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A QUESTION OF BACKGROUNDS: SITES OF LISTENING

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In 1951 John Cage entered an anechoic chamber at the University of Harvard. He expected to hear silence; what he heard has now become a legendary anecdote about this experience. Twenty-four years later from his sick bed, Brian Eno had a revelatory experience of listening to music through a broken hi-fi while confined to a hospital bed. Although several years apart, these two individual experiences both stimulated new modes of engaging with, creating, listening to and understanding music. These two distinct creation myths (to use Seth Kim-Cohen's description[1]) are reference points from which the discussions in this chapter develop. The intent in this chapter is to examine the site of listening in which these two events took place, not the physical locus itself, but as the contextual site in which these two events took place: namely, the 'background'. The discussion of ambient music will be centred around Brian Eno's *Discreet Music* (1975) and *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978). *Ambient 1* was the first mention of the term 'ambient music', yet the roots of what led to this development are evident in *Discreet Music*. All references to ambient music will be based on Eno's liner notes from these two albums.

By focussing on the background, we can pose several questions: How can we understand the sonic foreground if we do not consider or disregard the sonic background? What role has the background for the contextual perception of what is in the foreground? I will argue that the background is the context which supports our listening, and that this contextual presence is

1 Seth Kim-Cohen, *Against Ambience and Other Essays* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

integral to our understanding of the music we are listening to. This chapter seeks to address these questions through the perspectives of music, film sound, game sound and 3D audio applications.

These different sites of listening share one central aspect which permeates the act of listening, namely the acousmatic. The acousmatic listening situation is one in which the source of a heard sound cannot be seen.[2] In this way, the acousmatic listening experience of a sound becomes a subjective perceptual experience, which has ontological consequences for how we understand the sound. Importantly, acousmatic listening forces us to focus on the sound itself and not the potential source, and this focus implies an intentionality in our listening. Sites of listening share and reference various narratives, and are linked by common conceptual threads and metaphors which intersect and overlap.

Silence in site

Seated on a chair in the anechoic chamber, John Cage heard two sounds – one high and one low. The engineer in charge told him that the high-pitched sound was his nervous system and the low-pitched sound was his blood system.[3] Famously this experience inspired the composition of Cage's 'silent piece', *4'33"* (1952), which is scored for any instrument or combination of instruments, where the performers are instructed not to play their instruments during the three movements. Indeed, the piece is far from silent. Cage wanted to focus the audience's attention on one particular aspect of musical and sonic perception, specifically that when music is silenced, there is still sound. "Until I die there will be sounds",[4] Cage wrote about the experience in the anechoic chamber, arguing that there is no such thing as silence.

2 Pierre Schaeffer, *Treatise on Musical Objects: An Essay Across Disciplines*, trans. by Christine North and John Dack (Oakland, CA.: University of California Press, 2017).

3 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 2010), 8.

4 Ibid., 8.

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Cage wanted to let sounds be themselves. This was a mode of understanding sound and music on its own terms and not simply "man-made theories of expressions of human sentiments".[5] Yet in the anechoic chamber there was also a third sound. Douglas Kahn observes that,

> […] there was a third internal sound isolated, the one saying, 'Hmmm, wonder what the low-pitched sound is? What's that high-pitched sound?'[6]

This observation indicates a level of mental activity which is in a constant state of analysis, in an ever-present listening situation. This mental mode of analysis could be seen to run counter to the credo of allowing sounds to exist of their own accord and we as human listeners merely to accept them. Cage was faced with the sounds of his own body as an acousmatic experience: first through hearing unidentified sounds; then, by recognising them, understanding that the room was not silent after all. Finally, he realised that this situation was not something he could control and that such sounds are there regardless of surroundings and circumstances.

In *4'33"*, Cage suppresses the traditional structuring of both a musical creation and a musical performance and brings the ambient environmental presence to the foreground. The background, which we 'listen beyond' at concerts, is now the focus of our attention. Like Cage, we hear that it is not only the sounds of the ventilation system, the passing cars and the shifting people next to us which make up this background sound: our own rumbling stomachs, head-scratching and movements also make up the totality of the sonic experience. James Pritchett has observed that:

5 Ibid., 10.

6 Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1999), 190.

