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The Ambient Eerie

Examining the Eerie in Brian Eno's *Ambient 4: On Land*



Abstract

This dissertation examines the sensation of the eerie, as characterised by Mark Fisher in his book *The Weird and the Eerie*. It considers how the properties and effects of listening to ambient music can evoke a feeling of the eerie, and explores the particularities of ambient music which allow it to do so with more potency than visual media. With a close analysis of Brian Eno's *Ambient 4: On Land* at its core, this dissertation considers the act of listening as a performative action to engage with the audible world around us, and how ambient music invites and facilitates self-awareness in our sonic environments. This text also examines the role of memory in *On Land* and in the eerie, considering both the formation of memory and moments of temporal rupture. From Fisher's writing this text considers the foregrounding of the landscape in both the eerie and ambient music, and the power this instils in the landscape. Finally, this dissertation explores the dichotomy of presence and absence at play in situations which incite the eerie, the role of this disjunction in ambient music, and its effect on the human figure. The eerie is an intangible sensation, one which implicates the human figure in their sonic, conceptual and temporal reality.

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Introductions

Introducing the Eerie

A cold mist creeps over dark purple moorland, a lone bird's cry echoing across open fields, and a long-ruined building, blanketed in ivy, is slowly being eroded to dust. The eerie lingers over sites like these, it seeps into the ground and rises into the air, settling on the emptiest places - or the places full of the most absence. Upon entering an eerie setting, the human figure is unsettled, on edge, maybe even scared, but of what they could not say. This intangible sensation will be the focus of this dissertation. Or, more specifically, how and why ambient music has the power to evoke, with more potency than any other medium, that sensation of the eerie.

Before we can hope to delve into the medium of ambient music and its power to provoke such a sensation, it is necessary to set out a definition of the eerie. For this we will turn to the inspiration for this dissertation, Mark Fisher's seminal book, *The Weird and the Eerie*. In his text, Fisher raises the eerie out of its synonymical status alongside a plethora of horror-genre words: creepy, scary, unnerving, uncanny; and distinguishes it as a more complex, experiential sensation. Weaving through a tangled web of popular culture, from the films of Stanley Kubrick, to the writing of H.P. Lovecraft, Fisher extracts a definition of the eerie as an effect wrapped up in presence and absence in the landscape, and an awareness of the self in relation to that landscape. A feeling of the eerie is incited by 'a failure of absence or by a failure of presence,' when 'there is something present where there should be nothing, or if there is nothing present when there should be something.'¹

In addition to this dichotomy of absence and presence, Fisher also situates the eerie in opposition to Freud's uncanny, or the 'unheimlich' - 'unhomely.' The unheimlich presents 'the strange *within* the familiar', an invasion of the homely, domestic safe space by something unsettling.² In other words, the unheimlich occurs when the 'inside' is invaded by the 'outside' world. Our place of comfort becomes suddenly threatening or unsettling due to an external force. The eerie, on the other hand, is born of a sudden change of perspective by the subject. According to Fisher, both the weird and the eerie 'allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside.'³ With this framing, the eerie takes place both externally in the landscape, and also acts *upon* the subject to create the unique sensation. It is this implication of the body, mind, and perception of the self, which will be at the heart of this dissertation.

With these rough parameters set as a definition of the eerie, or at least towards a definition, we can explore what is *within* the eerie. What is *there* or *not there* within the eerie landscape? What happens in the mind and body, and how does ambient music manage to capture that feeling with such potency?

¹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, (London: Repeater Books, An Imprint of Watkins Media, 2016), 61.

² Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10.

³ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10.

Introducing Brian Eno's *Ambient 4: On Land*

'Immersion was really the point: we were making music to swim in, to float in, to get lost inside.'⁴ These are the words Brian Eno wrote in *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, his published diary. In the appendix titled 'Ambient Music,' Eno recounts the birth of his fascination with this emerging genre of music. Confined to a hospital bed in 1975 following an accident, Eno was visited by a friend who gave him a record of 17th-century harp music, but when it began to play the hi-fi was playing very quietly, with one of the speakers completely broken, and Eno in his bed-ridden state could not manage to either turn up, or stop, the music. Eno recounts: 'It was raining hard outside, and I could hardly hear the music above the rain - just the loudest noises, like little crystals, sonic icebergs rising out of the storm.'⁵

Eno was a pioneer of the genre he named 'Ambient Music.' The production of more complex electronic technologies, with the first synths moving into the mainstream, and a general expansion of experimental music enabled Eno to carve out a space for quiet, meditative immersion in these emerging synthetic sonic textures. The album at the core of this dissertation will be the fourth and final of Eno's *Ambient* series, *Ambient 4: On Land*. Preceded by *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, *Ambient 2: The Plateaux Of Mirror*, and *Ambient 3: Day of Radiance*, the final album of this series is the darkest of the set. With its atonal drones, low, uneasy, rhythmic blows, and whispering textures just below the surface of the tracks, *On Land* plunges the listener into an unsettling sonic environment.

Inspired by Federico Fellini's seminal film *Amarcord* (1973), a central focus of this album was, for Eno, 'expanded moments of memory,' which looked particularly at the Fellini-esque 'unfaithful reconstruction of childhood moments.'⁶ *On Land* takes us on an eerie, troubled coastal walk through the English countryside of Eno's childhood memories. The central role of the landscapes of his childhood is made clear by the titles Eno gave the tracks: with 'Lizard Point' opening the album, through 'Unfamiliar Winds (Leeks Hills)' based on the forests near Eno's childhood hometown of Melton, and finally the album concludes with the crumbling shore of 'Dunwich Beach, Autumn, 1960' in Suffolk.

For Eno, *On Land* is an exploration of the power of ambient music to create immersive sonic environments. His pioneering experimentation with music as ambience led to a process of music-making he described as being 'closer to the process of painting.'⁷ We can consider *On Land*, then, as a blurred, eerie, sonic painting of the half-forgotten landscapes of Eno's childhood.

Ambient music in itself is a powerful tool for constructing sonic landscapes, however there is something unique about the soundscapes painted in *On Land*. Mark Fisher uses a direct quote from Eno in *The Weird and the Eerie*. Taking the words from

⁴ Brian Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, (London ; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), 294.

⁵ Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, 294-195.

⁶ Robin Rimbaud, "How Brian Eno's *On Land* Changed my World", on *Scanner* (March 2021), <http://scannerdot.com/2021/03/how-brian-enos-on-land-changed-my-world/>, accessed 20/04/22.

⁷ Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, 294.

the record's sleeve notes, Eno writes: 'the landscape has ceased to be a backdrop for something else to happen in front of; instead, everything that happens is a part of the landscape. There is no longer a sharp distinction between foreground and background.'⁸ Fisher claims there is an eeriness to representations of the landscape which treat it 'as an agent in its own right.'⁹ This is precisely the motivation for, and effect of, *On Land*. The soundscapes created are full of a deep, quiet, but huge, emptiness. The soundscapes created are unmistakably eerie.

