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NON

Ultrablack Resistance

You sit at a table. You engage in a conversation with others. A lively, vivid, but still civilized, rather calmly moderated conversation on current affairs. The statements go back and forth, the heat rises, then dies down again. Then you say:

We have the opportunity here to blather like socialists. Some can speak evolutionary talk, others can speak revolutionary talk, yes. And what happens objectively? Oppression will not change at all! Television is an instrument of oppression in this mass society! And that is why it is quite clear here that if anything is going to happen here, one must stand against the oppressor. One has to be biased. This has to be said here. And that's why I'm gonna break this table now. Yes, so that everyone knows! (Nikel Pallat quoted in Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 85–86;¹ translated by Holger Schulze)

And that's why I'm gonna break this table now. An erratic act occurs. This very act of breaking the table, it breaks at the same time all the carefully established and maintained consensus supposedly supported by everyone – until this very moment. This consensus is now cancelled in the most disruptive and most violent way. It could only have been more violent if one of the participants had violently attacked another one – and thus ending the consensus. But by this performative act of destroying the wooden tabletop – maybe even rehearsed or at least planned ahead before arriving at the television

studio – this very participant is inscribing his dissenting position unmistakably into all the other participants' memories and, in this case, even into the collective memory of all who watched this TV show, heard or read about it – or watched it more recently in some online repository. This act took place in a TV talk show aired on German television on 3 December 1971. The protagonist was Nikel Pallat, singer and manager of the famous Berlin band Ton Steine Scherben, well known at the time for popular rock songs that encouraged and flamed the protest and the unrest of 1968 with Marxist demands for liberation imagined in lyrics and in melodies. However, the described scene in the talk show had actually next to no impact regarding the talk show itself (aside from Pallat, already on his way out, taking some precious microphones with him for imprisoned young comrades). Yet, the urge for dissent, for disruption, for difference, for denouncing and dismantling a false and fake consensus is archived and memorialized in this act and its recording.

This setting in of a break, of a separation, of a substantial, not only occasional disagreement, of a fundamental critique and disengagement is a dark and a hurtful one. Explicitly stating such an unbridgeable difference and disruption between one and another – between me and you – is at the same time painful as it grants relief. Nikel Pallat's act precisely performs this actual pain and agony that might have been felt at the time by not so few of the participants at the talk show's table. Pallat's act externalizes in his flesh and in his action what was to be experienced as a repressed affect at the time, three years after 1968. A repression that might have also materialized in a transition from rather peaceful activism, demonstrations, interventions of civil disobedience into meticulously planned, transnational and wilfully cruel and threatening terrorist acts. But with Pallat's act this agony is, at least in this very TV show, exposed and not any longer concealed or covered by polite and gentle small talk. The pain is tangible in this undoubtedly awkward moment – as it is in any sudden and eruptive articulation of long repressed feelings. With this manifestation of pain in an otherwise seemingly all cleaned, whitened and painless environment for public entertainment, only with this moment of *breaking the table* the harshness of this situation could have been exposed. The situation is then thoroughly *blackened*. This situation, right now and right here, does not any

longer look as if it were devoid of all characteristics and conflicts. However it turns out to be replete and densely filled with each and every particle of conflict, pigments of taint, contaminated to the fullest with all unresolved struggles of the past decades, in politics and in capitalist exploitation – including the exploitation and degradation of genders, ages, bodies in their abilities, of lifestyles and heritages.

This break from the usual and the dominant, the white, the devoid, blank and hegemonic, this break is *ultrablack*: it is *NON*. This rupture is probably the strongest symptom of dissent. It does not necessarily present or even advertise a better, a more desirable or even possible future utopia. No sense of a desirable *acid communism*, of a *generative syrrhesis* or possible new world is presented as alluring stimulus. Yet, this very act materializes and realizes primarily the existing rupture in lifestyles, in economies, in the *Produktionsverhältnisse*, the conditions of production at present times. *NON* is a marker of radical and fundamental resistance. *NON* cuts off the lines of communication and of negotiation with current consumer cultures. *NON* cuts off the habit of servicing the oppressor, it stops the care work for the oppressor – strictly following Audre Lorde's famous dictum: 'This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns' (1984: 113). This is the ultrablack rupture. A rupture that is performed in radical opposition to an oppressor: 'You have to be biased' (Lorde 1984). For in this radical rupture in all its ultrablackness also stand the twenty-five and more *interpretive communities*, discussed in the previous chapter. But what precisely is an *ultrablackness*?