> Confronted with the silence, in a setting we cannot control, and where we do not expect this kind of event, we might have any number of responses: we might desire for it to be over, or desire for more interesting sounds to listen to, or we might feel frightened, insulted, pensive, cultured, baffled, doubtful, bored, agitated, tickled, sleepy, attentive, philosophical, or, because we "get it," a bit smug.[7]

Cage's text, in which he proclaims that there will be sound until his death, was originally given as a presentation to the Music Teachers National Association in 1957. Like Brian Eno's liner notes for *Discreet Music* and *Music for Airports*, I view these texts as artist statements that both comment on the origins and artistic motivations of the music as much as the technical and creative process. Had Cage never visited an anechoic chamber, such a physical setting would have remained an idealised space in which to experience silence.

As Douglas Kahn has pointed out, the third sound in the anechoic chamber was Cage's internal voice interrogating what he heard. This interrogation is as much a product of the surprise he must have felt at hearing sound in a space where he expected to hear nothing, as it is from a desire to analyse a listening perspective to separate sounds from their causes to hear them as themselves.

The act of 'silencing', or desire to explore silence, was explored by Cage in a number of works, despite his surprise experience in the anechoic chamber. Although *4'33"* has arguably become one of his most famous (silent) musical works, pre-dating it is the unrealised *Silent Prayer* (1948). Cage wanted to compose a work of silent music and sell it to the Muzak Corporation, effectively silencing the utilitarian sonic accompaniment of commercialism.[8] Although never realised, *Silent Prayer* was located outside the traditional confines of the concert hall (where *4'33"* was located) and the "western

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7 James Pritchett, "What silence taught John Cage: The story of *4'33"*," *The anarchy of silence: John Cage and experimental art* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani di Barcelona, 2009), 167.

8 Seth Kim-Cohen, *Against Ambience and Other Essays* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 17-20.

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compositional tradition, which was, after all, his target".[9] With the silencing of background Muzak, Cage wanted people (all people, not just concert goers) to attend to the sounds of their surroundings and not have them masked by an unobtrusive yet omnipresent soundtrack. Whatever the potential impact of *Silent Prayer*, turning the attention towards the concert hall with *4'33"* engenders more concentrated and focused listening.

Douglas Kahn points out that *Silent Prayer* was more about conventional notions of silence than the silencing of an ever-present soundtrack, yet the result would still have been an increase in the environmental 'background' sound. The question still remains whether listeners would feel a sense of liberation having being freed from such functional music within their ambient environment, and thereby experience a heightened sonic awareness of their surroundings, or would be disconcerted by a sense of absence arising from the ubiquity of such Muzak.

Thresholds of sites

In the liner notes to *Discreet Music* (1975), Eno relates the story of his listening to an album of eighteenth century harp music a friend had brought him whilst in hospital. Having put the album on and gone back to his bed, Eno realised that the volume was set too low and one of the speakers was broken. Lacking the energy to get up and do something about it, Eno instead listened to the album just above the threshold of the background noise. This experience sparked in him a new way of hearing music mediated through or as an additional layer within our everyday environment.

Although pre-dating *Ambient 1* by three years, this experience, which led to *Discreet Music*, helped define the structure and formulation of what Eno came to call ambient music. Later, in 1978, in the liner notes to *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Eno introduces the concept of ambient music and describes

9 Ibid., 19.

ambience as atmosphere and "a surrounding influence".[10]

Eno's epiphany arose from the fact that, for the most part, we expect things just to work and when they do we ignore them as objects and only relate to the function each object affords. Only when an object stops functioning in the way we expect it to does our attention or awareness become more intently focussed on it. This functional awareness was exacerbated as Eno was ill and unable to get up easily and rectify the faulty equipment. Had Eno been at home in his living room, the experience could have simply sparked irritation over having to sort out the broken speaker, or the volume dial swiftly cranked to compensate for the lack of volume, so producing a very different listening experience. Listening to music at, or just below, the environmental noise floor, is an attempt to steer listeners away from hearing the music as music per se, and rather as something that melds into the background, interspersing the sounds of cutlery or as soft playback at a shopping centre or in an elevator.

