



the weird and the eerie
the psychology of place and space

Lecture 8 - Essay Seminar | Coexistent Perspectives (ADAA7000)

Question 3. Space and Place: *How do contemporary creative practices engage with the politics and poetics of space, including questions of displacement, postcolonial geography, affective architectures, or the uncanny? What critical frameworks can be used to analyse these spatial imaginaries?*

Question 4. Time, Memory and the Archive: *In what ways do contemporary artists and designers reimagine time, memory, and archival practice, whether through repetition, rupture, slowness, or non-linear temporality? How do these temporal aesthetics intersect with cultural, technological, or historical concerns?*

Essay Example 1 Rachel Whiteread — The Uncanny Architecture of Absence



Essay Example 1: Rachel Whiteread *The Uncanny Architecture of Absence*

Essay Question:

How does Rachel Whiteread's sculptural practice evoke the uncanny and hauntological dimensions of domestic space?

Essay Thesis:

Whiteread's casts of interiors materialise the traces of lived absence, transforming ordinary domestic architecture into spaces of haunting and memory. Through the logic of inversion and void, her works such as ***House* (1993)** and ***Ghost* (1990)** reveal the psychological and spectral layers of the everyday, aligning with Freud's notion of the *unheimlich* and Derrida's *hauntology*. In these "empty presences," the familiar becomes estranged — a condition Mark Fisher describes as the eerie: where something remains when there should be nothing.

Links to Lecture 8 Themes:

- *Unheimlich* (Freud), *Hauntology* (Derrida), *Eerie Presence / Absence* (Fisher)
- The domestic space as psychic threshold; the house as haunted architecture.

Outline Essay Structure:

1. **Introduction** — Introduce Whiteread and the idea of the home as a site of psychic residue.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Freud's *uncanny*, Derrida's *hauntology*, Fisher's *eerie*.
3. **Formal / Material Analysis** — Casting, negative space, domestic architecture as trace.
4. **Interpretation** — The home as an affective container; memory, absence, and loss.
5. **Conclusion** — Whiteread's "haunted minimalism" as a poetics of psychological space.

Example Essay 2 On Vanishing Land (2013) Mark Fisher and Justin Barton

The Eerie, the Weird, and Psychogeographic Sound



Example Essay 2: On Vanishing Land (2013)

The Eerie, the Weird, and Psychogeographic Sound

Essay Question:

In what ways does *On Vanishing Land* (Fisher & Kirby, 2013) construct an eerie psychogeography of the English landscape?

Essay Thesis :

On Vanishing Land operates as a sound essay mapping the Suffolk coastline through the twin affects of the weird and the eerie. Drawing on Fisher's theoretical distinctions — the weird as a presence that “should not be there” and the eerie as an absence that “should be” — the work turns landscape into auditory hauntology. Through field recordings, ambient sound, and fragmented narrative, it evokes a liminal geography where memory, labour, and history collapse into one another. The result is a spectral cartography of place — a psychogeographic reanimation of England's haunted edges.

Links to Lecture 8 Themes:

- The Weird and the Eerie (Fisher), Psychogeography (de Certeau, Sinclair), Liminal Landscapes
- The English coast as affective terrain of disappearance, dislocation, and spectral modernity.

Outline Structure:

1. **Introduction** — Frame Fisher's “eerie landscape” within British hauntological aesthetics.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Fisher on the weird/eerie; de Certeau and Sinclair on walking and psychogeography.
3. **Work Analysis** — Sonic textures, voiceover fragments, archival echoes.
4. **Interpretation** — The coastline as liminal zone: where past industries and futures vanish.
5. **Conclusion** — Sound as spatial haunting; the politics of listening in post-industrial England.

Essay Example 3 Sophie Calle — *Liminal Encounters and the Poetics of Absence*



Essay Example 3 Sophie Calle — *Liminal Encounters and the Poetics of Absence*

Essay Question:

How does Sophie Calle's work explore liminal experience and the psychological thresholds between presence and absence, self and other?

Essay Thesis:

Calle's performative investigations — from *The Hotel* (1981) to *Voir la mer* (2011) — occupy the liminal zone between observation and intimacy, public and private. Her practice converts acts of looking into spatial and psychological crossings, blurring the boundary between documentation and confession. Drawing on Victor Turner's concept of liminality and Deleuze's notion of the *oceanic*, Calle's work renders the act of witnessing itself as a threshold condition — an affective suspension between knowing and not knowing, being seen and unseen.

Links to Lecture 8 Themes:

- *Liminality* (Turner), *Threshold Experience*, *Voyeurism and the Gaze*, *Oceanic Feeling* (Deleuze, Freud)
- Emotional topographies of waiting, searching, and witnessing.

Outline Structure:

1. **Introduction** — Introduce Calle and her fascination with thresholds and absence.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Turner's *liminality*, Freud's *oceanic feeling*, phenomenology of the gaze.
3. **Case Studies** — *The Hotel* (1981), *Voir la mer* (2011).
4. **Interpretation** — Surveillance, intimacy, and the border between art and life.
5. **Conclusion** — Calle's liminal poetics as a form of psychological cartography.

Artist / Work	Core Theme	Key Theorists	Conceptual Focus	Key Works
Rachel Whiteread	Uncanny architecture / Hauntology	Freud, Derrida, Fisher	The domestic as haunted space	House (1993), Ghost (1990)
Mark Fisher & “On Vanishing Land”	Eerie psychogeography	Fisher, De Certeau, Sinclair	Sound, landscape, and the spectral	On Vanishing Land (2013)
Sophie Calle	Liminality / Oceanic thresholds	Turner, Deleuze, Freud	The threshold between self and other	The Hotel (1981), Voir la mer (2011)