. Ultimately, however, the tape loop resembles the Möbius strip, as noise too loops back into the logic of the human.

A film like *Antichrist* resonates with ideas about the ear being a receiver we imagine to be open which characterises the otocentric thought of contemporary philosophers from Nancy to the speculative realists. However, this conception of the ear is perhaps always too appropriative. It might be worth pausing to remember the ear's anatomy. The outer ear appears exposed, agape, responsive. But beyond the drum is the bony labyrinth of the inner ear, which spirals in on itself. The nonhuman discloses this limit to the ear's patulous openness, revealing the fantasy of this openness and collapsing it back in on itself into the ear's involute interior. When extending this ear to the nonhuman, we may think we are hearing an outside, when in fact we are hearing…nothing. Or simply the noise of ourselves, of our own interior otoacoustic emissions, listening to the human once more.

CONCLUSION

> Là est, justement, l'origine. Noise et nausée, noise et nautique, noise et navire sont de même famille. Il ne faut pas s'en étonner. Nous n'entendons jamais si bien ce que nous nommons bruit de fond qu'à la mer.
>
> Serres *Genèse*, 32

I want to begin with a series of aqueous reflections.

French filmmaker, Lucille Hadžihalilović, set her most recent film, *Evolution* (2015), by the sea. The film is a weird and wonderful 'nightmarish lullaby' of sensations channelled through the body of a young boy who finds himself in a nauseating, uncertain world made up of maternal figures, medical interventions and underwater visions and experiences, evoking loose ties to the genres of horror and sci-fi (Grozdanovic 2015). The film, in many ways, is exemplary in linking together the relationship between noise, nausea and the nautical that Serres identifies in the epigraph to this conclusion. In speaking of her approach to the sound design, Hadžihalilović revealed her desire to work exclusively with natural sounds, particularly the 'wind and noise from the sea' (Sélavy 2016). However, as I argued for *Antichrist*, the source and destination of the noise is unstable. This background noise of the ocean attaches to the film's other images and sensations through sound bridges. In interview, Hadžihalilović admitted that she had not always intended to set her film by the sea: 'in the beginning it was only the hospital – a hospital in a city, with nothing outside. Then at some point it seemed obvious I needed to get out, and suddenly, of course, the seaside and the ocean seemed a perfect echo of what was happening inside' (Bradshaw 2016, 32). When the film approaches the little boy's body in close up, the same sound of the ocean evokes his interior. The noise of the sea becomes the sound of blood coursing through veins, and likewise the same noise attaches to the buildings of the white medical facility as it becomes the wind whipping through and around its corners. As such, this sea noise variously attaches to human bodies, bodies of water and man–made, cultural or institutional bodies and continuously renegotiates the boundaries between them, using the image as a support that facilitates this shift. It is shifts and interruptions like this that make us conscious of the ocean's background noise, which otherwise we hear against and through, without necessarily being conscious of it. To the alliterative trio between noise, nausea and the nautical, *Evolution* also adds the natal, through its intrauterine images of bodies submerged foetus-like in tanks, the pulsing waves of

ultrasound and Dopplers as they palpate the little boy's stomach, or the documentary-rawness of a caesarean section that the nurses are shown to be watching in the cover of night. In this manner, the film also recalls Nancy and Glissant's thinking of origins and the birth of the subject in the opening of sound, sense and world. As a whole, *Evolution* could be said to display an umbilical logic between different bodies, recognisably human and not (achieved through sound bridges, graphic matches, colour distribution, editing) – mapping relationships between them, connecting them, allowing their meanings to feed off each other, while also remaining separate. The film illustrates the way this thesis has explored noise as a means to think through, or sense, the relations between bodies, between inside and outside, and the way cinema might tune us to the presence of noise in ways we are not usually conscious of, sensitising us to new relations and opening us to the uncertainty and instability that constitutes our relation to the world.

Throughout this thesis there has been this undercurrent of the sea. Its rolling and pitching noises were there in the background of *Anatomie de l'enfer* as a persistent element of the soundscape, it asserted itself forcefully as the swell subtending the *écho-monde* and, as an instance of nonhuman noise, its inaudible heave was kept at bay in the final chapter of this thesis. For Serres, the silence of the sea is only ever an appearance. He elaborates: 'le silence de la mer est une apparence. Le bruit de fond est peut-être le fond de l'être. Peut-être l'être n'est-il pas en repos, peut-être n'est-il pas en mouvement, peut-être l'être est-il agité' (Serres 1982, 32). This agitation of being has emerged throughout this study as what is at stake when we think about what it means to 'exister selon l'écoute, pour elle et par elle'? In its exploration of becoming 'all ears' in our engagement with film, through the senseless or insensible figure of noise, this thesis has opened up a model of consumption of cinema that engages questions of damage, of porosity, of permeability and even of potential violence that comes through in the figure of vibration, echoing the disturbance of being that Serres claims to be contained in the relational, agitated movements of the sea. Hainge, in his own gloss on Serres, explains why the sea is a privileged figure for noise. Noise, Hainge explains, 'makes the world pitch, roll, heave and swell, like a ship in rough seas whose movement is never entirely its own but only ever the result of a relation between it and its environment' (2013, 68).