The spatial constructs which surround us provide a state of flux from which to interpret listening as a type of ambiguity, particularly so for the two historical examples cited so far. Both situations – the sick bed and the anechoic chamber – not only provided important insights into modes of listening for both Eno and Cage, but the experience also prompted insights into the sites of listening. Each site prompts a different mode of listening, either to the sounds of your own body or to music which seems to be both audible and inaudible. Listening from his hospital bed prompted in Eno an awareness of his immediate spatial sonic environment and the relationship of the harp music to these surroundings, the music to the listener, and the listener to the surroundings. In one site we expect there to be sounds and the other site we expect silence. Both events bear a resemblance, in the acuity of the listening experience, to what Laurie Spiegel calls "slow change music",

10 Brian Eno, 'Ambient Music', liner notes from the initial American release of Brian Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (PVC 7908 (AMB 001), 1978).

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in which there is "little density of change, slow change, minimal change"[11] and as a result causes the ear to be more and more sensitive to subtle shifts in the music. For Spiegel and Eno, there is also an aesthetic emphasis and preference on the types of sounds used to create this perceptual state, while for Cage, it was about the sounds being themselves. Although different in intent, Cage's and Eno's work influences our listening by drawing attention to the subtle changes in the background. Cage's understanding that there was no such thing as silence related to his mode of perceiving his surroundings. Although Cage's oeuvre contains open works of any duration, particularly the happenings (1959-1968), it is Eno's ambient 'surrounding' music – which could last forever. This is in part due to Eno's compositional method, and his use of technology, particularly generative software, where the slow change of sonic materials and variation of their density can become vastly extended.

The site of wallpaper

The wallpaper, furniture and background all come into view when reading Eno's liner notes and listening to his subsequent music productions. One can understand Joanna Demers' comment that "ambient musicians in general seem a highly secure bunch, content to make music to be ignored".[12] Citing Erik Satie[13] and Muzak[14], Eno is clear that his music should be suitable both to be listened to and to be ignored. Long drawn out melodic lines, with no sharp attacks and long decays, lend themselves to music that could be played continuously for extended periods of time. Prolonged listening would enable this music to drift in and out of the background. Indeed, the inspirations from

11 Laurie Spiegel, "She has the technology," interview with Frances Morgan, *The Wire*, October 2012, issue 344.

12 Joanna Demers, *Listening Through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 116.

13 Brian Eno, *Discreet Music* (CD) (Virgin Records Ltd., ENOCDX 5, 2009).

14 Brian Eno, liner notes, *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (CD) (Virgin Records Ltd., ENOCDX 6, 2009).

both La Monte Young and Steve Reich are evident, in their almost hypnotic repetitions. Yet, repetition also indicates a change, which becomes evident over time. The presumed flattening of a music such as ambient propagates a difference between foreground and background in its temporal experience. The object of audition is not changed in any way, rather the change happens in the receiving subject.

It is clear that the intentional act of selecting a piece of music for listening certainly does not warrant a want or desire to ignore the music. Rather, all are intentional acts that have a clear sense of purpose. If the music is experienced in a different setting, say an airport terminal, then we return to the direction outlined in *Discreet Music*, where the music exists at times above and at times below the threshold of background sounds. In this way, ambient music is placed in a space where it cannot be critiqued. Seth Kim-Cohen points out a key aspect in the interpretation and understanding of such art works, namely that "one of the sites to which any work must be specific is the site of art history: of the traditions, works, artists and ideas to which it responds. It doesn't matter if an artwork wants to be engaged thus. It happens anyway".[15] The importance of this insight is that all works will always be viewed in context to some other object, thing or creation to which it stands in some form of relationship.