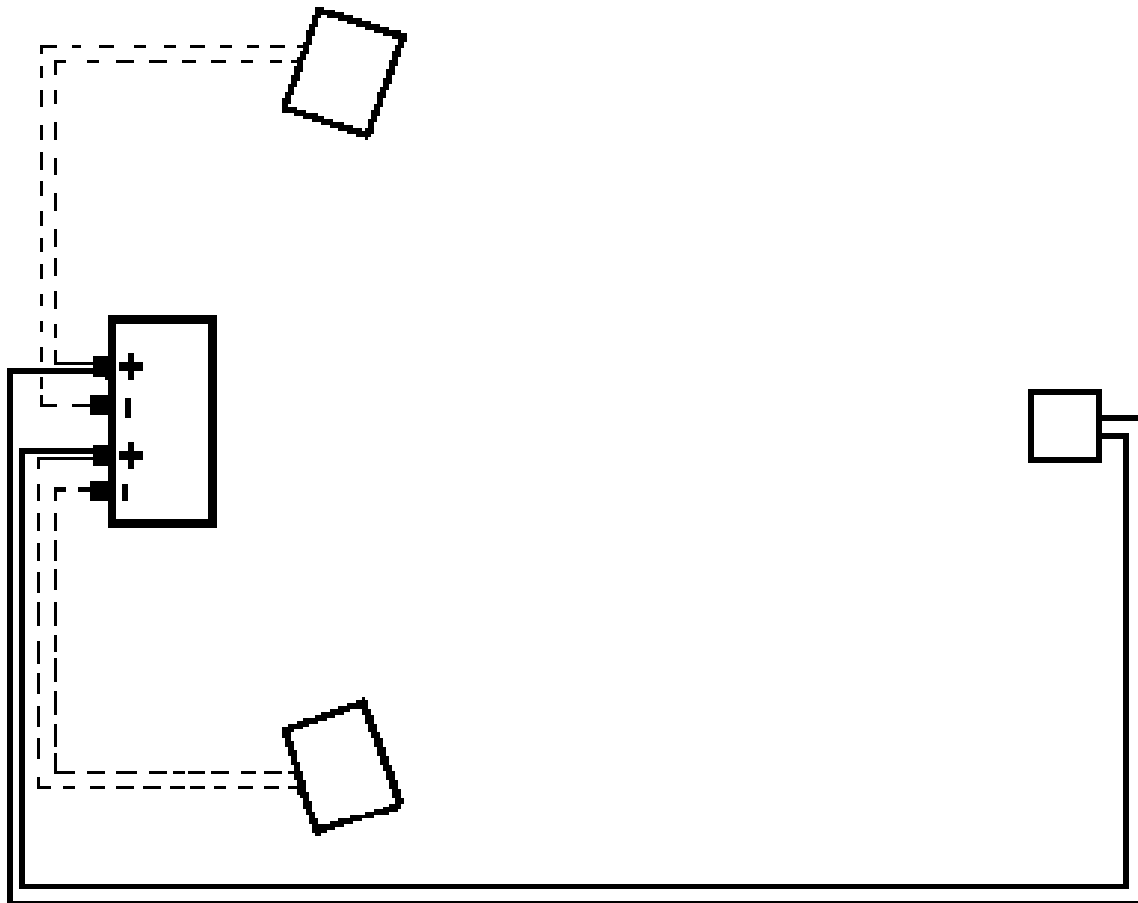


Figure 1 ~ Diagram of speaker setup in the inner sleeve notes of *Ambient 4: On Land* (1982) by Brian Eno

⁸ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 80.

⁹ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 80.

Chapter 1



Ambient Music

The Act of Listening

Cutting open the clear plastic and sliding the stiff new record sleeve out of its shiny packaging. An abstracted illustration of oranges and reds, punctuated with flowing lines of bright blue make up the cover art. The patterns and contours are vaguely familiar - a segment from an ordnance survey map. As the needle drops into the first grooves of the record, the quiet crackle of dust begins to blend into a slowly rising wave of dark tones, illuminated with far-off droplets of light, touches of piano keys, almost imperceptible in a mist of slowly swirling synths and deep, reverberating thuds of percussion. These are the opening moments of Brian Eno's *Ambient 4: On Land*. Released in 1982, the album comprises 44 minutes of eerie ambient soundscapes based on the childhood memories of artist, musician, composer and writer Brian Eno.

The materiality of ambient music is a unique one. It is meditative and quiet, immersive and isolating. Even the space in which ambient music is received plays a vital role in its effects on the listener. For *On Land*, Eno goes so far as to include in the record's inner sleeve notes a diagram of the particular speaker placement for an optimal listening experience (see Figure 1). The diagram dictates the listener be completely surrounded by sound, to be *inside* the sonic landscape. In the inner sleeve notes, Eno states that 'I regard this music as environmental: to be experienced from the inside.'¹⁰ The listening subject in *On Land*, if Eno's room composition is carried out, will be faced on all sides with sound, including behind them, effectively situating them inside a structure built by sound. The nature of the music, however, does not provide such definite boundaries. Indeed *On Land*, and Eno's other ambient works, are designed to have no perceptible beginning nor end. Instead the artist hopes that 'people could sit there and think that the music continued out of earshot. I like the notion that you're sitting in this field of sound, and you don't necessarily hear all of it.'¹¹ With *On Land* the listener is immersed in a sonic environment which fills the immediate space around them, but also continues beyond, into the space just out of reach, out of sight.

Not only is the listener surrounded by, and submerged in, a vast soundscape, Eno designed his ambient pieces to work in collaboration with the environments into which they would be projected. For example at Cologne airport in 1977, drawing

¹⁰ Brian Eno, Sleeve notes on *Ambient 4: On Land*, released 1 March 1982.

¹¹ Eric Tamm, 'Chapter 10: The Ambient Sound', in *Brian Eno: His Music and the Vertical Colour of Sound*, 138.

inspiration for *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Eno considered how music would operate specifically in that environment. He came to the conclusion that it would need to be 'interruptible' to make way for airport announcements, and that it would need to 'work outside the frequencies at which people speak, and at different speeds from speech patterns.'¹² In other words, ambient music must interact with the space it inhabits in a seamless and affecting way. Ambience is defined by Eno as 'an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint': a watercolour wash of sonic pigment over the details of a complex environment.¹³ A wash of music which is pointedly empty, or full of a sense of empty space.

Ambient music has the power to construct a sonic space which can colour the world it interacts with, and in doing this, animate the space it inhabits. In *On Land*, 'the landscape has ceased to be a backdrop for something else to happen in front of; instead, everything that happens is a part of the landscape.'¹⁴ The quiet, unintrusive work of ambience brings the landscape to the foreground and becomes the aesthetic subject of Eno's 4 ambient albums. Where *Music for Airports* differs from *On Land*, however, is in this subjection of the landscape. Where the first album was designed to weave into the soundscape of the airport, with voices, announcements, the hum of rolling suitcases; by the time Eno began work on *On Land*, the space he hoped to sonically inhabit had changed. From a physical, tangible place, Eno had moved into a mental space: his memories. *On Land* is an album designed to both capture and fill the half-forgotten landscapes of Eno's childhood with music.