The films examined herein, as I have been exploring throughout, have harnessed noise to stage this extreme relation between a body and the world, sense and the sensuous, spectator and film, as a question of attention, of involvement, of relationality and of potential fragility. This has important wider implications for work addressing the forms of understanding and

knowing that cinema can bring about with relation to the world. Throughout, I have shown how cinema constructs bodies as responsive and explored the ethical and political implications of doing so. Each of the filmmakers considered use the vulnerability and openness brought about through noise to tune us to the world and others in ways that reveal the ethical dimensions of the sensory, through its ability to trouble the subject and think through alterity within the space of contested or threatened identities. Likewise, this vulnerability brought about through noise asserts the potential politics of a sensuous cinema in the way noise is able to sharpen our responses and expand our field of audition to incorporate bodies our everyday listening might not admit.

A calmer, less turbulent watery image: this time of Nancy's own body bathing in water, found at the opening of *Le Corps du philosophe* (Marc Grün, 2003). The camera stays close to the philosopher's body, as Nancy laps gently in the water, effecting a moderate sidestroke that sees his ear hovering at the water's surface, submerging and re-emerging. In voiceover, Nancy intones against the ground of the soft, diegetic lapping of the water:

> Le monde est là de toutes parts, et le monde de toutes parts se donne à sentir comme ses couleurs, ses odeurs, ses saveurs, ses bruits, ses présences, ses éloignements, ses distances, ses volumes, ses pressions, les relâchements de ses pressions, ses coupures, ses blessures […] ce qui du monde me porte et ce qui au contraire me pèse, ce contre quoi je m'appuie et ce qui lâche quand je m'y appuie…toutes ces formes innombrables de sentiments, et en même temps de sentiments de soi, c'est-à-dire que je suis tous ces sentiments ou toutes ces sensations, je les suis comme le corps qui à un moment donné, passant à travers le monde, tient toutes ces sensations dans une certaine tenue, un corps qui fait aussi être le monde, de cette manière là. (Grün 2003)

The relation between the image and the words spoken as voiceover, reflecting on the relation between sense, body and world, also speak to the way this thesis has explored noise in cinema as expressive of an extreme relation between self and world that are both in a resonant intimacy, that open to one another and dissolve into each other through vibration, and that are gathered together, or held together 'dans une certaine tenue' in *À l'écoute* under the figure of the *corps sonore.* Nancy returns to this *corps sonore* in the closing remarks of *À l'écoute* claiming: 'frappe du dehors, clameur de dedans, ce corps sonore sonorisé, se met à l'écoute simultané d'un "soi" et d'un "monde" qui sont l'un et l'autre en résonance' (2002, 82). It is this

conception of the sonorous that, in my final chapter, also emerged as the appropriative limit of the ear's openness and its ability to register or indicate a spectrum of the nonhuman.

The sounding of the sonorous body, like the sea, is never wholly its own, but always in relation with the space into which its soundings emit, just as its silence is always permeated by the noises of what it receives. This thesis has explored what happens when we strain our listening in an attempt to listen to noise in cinema. Throughout my discussion, I have argued that noise allows cinema to entertain a less knowing relation to the world and the different bodies situated within it, drawing attention to what is unknowable, or goes unaccounted for in expression. In this sense, noise in the films discussed also works as a figure that de-situates bodies, un-grounding them and drawing them into more open, unstable or dissensual relation with others that characterises the *corps sonore*. Such was the case with Breillat's body, in abeyance and excess, carried in the transport of little noises that resist at the point of our listening while also carrying the body beyond itself. Likewise, Noé's use of inaudible frequencies and unpleasant sound that dominate his images, working to destabilise subjectivity and appeal to the body of spectator and film as an open place of resonance, traversed by the violent vibratory effects of noise. For Gatlif and des Pallières, noise allowed them a means to open the *corps sonore* to an *écho-monde*, a world of sonorous mixings and contaminations to which we are relationally tied, and that cinema makes palpable as a space filled with others whose experiences, more so than geography, place us at an unbridgeable remove from them. Noise, as I developed through these two first chapters, allows these films a particular and infinite sensitivity to such contested bodies, while also acknowledging their withdrawal. In this thesis's final investigation of nonhuman noise, the auditory offered different routes to explore how we might tune to nonhuman bodies sounding in our environment, attending to them on their own terms as an outside of human world-projection. Here, I contended with how such attunement is also marked by failure, eventually echoing back to us the limits of the world that is our echo chamber, and returning to ourselves our own situatedness as *corps sonore*.