Being ignorable can be seen both as an insistence on being left to one's own devices as well as an insistence on aspects of timelessness. The long, stretched out, soft passages, with predominantly tonal and simple melodic contours, imply a music that could continue on into infinity (were it not for the listener pressing the stop button). One of the strengths in this type of musical communication is the freedom to hint at and imply spatial relationships both in the musical material and in the listener's reception of the material. Unlike other genres or modes of communication, ambient music can freely move in a perceived spaceless and timeless fashion. However, something timeless

15 Kim-Cohen, *Against Ambience,* 44.

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is perceptually placed 'outside history' and thus has and will always exist. Cage's revelation certainly brought an understanding that the sounds which surround us are always there, regardless of our listening to them, and as such, the background which we listen to and against is always present – but never placed outside our personalised temporal history.

Experiencing broken sound equipment would often lead to irritation but "it is usually broken equipment which comes to conscious attention"[16] and it is precisely this that is at the heart of Martin Heidegger's famous tool analysis. Heidegger discusses this with regard to *being* or "being-there" (*dasein)* in the example of the hammer. The identity of a hammer is not defined by its apparent visual or physical characteristics but its relationship to other things that it references, such as nails and wood. Objects are therefore given their identity in the context of other objects, or in the case of living things, what they encounter and experience. More broadly, identity is constructed in relation to the other things, meanings, perspectives and narratives that exist in relation to it.

For Edmund Husserl, intentionality is related to the objects which lie before the mind – the objects of our perception are objects of *something*: "All perception, judgment, love, and hate is perception, judgment, love, or hate *of some object*".[17] While Heidegger broke with this perspective and found the understanding that all things that reveal themselves to us in consciousness are only a small subset of the objects which surround us. The hammer is one example of this. The identity of the hammer itself is only revealed to us when it no longer functions as a hammer, while previously the hammer was an object in and of itself and taken for granted by accomplishing the tasks which we needed it for.

According to Heidegger, the broken hammer brings the nature of the object itself into focus. In our interaction with the objects which surround us,

16 Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 174.

17 Ibid., 173.

only a small part of this awareness makes up our conscious interaction with the world; for the most part objects retreat to a hidden realm, supporting our perceptions but seldom making themselves visible.[18] Heidegger's reference to "tools" is not limited to specific objects such as hammers, drills or wheelbarrows: Eno's broken speaker is indeed one such tool experience.

Unseen site

A site refers to a specific position or location. We are surrounded by objects with a function we take for granted. When the 'ambient' is conceptualised as a "surrounding tint",[19] we experience the ambient not only as something which is all around us, but also as an ever-present entity. When faced with listening to the ambient we are experiencing something that Eno described as a "music to swim in, to float in, to get lost inside".[20] This presumed immersive quality of the music places it outside our ability to discern between the objective and subjective space of our perception. Indeed, this immense immersive experience disintegrates the hierarchy of foreground and background, and with that our ability to discern some contour to the musical experience and our surroundings which makes the experience omnipresent. The consequences of the site of the ambient is highlighted in the work on film sound by Michel Chion, which indeed demonstrates that an ambient surrounding influence is imperative to understanding the foreground.

Our listening is influenced and affected by something which is hidden and Chion refers to this as the *acousmêtre*. The *acousmêtre* is an acousmatic character, hidden from view, who creates a sense of ambiguity to the scene of a film. It is a character who hides "behind curtains, in rooms or hideouts",[21] and who is implicated in the action and all the while on the verge of being part

18 Ibid., 37.

19 Brian Eno, *A year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 293.

20 Ibid., 294.

21 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129.

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of it. The powers of the *acousmêtre* – the cinematic figure of an audible voice without a clearly visible body – depend on "whether or not the *acousmêtre* has been seen".[22] This background, conceived in film, is far from siteless, but the reduction of site is tied to the abstracted nature offered by both film and games. The contextualizing site is acousmatic, it is hidden from view but the sounds themselves are fundamentally *of the* site, as they belong to the context from where we view and hear the foreground. The *place* does not need to be a physical location, but the place as a site of understanding is the central focal point in this mode of listening.