There is a profound sense of absence in *On Land*, and this can be attributed partly to its inspiration. Without the tangible world which *Music for Airports* was designed to inhabit and affect, *On Land* has no physicality. Instead, the album is tied to the incomplete, evasive process of memory. Eno cites Federico Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973) as a catalyst for his fascination with the formation and representation of childhood memories. Going so far as to describe imagining 'an aural counterpart' to the film, the process of remembering and forgetting 'became one of the threads woven into the fabric of the music'.¹⁵

On Land moves in sensations, in moods half-captured, half-forgotten. *On Land* wraps itself around the intangible reality of memory, leaving the soundscape hollow and forcing the listener to be confronted with the sonic landscape itself - the landscape becomes the foreground. The materiality of sound in *On Land* colours the space into which it is projected, dyeing walls a dark green with its eerie sonic landscapes. It implicates the listener in relation to the space around them, plunging them into an immersive sonic environment. One which does not end at the edges of the tracks, but could continue on infinitely into the empty tonal darkness.

¹² Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, 295.

¹³ Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*, 296.

¹⁴ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 80.

¹⁵ Rimbaud, "How Brian Eno's *On Land* Changed my World."

Deep Listening

Those with a full range of hearing are constantly experiencing the world around them through sound, through what they can *hear*. With full hearing, a person can be submerged in a soundscape at every moment of the day and night. The audible world helps flesh out the visual, situating what we can see in a larger, more expansive sonic landscape. Sound continues past the limits of the visual, and onwards into the out-of-earshot. This indefatigable soundscape, be it the steady hum of nearby urban traffic, or the distant, ceaseless crashing of waves on a moonlit beach continues whether we realise it or not. The unconsciousness of hearing is something ambient music plays with. It can move quietly, tinting a space with a sonic mood without the hearing subject noticing. However, *On Land* is designed to invite a practice of active listening - a practice the influential composer and artist Pauline Oliveros considers extensively in her book *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*.

In *Deep Listening*, Oliveros opens the book by setting out a distinction between the two audio processes of hearing and listening. For Oliveros, 'to hear is the physical means that enables perception. To listen is to give attention to what is perceived both acoustically and psychologically.'¹⁶ Hearing is simply the process by which we perceive the audible world, but listening is an action undertaken with consciousness and a focus on the sensation of listening itself. Oliveros' book begins with introductory theory, but the majority of the work's content is in the detailed instructional texts which outline a number of 'deep listening' exercises. These exercises range from energy work, body work, breath exercises and vocalising, to listening and dreamwork. They aim to harbour a physical and psychological state in which the subject can engage with their sonic environment in a deeper way, paying attention to the 'interplay of sounds and silences or the sound/silence continuum.'¹⁷ For Oliveros, silence plays just as essential a role as sound in the process of listening. By paying attention to the 'space between sounds,' the listening field is widened, we become aware of the emptiness and scale of the sonic landscape, a process we see captured in Eno's sparse, vast, ambient soundscapes.¹⁸

Eno describes creating ambient music as comparable to painting; layering sonic pigments, smudging and overpainting until the piece is finished. To explore the act of listening further, it is essential to consider the physicality of sound. François J. Bonnet explores the physical processes that go into the act of listening in *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*. In this text Bonnet examines a number of conflicting theories about the way in which we perceive sound, or *where sound happens*. He eventually comes to the conclusion that sound must be located 'at the meeting point of a vibratory event, a potential audible, and an auditor.'¹⁹ In other words, the sound waves which

¹⁶ Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*, (Lincoln, NE: Deep Listening Publications, 2005), xxii.

¹⁷ Oliveros, *Deep Listening*, xxiv.

¹⁸ Oliveros, *Deep Listening*, 14.

¹⁹ François J. Bonnet, "Apprehending Sound" in *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth, Urbanomic, 2016), 91.

vibrate through the air become 'sound' as we know it, when there is a *potential* for them to be heard. In other words, if a tree falls and no-one is around to hear it, yes it does make a sound, because it has the *potential* to be heard. Bonnet claims that 'ultimately a sound is a sound above all because it is possible that it could be heard.'²⁰ Crucially to our understanding of the eerie in ambient music, sound is the potential meeting point of sound waves and a listening subject. Sound is highly physical and serves both to flesh out the perceptible world, and to situate the listener in their physical environment. Bonnet makes the comparison of colour and sound, suggesting that, although colour belongs to an object, it is light that allows the viewer to perceive it; so it is that sound belongs to a vibratory event, but it is the creation and travel of sound waves which allow us to perceive it.²¹ Sound creates a relationship with the auditor, the air around them, and the vibratory event, tying the hearing subject to the external world.

Salome Voegelin also takes great interest in how sound works with and upon the auditor. Vision, according to Voegelin, 'assumes a distance from the object,' whereas sound 'sits in my ear.'²² There is an undeniable proximity to sound. Where looking at an object inherently allows a perception of space between the body and object, sound is invisible. The perceptible distance between sonorous object and auditor can be misleading, fabricated or exacerbated depending on the acoustics of a space or the source of that vibratory event. An element which we see taken full advantage of in Eno's vast sonic landscapes. With no visual counterpart to represent scale, the audible worlds created in *On Land* are truly infinite.

Voegelin also makes the point that, in its invisibility, sound contains an ephemerality which renders hearing 'full of doubt.'²³ Without the reassuring distance sight can grant a subject, sound moves in the invisible, in the infinitely potential, in the endless. Friedrich Nietzsche describes the ear as 'the organ of fear' which, the philosopher claims, 'could have evolved as greatly as it has only in the night and twilight of obscure caves and woods.'²⁴ Vision brings with it a reassurance, a physical certainty. In horror films, often the most terrifying monsters or evil forces are the ones we never get to see. Vision rationalises and contains reality, whereas sound can work upon the imagination. Enabling fear, the sonic reality of a presence unseen denies the reassurance of the visual, thereby allowing, as Mark Fisher theorised in relation to the eerie, questions of agency to go unanswered. Here we can find a definite overlap of fear and the sensation of the eerie - fear of the unknown. A fear which is undeniably entwined with the auditory sense.

With this understanding of the process of active listening, and of the power of the audible to situate the listener in an invisible, ephemeral soundscape, we can begin to delve deeper into the expansive, eerie world of Eno's *On Land*.

²⁰ Bonnet, "Apprehending Sound," 90.

²¹ Bonnet, "Apprehending Sound," 84.

²² Salome Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

²³ Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, xii.

²⁴ Bonnet, "Apprehending Sound," 71.

