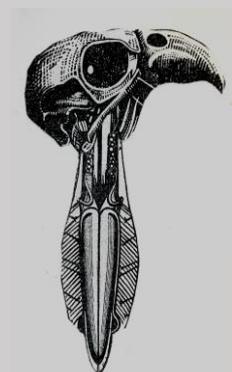


Subsongs



Subsongs is supposed to function like the soundtrack to a non-existent film. The images evoked by these songs depend on the imagination of the listener.

This text gathers some information on the songs and recording process. If you think that this info could add anything of value to your listening experience or are otherwise interested, go ahead.

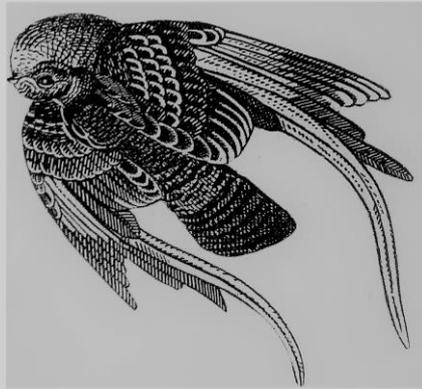


Subsongs itself is a term borrowed from ornithology. It means any utterances from birds that are not associated with their standard 'songs' that make them recognizable as a species (e.g. the subsong of crows includes a lot of chirping and/or melodic sounds that are not normally associated with their 'krah' song. These recordings also function on a level below the traditional understanding of songs).

Birds are the central protagonists in this absent movie. Not as a stand-in for nature, more as a metaphor for 'far removed from human', the other, the alien yet familiar. Some titles refer to this more or less directly: *Hatching and Sprawling* is what birds generally do, *Traceless Movements* is a description of flying, *Exits of the Sky* are what birds find when they land anywhere.



The Parliament of Birds refers to both a fictional secret language in William Gibson's 2014 novel *The Peripheral* and the ancient Persian poem *منطق الطير* (*The Conference of the Birds*) by Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar. In this poem, the birds of the world gather to find their sovereign, the legendary *سيمرغ* (*Simurgh*). Most of the birds perish during their journey until there are only 30 left. At this point they realize that they are the true sovereign, as *مرغ سی* (*si murg*) literally means 'thirty birds'. The idea of a birdlike and post-human sovereign is picked up in *Bird Superior*. This title is borrowed from the character *Loplop* (or, in German, *Hornbom*) in Max Ernst's 1929 collage novel *La femme 100 têtes*. Allegedly *Hornbom* was the name of a pet-parrot that Ernst had as a child. The *Bird Superior* and the *Woman with a Hundred Faces* destroy religion, capital, and patriarchy. If there is a visual cue for how this imaginary movie could look like, it lies in these collages. The bird noises heard in these songs are from a variety of field recordings I did in the past years, mainly of crows. The voice of *Bird Superior* is that of a blue-and-yellow macaw parrot caged in Gruga Park in Essen, Germany.



The other song titles are appropriated from different artistic and philosophical sources. They are not intended as explanations nor do they add a deeper meaning to the music. Instead these titles were chosen to add a semantic texture and set certain atmospheres or scenes.



Dark Precursor is a term borrowed from Gilles Deleuze's 1968 book *Différence et répétition*. The *précurseur sombre* is a kind of weak electrical charge that precedes a lightning strike – an imperceptible notion of the coming change that will create a difference not yet here: "Thunderbolts explode between different intensities, but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible *dark precursor*, which determines their path in advance but in reverse, as though intagliated. Likewise, every system contains its dark precursor which ensures the communication of peripheral series." (Deleuze 1994, p. 119)

The Ritual of Unemployed Negativity refers to a concept by Georges Bataille from a letter sent to Alexandre Kojève in 1937. *Négativité sans emploi* is a perversion of the conceptual role that negativity plays in Hegel's thought (and its reading by Kojève). After the 'end of history' (i.e. after the revolution) negativity will no cease. Bataille's question is what will become of unemployed negativity in the sense that it does not progress anything, remaining negative without the productive role of a 'negation of negation'. "If the act (the 'doing of things') is – as Hegel says – negativity, the question arises whether the negativity of one who has 'nothing more to do' disappears or is subsumed under *négativité sans emploi*. Personally I can only decide on the one sense, my own being exactly this 'negativity out of work' (I could not define myself better)." (Bataille 1937) The field recording starting this song was made in a Buddhist columbarium near Kyoto in 2012.



The Phantom of Capital is a nod to Luis Buñuel's 1974 film *Le Fantôme de la liberté*, but in reversal. This phantom is not one of liberation, revolution, or the power of dreams. It serves as the phantastic embodiment of capital as automatic subject described by Marx and the main antagonist of the narrative (if there is one). Capital as a disembodied voice speaking in tongues which nobody understands but issuing orders that everybody follows.



Terminal Beach is the title of a 1964 short story by J.G. Ballard. A man whose family died goes to a pacific atoll that was used as a testing site for nuclear weapons where his mind and body slowly disintegrate. The terminal beach is the archetypical landscape of the Anthropocene: "The series of weapons tests had fused the sand in layers, and the pseudogeological strata condensed the brief epochs, microseconds in duration, of thermonuclear time. Typically the island inverted the geologist's maxim, 'The key to the past lies in the present.' Here, the key to the present lay in the future." (Ballard 1964). I was not aware of this story when I chose the title. The beach in this subsong is terminal in the sense that it may be the place of showdown, the final conflict. The field recording this song is built around was made at Jaffa beach, Israel in 2019.



The Final Machine underlines both the finale and the closing titles. It's like a doomsday device that got turned on but doesn't have an off-switch. This refers to Japanese noise artist Ôtomo Yoshihide's concept of 原発くん (*Genpatsu-kun*, 'little reactor boy'), developed in the aftermath of the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011, as cited in David Novak's book *Japanoise* (Durham 2013, p. 171).



- A1 Dark Precursor
- A2 The Parliament of Birds
- A3 Hatching and Sprawling
- A4 Traceless Movements
- A5 The Ritual of Unemployed Negativity
- B1 The Phantom of Capital
- B2 Terminal Beach
- B3 Exits of The Sky
- B4 Bird Superior
- B5 The Final Machine

Recorded 2020 in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg.

Sources:

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