A listening protagonist in the *acousmêtre* is found in both of the two creation myths referenced at the beginning of this chapter, always hidden from view but present in the receiver's consciousness. The immersive site is no longer a protagonist who at one point or another comes into view, rather the site itself is the protagonist and the sounds we hear are *of* the site. In this way, it is something which *is*, and presumably always will be. Eno's experience of listening to an acousmatic ambience in Ghana exemplified this perfectly.[23] Listening on location through headphones, and hearing an unseen nature chorus is interpreted as an acousmatic listening experience of abstracted sound. Through this act of *becoming music*, it then ceases to be music when projected back out onto the landscape as something omnipresent.

Chion refers to ambient sound (which he also calls 'territory sound') as "sound that envelops a scene and inhabits its space"[24] and that does not reveal or embody its source. Becoming music is then becoming site. By being a background, the ambient is a now-ness, an entity which is always present. The now-ness of the ambient in its present-ness is implicit in this immersive experience of our surroundings. The absence of a foreground in ambient

22 Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39.

23 Brian Eno, liner notes, *Ambient 4: On Land* (CD). (UK: EMI -Virgin Records - 50999 6 84530 2 2, ENOCDX 8, 2009).

24 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 75.

music immediately situates the experience of ambient music on the objects closer to us, our own bodies, the room we are in, the relationships we have, and the experience between us and our surroundings. But fundamentally, listening is intentional hearing, and the relationship between the music and our listening initiates a mode of analytic attention where the music not only merges with non-diegetic sounds of the background, but also springs from this background to our diegetic present-ness.

Diegetic sounds are sounds which come from a character or focus present in the foreground, and non-diegetic sounds are from somewhere beyond the foreground. Chion identifies non-diegetic sounds as, among others, musical underscoring[25] to accompany a scene. Indeed, the interplay between these foreground and background sounds represents a kind of self-awareness in its present-ness. There is never any doubt as to what we are listening to – if the music retreats to the background but demands our intentional focus, then it is no longer of the background but wholly in the foreground. This seemingly simple topology is followed in the IEZA framework[26] where the audio of the fictional world of a computer game needs, on the one hand, an environment for individual sounds and sound sources, and on the other, background sounds that create the context for how these sounds are perceived.

The background is, as Cage and Eno both experienced, always present. Indeed, it is inescapable: "We are surrounded by noise. And this noise is inextinguishable. It is outside – it is the world itself – and it is inside, produced by our living body. We are in the noises of the world, we cannot close our door to their reception, and we evolve, rolling in this incalculable swell".[27] This inextinguishable noise is, in Chion's terms, the non-diegetic part of our experience; something that exists outside the scene yet which

25 Ibid., 73.

26 Richard van Tol and Sander Huiberts, "IEZA: A framework for game audio," accessed February 10, 2018, http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/3509/ieza_a_framework_for_game_audio.Php

27 Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 126.

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plays an important part in how the scene is understood. This inextinguishable noise is what has dominated the examples presented here.

Environments and sites

Sites of listening share overlapping and intersecting narratives and metaphors, and as ambient music is a conceptualised surrounding influence or tint (to paraphrase Eno), then the focus has been on the background and our perceptions of this background. In most, if not all, acts of composition or song-writing there is a preoccupation with the production of space, or implied space, whether it is a large, church-like reverberance or a small, intimate experience of being close to a singer, instrument or environment. This creation space is strongly related to our experience *of* our surroundings and in our relation *to* our surroundings. As such, ambience labelling information is the classification of,

> […] information that is perceptually important but which we don't 'focus' on: 'background'. Without this background, the 'foreground' objects of perception don't actually make sense, and we might regard this background as a *context* for sounding objects, helping us to discern and position them.[28]

The background is the context from where we read and make sense of the sounds which surround us, be it a sick ward or an airport. The musical interpretation is highly dependent on this environmental site as a vantage point for our perception. Indeed, David Griesinger[29] has found that the sonic background of a performance space can have unique timbral and spatial properties, and

28 Peter Lennox, Tony Myatt, and John Vaughan, "3D audio as an information environment." In *Audio Engineering Society Conference: 19th International Conference: Surround Sound-Techniques, Technology, and Perception*. Audio Engineering Society, 2001.