Chapter 2



Memory

Childhood Memories

A heavy boot sinks into wet bog grass, the peaty mud sucking as it pulls away, trudging forward. The sharp green blades sway gently in the night breeze, a cold mist creeping among the grassy knolls and hovering over pitch black expanses of water. The moon is obscured by a heavy mist, affording the walker the merest suggestion of light and shadow. The ground is treacherous, wet, shapeless. There is no indication of a path, the walker is lost. Every step could plunge them into the icy black bog water. But there, in the distance, a light flares up, flickering and hazy in the gently dancing mist. A lantern, perhaps the light of a candle in a window. The walker plunges through the sticking mud, brushing past bog grass and making for the light. The mud sucks at their legs, but they push on towards the warm glow. They gasp with shock as cold water spills over their knees and into their boots, becoming soaked and heavy. Pulling their leg from the sinking mud, they forge on. But no, the light is gone. The night is plunged into fading moonlight once more.

The first few seconds of 'Lantern Marsh', the fifth track of *On Land*, immerse the listener in the eerie expanse of marshland. The high-pitched, wheeling tones which sound frantically and echo into the distance submerge the listener in a feeling of agitation. The pace of this piece is notably more urgent than its predecessors on the album. From the opening notes, the listener is transported to the vast marshes, lost, and sensing a rising panic.

Lantern Marsh, an expanse of miles of flat, deserted marshland, belongs to the Orford Ness National Nature Reserve. Comprising over 2000 acres of land, Orford Ness was owned by the Ministry of Defence until 1993, and has seen decades of violence play out on its eroding shingle coastline. Lantern Marsh is also a tourist attraction, and a childhood haunt of Brian Eno. Growing up near the East-Anglian coast, Eno captures a sense of childhood fear in the track titled 'Lantern Marsh.' The marshland is home to stories of spirits unable to cross into the underworld and damned to roam the marshes, luring lost travellers to a watery death with their lanterns. A site imbued with childhood fear and tension, Eno's sonic representation of Lantern Marsh (and the process of recalling memories throughout *On Land*) manipulates the chronological progress of time through the use of memory; and also explores memory as a spatial dimension, a place to be explored, but also a place vulnerable to erosion.

Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik explore the ways in which memory can be captured and represented - or re-presented - in the arts. They theorise that the act of remembering should be considered in its literal sense. That the act of 're-calling,' or 're-collecting' implies a 're-turn, re-vision, re-enactment, re-presentation: making experiences from the past present again in the form of narratives, images, sensations, performances.'²⁵ The arts according to Plate and Smelik have the ability to bring the past into the present moment with visceral intensity. Memory, considered on an individual rather than cultural scale, is an entirely subjective brain function. One which moves in records of physical sensation, but also in *feeling*, in emotion and mindset. This is also the world in which art operates - the arena of feeling.

On Land is a study in remembering. It is a collection of sonic landscapes, but these soundscapes also have an emotional dimension to them. They are born of childhood memories. To sit and listen to the immersive world of *On Land* is to experience a remembered past reality. In listening we are transported back to these halfway-real places, and at the same moment the past rushes up to imbue the present moment with the emotional landscape of Eno's memories. As a medium, music has a particular power to evoke emotion, and studies have proved a strong correlation between music, emotion and the formation of memory. A 2007 study found that, when presented with snippets from music of past popular songs, the subjects of the study reported that the music evoked both vivid autobiographical memories and strong emotional responses.²⁶

Music has the power to pull the past through time to invade the space of the present. Upon hearing a song from years ago, we do not simply remember having heard it before, we are transported to the emotional content of that memory, we feel *now* what we felt *then*, perhaps as an echo of those past emotions, but nonetheless we are moved to a past feeling. The same can be said of other senses, such as taste and smell. The famous tale of Proust's madeleine similarly explores this phenomenon of temporal rupture in memory. Upon experiencing the taste of madeleine and tea, Proust describes the sensation which overwhelms the narrator:

'No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory.'²⁷

²⁵ Liedeke Plate & Anneke Smelik, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6.

²⁶ Petr Janata & Stefan T. Tomic & Sonja K. Rakowski, "Characterization of music-evoked autobiographical memories," *Memory*, vol. 15, issue 8, (2007), doi:10.1080/09658210701734593.

²⁷ Marcel Proust, C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin Andreas Mayor, *Remembrance of Things Past*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981).

Proust speaks here of the pure emotion which overcomes him upon tasting the tea and cake, but it is 'detached' from any visible, tangible memory *per se*. Instead the *feeling* is reignited first, and it is only later in the passage that Proust begins to flesh out the memory around this powerful sensation: 'the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea.'²⁸

Music can work in a similar way to transport the listener to a time before. Perhaps, once again, it is the physical proximity of sound which makes this transportation so much more vivid than memories attached to visible stimuli. Sound, taste and smell all happen within the confines of the body, whereas touch and sight demand a distance between the self and the outside world. The experience of sound will always be a close one. Perhaps it is precisely that close proximity which also allows emotional memories to attach more strongly to audible memories. The closeness of what we hear and how we feel build up an internal reality of our experience in the world. Where vision records our place in relation to the world, and puts us at a distance from the external, sound (likewise taste and smell) and emotion can entwine to create an internal record of the world. This experience of the world *within* our bodies, then, can be recalled with much more potency than visual memories, because the body can recreate that internal landscape. The same synapses in our brains can be stimulated to re-animate that past feeling associated with the 'internal' sense of sound, taste or smell.

²⁸ Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Space and Memory

In *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, Plate and Smelik discuss the aforementioned process of re-presenting the past. For Plate and Smelik, memory must be considered as more than a linear record of past time, arguing that 'memory has not only a history: it also has a geography [...] The materiality of memory has a spatial dimension: it literally takes place.'²⁹ Memory is concerned with both time *and* space. On one hand, memory has a spatial dimension in a conceptual sense; as discussed above, memory works within the body to create an internal, self-referential world. On the other hand, Plate and Smelik propose an external spatiality to memory. We talk of events which 'took place', experiences which literally took up space and time in the material world, echoes and evidence of which we can see today in artefacts and ancient ruins. We fill the physical world around us with our memories, overlapping and overflowing into buildings which crumble away, into meadows which are churned up for harvest, into cathedrals which burn to the ground. The ground, the earth, watches and endures as human memories are poured into it.

Like all of us, Eno has filled the world around him with memories, and *On Land* is a testament to the spatial dimension of memory. In *On Land*, there is almost nothing but space in the remembered landscapes of Eno's childhood. What the artist has chosen to capture, in a way only the medium of ambient music truly can, is the scale of these half-remembered landscapes. The very materiality of *On Land* is memory itself - it is the result of remembering (and forgetting) places. Marc Augé proposed a theory for the production of memory which challenges the accepted idea of memory as an endlessly-updating database of experiences. Instead, Augé argues for the powerful, in fact fundamental, role 'oblivion' plays in the formation of memory. Taking 'oblivion' to mean 'loss of remembrance', Augé proposes that oblivion acts upon the mind, to leave behind what we understand as memory:³⁰ 'what remains is the product of an erosion caused by oblivion. Memories are crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shore are created by the sea.'³¹

Like the crumbling shore of the East Anglian coast, memory is, according to Augé, that which is spared the fate of being consumed by oblivion. We see this in our own memories, where the cruel hand of oblivion has eaten away at moments we hold dear. The details begin to fade, only the moments we hold onto tightly, those we revisit often, remain. The rest, though - what happened in the rest of that day, even in the next hour - is lost to us. *On Land* explores the work of oblivion and memory in its half-remembered, half-forgotten landscapes, recalled and re-presented through the medium of ambient music.