The questions of relations, subjectivity and sense raised by Nancy's thought open directly onto pressing issues for understanding cinema's sensitivity to and engagement with the real. Through this attention to what is in excess of our perception, or how noise in cinema brings us towards what we do not know without giving up its unknowability, my discussion resonates with questions of the real that have been of central concern to French thought and aesthetic practice throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, but brings these questions to new articulations of the cinematic medium, post the digital turn, as well as to cinema's other

dimension: the sonic. Precisely in the way noise tunes our perception towards what is in excess of audibility, attending to that which resists at the point of our knowing, looking, hearing, in the manner Nancy elaborates in his own essay on cinema, *L'Évidence du film*, noise is able to register a relation to the real, if not the real itself. The range of evidence I have explored – noise and the auditory – has allowed a new dimension through which we might understand cinema's attention to, and engagement with, the real.

In bringing the *corps sonore* to a consideration of noise and listening in the cinematic medium, this study has also enabled new questions to be posed about cinema's sensuous capacities in a renewed encounter between Nancy's thought and cinema, one that reconfigures our attention to the different passages between the senses, the relationship between the intelligible and the sensible, away from the paradigm of haptic visuality and touch that has sometimes displayed a tendency to reduce cinema's sensuous dimension to the shorthand of tactility. As I have shown, noise allows us to think the interplay between the senses across new borders of pleasure and violence, here and there, inside and outside. And I have likewise demonstrated how we might think about what other forms of unknown and unaccounted for expression inhere in our distant sense of audition, moving away from the (sometimes automatically) privileged epistemologies associated with the proximal senses of touch, taste and smell. This has allowed me to elaborate ways we might conceive of images as resonant and listening, rather than tactile and caressing. Finally, through attending to noise in cinema alongside Nancy, I have been able to open a space for new expansive dialogue between Nancy's philosophy and film, while also bringing Nancy's thinking into contact with new interlocutors such as Michel Chion, Édouard Glissant or the speculative realists that might, in the future, be taken up further by the intersection of film and philosophy. Similarly, shifting the emphasis of my study to noise and the auditory has allowed me to explore film-philosophical questions in relation to technical aspects of the process of cinematic production – such as Foley, sound design, sound mixing – that are too often ignored at this intersection, in favour of the gravitas of The Image. Indeed, this is a major avenue that this research has opened for what I believe is rich further inquiry.

And yet, while I argue that cinema is a privileged space of resonance that responds to Nancy's text *À l'écoute*, the films to which I have attended through their use of noise extend beyond Nancy's thinking of the *corps sonore* to explore its messier, more corporeal and potentially nightmarish or threatening articulations. While characteristics of Nancy's text tend to echo within the register of the instrumental, the musical, the classical, the harmonious - in spite of

its claim to think through the body - the films I have examined use noise to disrupt this register, and open out the *corps sonore* to unpleasant sound, unknown sound, meaningless sound, as well as the empire of everyday noises that make up the art and craft of Foley. Cinema is able to draw attention to the ways we name and position what we hear and place us into new, more attentive, forms of encounter with the world. Throughout, I have been interested in what it means to become 'all ears' in our experience of and consumption of film. All ears, we are rendered attentive, tense, anxious, straining to what is beyond meaning, sense, signification; all ears, we are involved in a listening that is an ethos, a disposition, an extreme attentiveness to being, a particular opening of the ear that demonstrates, following Nancy, a taking care of the real. And, all ears, we are also susceptible to damage. Exposure to noise risks perforating our ear drum, an incursion that itself generates noise – neither of the world outside, nor of the body's inside - but in our perception through the medium, or the anatomy, itself.

The films examined in this thesis present to our listening a contained resonant world, rather like holding up a seashell to our ear, producing an illusion of ocean noise. It is a myth that listening to the interior of a seashell contains the sound of the ocean. What we hear rather, is the noise of the shell's surrounding environment; the shell attenuates these frequencies, including air flowing within the resonator – the shell – and noise originating from the human body itself. Through occlusion, when listening to the shell, our ear picks up the sound of blood flowing and muscles acting that are normally discarded by the brain, but become more pronounced when external sounds are filtered out. Cinema is such a seashell resonator, holding up to our ear a contained environment that attenuates certain noises, and sensitises us to the relations between body and world that dissolve in its sonorous mixing.

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Thelma and Louise; dir. by Ridley Scott (1991)

The Night Porter; dir. by Liliana Cavani (1974)

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Un Lac; dir. by Philippe Grandrieux (2008)

Une vraie jeune fille; dir. by Catherine Breillat (1976)

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We Fuck Alone; dir. by Gaspar Noé (2006)

Zodiac; dir. by David Fincher (2007)