29 David Griesinger, "The psychoacoustics of apparent source width, spaciousness and envelopment in performance spaces," *Acta Acustica united with Acustica* 83, no. 4 (1997): 721-731.

this background can impose very distinct characteristics or timbral colouration on the sound which is experienced in a space. In addition, it is our particular spatial positioning when experiencing music that helps our understanding of what we hear. As listeners, we try to understand our context dependent on the perspective from which we experience our situation, by attempting to recognise patterns and make connections between what we hear.[30]

These patterns can produce a sense of ambiguity, perhaps making it difficult to discern the direct signification of what the sounds represent in the spaces in which we hear them. These ambiguities carry with them implications from the different contexts from where they are experienced, and the acousmatic experience of listening from a site provides psychoacoustic descriptions of audio environments. Then we experience that "no sound event, musical or otherwise, can be isolated from the spatial and temporal conditions of its physical signal propagation".[31] A non-diegetic sound experience is the experience of an acousmatic sound, a sound which carries with it some significations of the space in which it is experienced.

In examining fundamental questions of sound in game audio, the IEZA framework draws on Chion's work on on-screen and off-screen sounds. Listening is a mode and function of gathering information about the environment we navigate, be it against a metaphorical site like an airport, a game or film world. In building fictional game worlds, the challenge is to create a believable environment in which the separate sound sources can exist and be accepted as part of the game environment. Sounds are placed coherently within a space against a texture/background and these must exist against the background to make sense.

The environmental and background stimuli, and the relationship of the perceived sound to the background sound, hovers at and around the

30 Gary S. Kendall, "Meaning in electroacoustic music and the everyday mind," *Organised Sound*, 15(1), (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010): 63-74.

31 Jean-François Augoyard, and Henry Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience: A guide to everyday sounds.* trans. Andrea McCartney, and David Paquette, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2014), 4.

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threshold of perception and "the listener […] accepts their symbiosis".[32] But in attempting to *be* the background, to meld into this present-ness of our perceptions, the ambient "foregrounds a devaluation of foregrounding".[33] Importantly, the background and the ambience is interpreted as music. If the insect and bird background chorus can be understood and listened to as music as is, then the synthesised backgrounds that exist acousmatically in (any) site can also be music. Music, in its broadest sense can be "related to a sense of place – landscape or environment".[34]

By pertaining to belong to or be part of a landscape, the aim of such music is ultimately to create a fully acousmatic situation, where the origins and causes of the sounds are erased and the only thing we are left with is a music that *is*.

In the psychoacoustic depictions of audio environments, listening implies an active engagement and intention in discerning the foreground sound and background sound. Chion divides the listening spectrum into three parts: on-screen, off-screen and non-diegetic,[35] and likewise Lennox breaks down the shapes of our space perception to three parts: my space, adjacent space(s) and distant space.[36] The fundamental importance between these spatial perceptions is the connections between them and how the sounds in my space/on-screen is influenced by the sounds of a distant/non-diegetic space.

Conclusion

For the most part, we expect things to work and when equipment ceases to function as we expect it to, it grabs our attention. For Eno, the broken speaker prompted listening focused on the threshold between the music and

32 Seth Kim-Cohen, *Against Ambience*, 33.

33 Ibid., 33.

34 Brian Eno, liner notes, *Ambient 4: On Land*.

35 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 78.

36 Peter Lennox et al., *3D audio as an information-environment*.

background sounds, while for Cage the anechoic chamber did not function as expected. Whereas Cage subjectively experienced his body's sounds, Eno attempted to present the work outside this sphere into a separate objectivity. The lessons to be learned from both Cage's 'silent' *4'33"* and Eno's ambient works concern our hierarchies of listening. Our attention turns toward the background, past the foregrounded sounding objects to create a new foreground present in our consciousness. This new foreground creates a new perceptual space, a depiction of an audio environment which can encompass references to real, fictional and metaphorical sites of existence or perception. Yet, regardless of the site in which a work is situated, it will always be experienced in relation to the site of history and in context to other objects that reference it or stand in some form of relation to it. A site is not always a physical place but rather it is a process, a set of conditions and something which has perceptual significance. The site of the ambient belongs intrinsically to a site present in our consciousness, and this site is present in its reference to other things, meanings, narratives and other sites.

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