Through its use of half-audible drones and far-off, barely perceptible glimmers of piano strikes, *On Land* creates a complex soundscape in which sounds emerge for moment and then disappear into the dark, situating the listener in a sonic recollection of

²⁹ Liedeke Plate & Anneke Smelik, *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 8-9.

³⁰ Marc Augé, *Oblivion*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 15.

³¹ Augé, *Oblivion*, 20.

half-eroded memories of the English countryside. There is an undeniable tension between absence and presence in these unfinished memories. Ambient music, as we have already discussed, is designed to have no beginning nor end, instead each track on *On Land* submerges the listener into the depths of a gloomy soundscape, with no introduction nor journey. The sonic landscapes are representations of childhood memories, and therefore, as in Augé's theory, representations of how the mind *forgets*. The landscapes are vast and uninhabited by anything recognizable. The main subject of *On Land* is memory itself - in the presence of what can be recalled, and in the absence of what cannot: the presence of oblivion. The pointed emptiness of the album speaks again to its eerie nature. A soundscape of half-remembered, half-imagined elements represented in synthetic tones and complex, unsettling textures.

The presence of oblivion in *On Land* can be heard in the emptiness of the score, the lack of sonic subject to comfort the listener, and the way the track fades in and out of an infinite darkness. The tension between absence and presence is another element of Mark Fisher's characterisation of the eerie. Where a failure of absence where absence is expected, or conversely a failure of presence where presence is expected. However in the sonic memory-scape of *On Land*, not only is there a failure of the presence of any recognisable sonic subject, there is an absence, an emptiness, which is made very present - the darkness of oblivion.

In Plate and Smelik's exploration of the representation of memory in arts and culture, they find a notion of performance. To remember, we often enact a process of remembering, for example, in Proust's madeleine tale he is shocked by a *mémoire involuntaire*, but is consequently spurred on to remember more. He fleshes out the memory, thus performing an act of remembering. Plate and Smelik claim that 'the notion of 'performing memory' thus presupposes agency.'³² The question of agency is one which interacts with Fisher's understanding of the eerie. The eerie emerges, according to Fisher, when a question of agency arises and goes unanswered. This interlocks with the tension between presence and absence. Questions of: Is there something there? What made that sound? arise in places imbued with a feeling of the eerie. In *On Land*, the presence and absence of memory provokes many questions of agency which can never be answered. The origin of any sounds in the vast sonic landscape is intangible due to their synthetic development in a production studio: *On Land* is far removed from an audio recording of the sites it paints in sound. The landscape is further intangible due to its lack of origin. The tones or timbral textures, far-off sirens or rumbling percussion do not document or represent anything solid. They are a re-presenting of a memory eroded by time. The soundscapes encompass remembered, forgotten, and since imagined elements of the landscapes of Eno's childhood. This lack of anchor to any tangible reality renders *On Land* deeply unsettling, ethereal, and ultimately, eerie.

³² Plate & Smelik, *Performing Memory*, 3.

Chapter 3



Animating Landscape

The Yorkshire Moors

Long blades cut into soft calves,
Slicing the first drops of dew from my flesh.
They wave as my crunching footsteps limp on,
Gorging in the peaty mud,
Exploding the glassy surface of a mirrored sky,
Splashing the razor grass with grey cloud and wheeling flocks of swallows.

Ahead a wooden arm stretches out,
Its finger dripping yellow paint.
It points in grim silence into the mess of bog grass and gorse.
Chilling, formless fingers of mist
Caress the grey-purple hillside,
Oozing through tangled nests of heather, and
Dancing in the steady breeze, like the
Smoke of a candle twisting round the tongue of a laboured gasp.

The moorland sighs, its cool breath
Lifting the hairs from my arms.

8/11/21

Having grown up on the Yorkshire moors, I have always had a close relationship with the brutal, desolate beauty of the vast expanses of moorland. The huge skies, deserted footpaths and brisk northern winds make the Yorkshire moors a landscape of powerful, unyielding intensity to any who venture upon them. Above is a poem I wrote in November of 2021, living in London at a time when the country was still in the grips of the pandemic. With non-essential travel restricted, and stuck in a city reeling from the upheaval of Covid-19, I found myself pining for the endless, moody skies and scratchy purple heather of my childhood.

Upon reading Mark Fisher's *The Weird and the Eerie*, I could not help but picture scenes from the moorlands to accompany Fisher's examination of landscapes as a site of tension, and his analysis of the workings of the eerie. This quote taken from Eno's sleeve notes and printed in *The Weird and the Eerie* spoke precisely to my visualisation of the Yorkshire moors: 'the landscape has ceased to be a backdrop for something else to happen in front of; instead, everything that happens is a part of the landscape. There is no longer a sharp distinction between foreground and background.'³³ On the moors, the land reaches up to meet the sky, the rolling tops of the heathered hills seem to have no edge - no end. The sky, often animated by dramatic clouds of all formations, reaches down to the highest land points, and mist from the valleys sweeps up the hillside to merge with the grey-white clouds. The moors are decorated with centuries-old footpaths, and countless dead-end sheep tracks - waiting to lead an unwary walker to nowhere.

There are few places I have felt so alone as on the moors. You can walk for hours and not see another soul - especially on the greyest days. Trudging through mud and heather, the moorland becomes all-encompassing. The lack of human presence becomes overwhelming in the face of this ancient, lonely landscape. This is an environment in which I have experienced the eerie a number of times. A place which brings me great comfort and feels 'like home,' but can also provoke a profound sense of the eerie.

As in my poem, walks on the moors alone often begin with the physicality of the human body in the inhospitable terrain of gorse bush and wet, boggy ground. With no company but the yellow-painted signpost, the moors can begin to rise up. The mist cuts the high moorland off from the valley below, obscuring any hint of human presence, and the walker is left completely alone, with just the landscape surrounding them on all sides. The intensity of this alone-ness leaves a void which the landscape readily fills. The earth itself becomes the foreground of the scene. With no subject to subjugate the landscape to its place as background, it can rise up as a subject in and of itself. This shift of perspective makes the hairs on the back of the neck stand up. The empty landscape is suddenly full - full of the landscape itself. This unexpected presence in what should be absence is what evokes this ephemeral but undeniable sensation of the eerie.

The power of the Yorkshire moors to provoke a sense of the eerie is captured particularly well in the 2011 film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*. Directed by Andrea Arnold, this adaptation of the classic novel by Emily Brontë situates the Yorkshire moors not only as a setting for the action of the plot to take place in front of, but as a character in its own right. Wordless and threatening, the landscape in *Wuthering Heights* is a constant presence. From the opening sequence of quiet, misty moors at twilight, to the wind whistling feverishly through ill-fitted window panes, and finally to the penultimate shot of the film which sees Heathcliff striding out once again into the vast sea of rippling bog grass. The landscape is a constant actor in the film and captures, successfully in my opinion, some sense of the eerie which pervades the Yorkshire moorland.

³³ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 80.



Figures 2 & 3 ~ Stills from *Wuthering Heights* (2011), dir. Andrea Arnold

The Eerie Film Score

Wuthering Heights (2011) manages to capture some sense of the eerie in its foregrounding of the landscape. However, I would argue that the more powerful element of the film in its moments of eeriness is not evoked by the visuals, but by the soundtrack - or, more accurately, the *lack* of soundtrack. The lack of any sound at all other than the relentless northern winds and rain beating on windows creates a distinct absence in *Wuthering Heights*. Dialogue between characters is kept to a minimum, the director chooses instead to turn her macro lens to the characters' hands, rustling clothes, or the sweat on the backs of their necks. In the absence of voices and any score whatsoever, the soundscape of the moors rushes in to fill the void. That soundscape is continually present throughout the film. Even when indoors, the characters (and the viewers) are constantly reminded of the vast landscape surrounding them.

The shots of the moors are striking and capture the power of the landscape, but it is the unspoilt, unrelenting sound of the wind, of far-off birds' cries, of the breeze whistling through the fingers of a tree branch, which capture the immense scale of the moorlands. Film as a visual medium raises questions of what we, as an audience, experience when viewing a scene through a screen. Once again, the visual removes us from the reality of action, but in cinema the removal is twofold. Not only are we looking at an object *over there*, the viewer is constantly aware of its framing as a picture on a screen - something happening *in there*, in a world completely, reassuringly separate from the cinema-goer in their soft-cushioned seat.

In a cinema, even with the largest projector screen, the knowledge of the divide between the reality of the self, and the un-reality of the moving picture is inescapable. It is the soundscapes of films which fill in that space - that gap between viewer and the action of the film. Not only this, but sound also extends out from, behind and beyond the screen, continuing the sonic world past the edges of the curtain.

In a text from *Transmedia Directors: Artistry, Industry and the New Audiovisual Aesthetic*, Holly Rogers writes on the role of sonic landscaping in David Lynch's cinematic oeuvre. Rogers maps the director's distinctive sonic motifs across his works to identify the 'Audiovisual Eerie' present in his work.³⁴ Famous for his ability to capture the unsettling and strange, 'eerie' is an adjective which often appears alongside the name David Lynch. Rogers, however, identifies the eerie in Lynch's films as a current which pulses through his works in the form of sound: 'Lynch's worlds [...] evoke the eerie through both audio (dis)placement and sonic composition. Sound that hovers "in the air" without apparent source constantly displaces our attention and allows an eerie alterity to seep into the diegesis: who is making this disembodied sound; which image does it connect to; what is just beyond the frame?'³⁵ The question of agency is raised through the immateriality of the soundscape which alludes to a larger space *beyond* the frame of the screen. Once again Fisher's theory rings true: that the eerie is a sensation which rises up in the misty discomfort of unanswered questions of agency.

³⁴ Holly Rogers, "The Audiovisual Eerie: Transmediating Thresholds in the Work of David Lynch," in *Transmedia Directors: Artistry, Industry and the New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, eds. Carol Vernallis, Holly Rogers, Lisa Perrott (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), 241-270.

³⁵ Rogers, "The Audiovisual Eerie," 26.

Just as Lynch's soundscapes 'continually signify away from themselves. They point towards peripheral places that lie beyond the threshold and behind the curtain,' so too do Eno's sonic landscapes allude to space beyond the beginning and end of each track of *On Land*.³⁶ As was discussed in Chapter 1, Eno's ambient pieces are designed to have no hard edges. They fade in and out of earshot, certain tones appearing out of the murk suddenly, some inching forward, but all weaving a complex tapestry of amelodic, tonal textures which give the impression of continuing on forever.

Both the scores to Lynch's films, and Eno's ambient pieces create a self-conscious sonic space. Where Eno focuses solely on the audible as the subject of his work, Lynch uses soundscapes to subtly flesh out his visual work. Sound, for Lynch, renders three-dimensional the world depicted on a two-dimensional screen. These sonic worlds Lynch creates, which have consistent motifs across many of his films, create an unsettling experiential world for the audience to sit in while they observe the visual action on the screen. The discomfiting Lynchian soundscape is constructed with intention and maintains a consciousness of its place as a connecting tissue across the director's oeuvre.

On the other hand, Eno addresses the sound as place more directly, giving no visual stimulus to fill in the foreground of the experience. I would argue that Eno captures the eerie more poignantly in his ambient works because there is an absence of foreground, instead the 'background' sound rushes forward to fill the audience's field of perception. Film as a medium works hand-in-hand with sound. Indeed, Salome Voegelin claims that 'sound fleshes out the visual and renders it real; it gives the image its spatial dimension.'³⁷ When working in conjunction with the visual, sound works *upon* sight to flesh out the fictional worlds of film. When paired with the visual, the soundscape instantly becomes more coherent. Many questions of agency presented in the film score are answered by their visible sources on-screen. Ambient music does away with the visual altogether, casting the listener adrift in a dark sea of invisible unknowns. In this way, though film is a powerful medium for transporting an audience *elsewhere*, the visual will always represent a reassuring separation from the experience, as well as answering those questions of agency, of failures of both absence and presence, raised in its sonic counterpart.

³⁶ Rogers, "The Audiovisual Eerie," 41.

³⁷ Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, xi.

Chapter 4



Absence and Presence

Where is Ana Mendieta?

The play of absence and presence in Eno's ambient soundscapes is essential in its propagation of a sense of the eerie. The marked absence of subject, of human figure to animate the landscape and define foreground and background, allows the landscape itself to fill in that void. The landscape is often confined to the ornamental background of an image, out of focus and *in service of* an animating foreground subject (often of human design - a human figure, buildings, farm animals). Yet in Eno's sonic landscapes, the marshlands and beaches half-lost to forgotten memory rush forward from their usual background status, they come into sharp focus as the subject of their own sonic depiction. The experiential nature of ambient music furthers this shift in focus by allowing no perceptible distance between audience and landscape. Sculpted from sound, Eno's landscapes rise up and around the listener, immersing them in a three-dimensional space in which the landscape itself is the subject. The listener cannot animate the scene. There is no scene, there is only experience and they are no longer the subject of that experience. The landscape has risen up.

Another artist concerned with the tension between absence and presence, and the image of the human figure in the landscape, is the Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta. Figure 4 depicts one of the sculptures in Mendieta's series *Siluetas* 1973-77, a collection made up of over two hundred sculptures, body art and paintings. In Figure 4 we see the hollow shape of a human body. The earth has been carved away; legs, torso, head and raised arms scraped out and discarded, leaving only the scar. The violence of this work is undeniable. The gaping hole is silent and threatening, decorated only with an explosion of red powder thrown into the sandy pit. Over time the sculpture will erode away, the earth will heal this dark wound and nothing will be left of the figure in the earth.

The hollowed out figure in Mendieta's *Untitled* represents simultaneously a failure of absence and a failure of presence, failures which demand questions such as '*Why is there something here when there should be nothing? Why is there nothing here when there should be something?*'³⁸ These are the questions raised by the eerie, according to Fisher, and these are exactly the questions raised by Mendieta's hollow sculptures: Why is there a human-shaped hole in the ground? Why is there no body to fill it? In other words, where we expect the earth to remain whole, this dramatic scar interrupts that

³⁸ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 12.

expectation, and a failure of absence takes place. In addition, upon recognising the figural shape of the cavity, the viewer is struck by a failure of presence. Where is the body? There is an undeniable morbidity to Mendieta's *Siluetas*. The human-shaped excavation cannot help but conjure imagery of the grave and death.

What Mendieta accomplishes with these works is not only a representation of death but also an examination of the relationship between human mortality and the earth. Although we are lucky enough to have photographic documentation of these works, the originals were created with no audience, outside the walls of the studio, in the earth itself. The sculptures are, as Eno's music is, experiential works. There is a powerful physicality to the *Siluetas*, a physicality which forges a direct relationship between the human figure and the landscape and persists long after the click of a camera shutter. Once the photographer leaves, their footsteps fading away, the void remains. The inverted body carved from the earth is silent and still. Observed by no one, the earth begins its slow, relentless process of healing the emptiness, filling in the void with more earth until it is returned to its original state.

There is a parallel here between Mendieta and Eno's work: both foreground the landscape through an act of *removing* the human figure. In both Mendieta's sculptures and in Eno's soundscapes the landscape becomes the central focus of the works precisely by way of an absence: an absence of the human figure. Throughout art history, particularly in Western European art, the human figure has considered itself the subject of the landscape. An image which comes to mind is the famous painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) by Caspar David Friedrich. This iconic painting reveals the pervasive mindset that although the landscape may be mighty and beautiful, it is always, almost automatically, imagined *in relation to* the human figure. So what happens when that figure is removed? This is the question asked and answered by both Mendieta and Eno. There is, however, a slight disparity in the interpretation of this question for each artist - and this yields different results. Mendieta removes the human figure from the landscape and leaves behind a mark of their absence. She forces us to consider Earth's ultimate power over itself and, critically, our bodies once they have eroded away. However, Eno's removal of the figure from the landscape differs. Rather than erasing the figure, Eno presents us with sonic landscapes in which there simply is no figure, there is no trace. Indeed the landscapes of *On Land* hold no reference to humanity at all. They are simply memories of deserted beaches, foggy marshes and crumbling shores, filled with nothing but their own emptiness.



Figure 4 ~ Ana Mendieta's *Untitled: Silueta Series, Mexico, 1976* Photograph © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection

Agency

In *The Weird and the Eerie*, Mark Fisher writes: 'Behind all of the manifestations of the eerie, the central enigma at its core is the problem of agency.'³⁹ For Fisher, the eerie arises when a question of agency goes unanswered - a question which is first prompted by a failure of absence, or a failure of presence. According to Fisher, in the scenario of a failure of absence the question prompted is: 'Is there a deliberative agent here at all?' whereas in the case of a failure of presence, it is the 'particular *nature* of the agent at work' which comes into question.⁴⁰ The *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy's* definition of agency reads as follows: 'In very general terms, an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and 'agency' denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity.'⁴¹ An agent then, is a being, or a force at work which is the master of its own actions. Fisher considers the presence of an agent, or the nature of that agent to be foundational to our understanding of the eerie as a powerful sensation which affronts us with our perception of, and place in, the world. He writes that 'since the eerie turns crucially on the problem of agency, it is about the forces that govern our lives and the world.'⁴²

Generally we understand agency in terms of our own human experience and the ways in which social, economic and political circumstances can limit agency for different social groups. However, in terms of this discussion of the eerie landscape, agency must be abstracted. Agency in the eerie works in the site of tension between absence and presence which can be found in the deserted landscape, in Mendieta's *Siluetas*, and in Brian Eno's *On Land*.

The eerie cultivated in Eno's sonic landscapes, void of subject, void of human figure, hinges on a marked absence. The absence of an animating subject allows the *presence* of the landscape to pour into that space. When there is nothing *but* the landscape, then it becomes everything. And if the natural world, which we usually exclude from conceptions of agency, is perceived in its all-encompassing presence, suddenly there is something there. Imbued with a sense of the eerie, we feel a presence in the emptiness; in the bird crying out into the quiet, the rustling of shrubbery, the natural world thunders on as it always has. Only in these moments of solitude, when the human figure does not dominate the landscape, only then do we begin to notice the agency of the natural world, only once we begin to *listen*.

Fisher explores the agency of the landscape in both Eno's *On Land* and in Jonathon Miller's television adaptation of the 1904 ghost story "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad" by M. R. James. Fisher claims both works capture the eerie in a similar way; by allowing the landscape to become the 'foreground.' He suggests the eerie in both Eno and Miller's work is achieved by a process which positions the landscape 'as an agent in its own right.'⁴³ Through the intentional emptiness of Eno's *On Land*, the agency which is usually reserved for human action, can be felt in the sonic landscape.

³⁹ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 63.

⁴⁰ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 63.

⁴¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Agency," (October 28 2019). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/>, accessed 18/04/22.

⁴² Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 64.

⁴³ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 80.

The third track on the album, “Tal Coat”, opens with the bubbling, gulping sound of water in a drain, with a chorus of synthetic whispers approaching and retreating through the three-dimensional sonic space. The complex web of textural whispers speaks to this sense of agency in the landscape. Who or what is whispering, just out of earshot? What are they saying? Two low, sliding bass tones feel like a sensation which comes with the eerie: the stomach drops. A sonic representation of that moment of realisation - you are not alone. The landscape’s scale and complexity become overwhelming and the ever-expanding web of liquid and wind currents which carry the whispers on a dance surround the listener, submerging them in the endless soundscape. “Tal Coat” is made to feel vast through the use of sweeping synths imbued with a highly-diffused reverb which floats away into the darkness. Echoing outwards beyond the speakers, they carve a cavernous space out of the air behind the ever-retreating tone. The sonic landscape opens up and the listener is confronted by the enormous scale of their surroundings.

This moment of realisation, the moment at which the landscape rushes forth into the foreground and its huge scale is made visible, is a key part of the eerie. Fisher describes that moment when the hairs on the back of the neck stand up, the stomach drops slightly, when we feel suddenly affected by the eerie, as the ‘shudder of the eerie.’⁴⁴ This shudder is brought on by a radical shift of perspective. Where Fisher describes the uncanny, or *unhomely*, as an invasion of the ‘inside’ by the ‘outside,’ the eerie is a moment of altered perspective - when we suddenly ‘see the inside from the perspective of the outside.’⁴⁵ In landscapes which should be comfortably familiar this shift reveals our surroundings to us with sudden, shuddering intensity. The boggy purple hillside of the Yorkshire moors suddenly becomes alien, threatening, full of a sense of its own presence, and I am confronted with my own insignificant and unwelcome presence in the mighty landscape. ‘There is no inside except as a folding of the outside; the mirror cracks, I am an other, and I always was.’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 12.

⁴⁵ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10.

⁴⁶ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 12.

Chapter 5



Mortality

The eerie emerges at the site of tension between absence and presence, at moments when questions of agency are raised and cannot be answered. The eerie positions the individual in relation to their surroundings and forces a new, altered perspective of the world around them, a perspective which strips the human figure of its place of priority over the landscape. The foregrounding of the landscape is the catalyst for a sense of the eerie and Brian Eno's *On Land* is a study of the particular eeriness of the all-encompassing sonic landscape.

Eno's ambient music seeks to create a boundless sonic environment which spills into the air and immerses the listener in a world of tonal textures with long, brooding synths and percussive beats working together to paint a landscape of sound. From his production choices to the speaker setup diagram included in the sleeve notes, Eno pushes the musical, auditory experience to its extremes. *On Land* explores the quiet, untouched, unseen places of Eno's memory and pulls them forward through time into the present. Left behind, and represented in the studied emptiness of the album, are the forgotten moments: the parts of Eno's childhood memory lost to oblivion. Their dark, hollow presence is felt in the infinitely expansive sonic field created in *On Land*.

Sound is shown in Eno's work to be a powerful medium for situating the self very closely to the world around us. The act of listening brings the sonic world *into* the listener and ignites a profound sense of one's place in the world. Sound is also shown to be an instrument of fear, of the invisible, of the wicked imagination, and of powerful memory recall. *On Land* is a study of the half-forgotten landscapes of Eno's childhood. The eerie present here is catalysed by the simultaneous movement of absence and presence through its compositions.

The most powerful move Eno makes in *On Land* is to foreground the landscape. He erases the human figure from its historical dominance over the landscape, and allows the hills and beaches to rise up with an agency and power the Western European imagination is not accustomed to. To experience this sensation out in the world is to feel a powerful shift of perspective. Suddenly the human figure is no longer the subject, but lost in the vast, overwhelming presence of the landscape, which fills the emptiness of the deserted moorland, the sea cliffs, the marshland, with itself - with its own presence. The scale of the earth becomes suddenly apparent, and the human figure rendered insignificant in turn. This shift in perspective goes further than geographical scale, however - it also concerns time.

There is a temporal element to this dramatic shift of perspective which is greatly unsettling. A temporal rupture or shift, similar in some ways to the story of Proust's madeleine. The tea and cake in Proust's tale act as a powerful transportative device for the author to be confronted with his own past, his own timeline. The author describes a 'shudder' as the tea and cake passes his lips, a shudder which is accompanied by a wave of 'exquisite pleasure.'⁴⁷ Proust's shudder is one of elation and indulgence. In the joy of nostalgia, Proust is confronted with his own timeline, and this self-indulgent, self-affirming sensation reassures Proust of the importance of his life. He writes: 'This new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal.'⁴⁸ The experience of *mémoire involuntaire* affirms Proust as the centre of his own universe. The shudder of the eerie is similarly temporal, but with more unsettling consequences.

The human-shaped voids of Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas Series* represent an absence of figure in the landscape. These works foreground the power of the landscape, but still centre upon the human figure - or lack thereof. Instead, in Eno's ambient works, the human figure is not removed, but was never there in the first place. The soundscapes have no indication of human intervention whatsoever. Produced using electronic synths and digitally manipulated, the spaces created in *On Land* are empty of the human figure, but that emptiness leaves no trace, instead it is swallowed up by the presence of the sonic landscape. Once the landscape is foregrounded, the human figure - the self, is no longer the subject of the scene which it inhabits. The historical Western European image of humanity as master over nature is inverted. The human becomes insignificant. The 'shudder' of the eerie that Fisher describes is that moment of realisation, that shift of perspective which allows us to 'see the inside from the perspective of the outside.'⁴⁹ We see our own lives in relation to the life of the earth, zooming out and looking from afar upon our place in the world as it really is - fleeting, insignificant, a blink in the eye of time. To experience the eerie is to be confronted with our own mortality.

Eno's *On Land* moves in this space where the human becomes irrelevant, the landscape is all there is, and its scale is - if not captured, then clearly invoked. The vast soundscapes to which the listener is transported through the tracks of *On Land* are full of a sense of intentional emptiness which allows the eerie to occur. A sense of the eerie borne out of the tension between presence and absence looms out of the darkness of oblivion and memory and confronts the listener with their own insignificant mortality in a powerful shift of perspective. The mirror cracks, but I am not an other - I am nothing.

⁴⁷ Marcel Proust, C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin Andreas Mayor, *Remembrance of Things Past*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981).

⁴⁸ Marcel Proust, C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin Andreas Mayor, *Remembrance of Things Past*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981).

⁴⁹ Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10.

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Figure 1 ~ ~ ~

Diagram of speaker setup in the inner sleeve notes of *Ambient 4: On Land* (1982) by Brian Eno, http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian_eno/onland-txt.html.

Figures 2 & 3 ~ ~ ~

Stills from *Wuthering Heights* (2011), dir. Andrea Arnold

(Figure 2: [https://m.media-](https://m.media-amazon.com/images/M/MV5BOTZIYWNmN2UtOGZIZS00MzVjLTllOWItN2I5YTY0N2NmNjlkXkEyXkFqcGdeQXVyOTc5MDI5NjE@._V1_.jpg)

[amazon.com/images/M/MV5BOTZIYWNmN2UtOGZIZS00MzVjLTllOWItN2I5YTY0N2NmNjlkXkEyXkFqcGdeQXVyOTc5MDI5NjE@._V1_.jpg](https://m.media-amazon.com/images/M/MV5BOTZIYWNmN2UtOGZIZS00MzVjLTllOWItN2I5YTY0N2NmNjlkXkEyXkFqcGdeQXVyOTc5MDI5NjE@._V1_.jpg);

Figure 3: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EnB3lmUWEAIKPIz.jpg>).

Figure 3 ~ ~ ~

Ana Mendieta, *Untitled: Silueta Series, Mexico*, 1976 (Photograph © The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

<https://museemagazine.com/features/2017/11/20/w413qtz3xpqjl0lc2yzm1aar30395l>).