Ultrablackness

Do you consider resistance against the existing order of things these days necessary? Then where is the foundation for this order in regard to politics, economy, sociality, ecology or even in the sciences and in the arts? How would one then more specifically resist against these – apparently quite questionable yet seemingly rather indispensable – foundations? What constituents, what institutional apparatuses and what interpersonal, what societal

and political agreements would then, consequentially, need to be rejected, revised, to be dismantled or bluntly annihilated? For if one would miss only one minuscule but crucial element of this foundation in our habituated order of things, one would surely then never have the slightest chance at all of aiming at a progressive post-institutional arrangement of everyday life. This fundamental critique and resistance against all things present is considered as *black*. This form of fundamental resistance represents therefore a monolithic opposition. This opposition is directed against, as addressed in the previous section, all the conflicts, all the pain, all the suppression, the torture, the violence and the everyday power relations of disciplining and punishing in contemporary societies. The resistance against all of this considers itself as black – and as black it is represented on the political spectrum, in protest marches and in activism. But this black might just not be enough. According to Marxist theorist, head of the record label *Force Inc. Music Works* and chief editor of the online magazine *NON*, Achim Szepanski, the colour of contemporary and future resistance has to be *ultrablack*: a black that is more than black. With black studies scholar Fred Moten one might diagnose here two background effects that might have led to this very notion of the ultrablack.

The first background effect is, what Moten calls *black fugitivity*, a ‘predisposition to break the law’ (Moten 2003). With Moten this predisposition is grounded in the colonial history of alienated blackness and deportation into the society of a white and alien culture. It is almost necessarily so, that deported persons, not familiar, not educated and neither learned, trained or introduced into all the meticulous details of this alien culture, must get recurrently into conflict with this culture and its arbitrary regulations, laws and etiquettes. This is effectively *not* a predisposition of the deported personnel but of the alien environment they have been deported to. It extends to the children of deported families as they even more so are assigned a life in alienation and already in fugitivity – before they even entered an age or lifestyle of an adult. Now, one could have argued for other forms of fugitivity also, referring to other deported persons, from other areas of the colonized globe, or to other people being alienated for their religious beliefs or other criteria that were chosen at one historical point for discrimination.

However, already the very definition of fugitivity leads to a more specific understanding of blackness in this specimen of resistance. Jack Halberstam defines the concept of *fugitivity* as follows:

Fugitivity is not only escape, ‘exit’ as Paolo Virno might put it, or ‘exodus’ in the terms offered by Hardt and Negri, fugitivity is being separate from settling. It is a being in motion that has learned that ‘organizations are obstacles to organising ourselves’ (The Invisible Committee in *The Coming Insurrection*) and that there are spaces and modalities that exist separate from the logical, logistical, the housed and the positioned. Moten and Harney call this mode a ‘being together in homelessness’ which does not idealize homelessness nor merely metaphorize it. Homelessness is the state of dispossession that we seek and that we embrace: ‘Can this being together in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused, this uncommon oppositionality, be a place from which emerges neither self-consciousness nor knowledge of the other but an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question?’ I think this is what Jay-Z and Kanye West (another collaborative unit of study) call ‘no church in the wild.’ (Jack Halberstam in Harney & Moten 2013: 11)

Fugitivity is being separate from settling: being together in homelessness, the state of dispossession that we seek and that we embrace. Fugitivity therefore represents a starting point of resistance that first of all accepts its own dispossession, its being discarded and disavowed. This *uncommon oppositionality* represents a constant state of being alienated: a state from which any activity of resistance, of demanding and of building another framework of social, economic or cultural life can only set in. To set this as the ground of blackness and ultrablackness frames it in a way that doesn’t ignore the *sonic colour line* (Stoeber 2016) reconfirmed here but that reflects upon it and results in acknowledging the involuntary trajectory towards fugitivity, towards questioning the social commons, and hence also working towards a revolutionary state. A major part of this revolutionary strategy of blackness and ultrablackness is then the instalment of a fundamental rejection of existing institutional procedures, regulations and orders of speech,

of ideological frameworks, of epistemological and ontological, of ethical routines and habitual forms of behaviour. Everything has to be rejected – and everything has to be rethought. It needs an act of major and painful disruption, an act of distancing, maybe even of violently marking a break, a rupture, a stopping of routine communication: the axe that is hacked into the table during conversation. Szepanski recognizes precisely this distancing and disruption in the theory practice of sonic fiction. For him, sonic fiction is a striking approach and research strategy that acknowledges, scrutinizes and acts accordingly to this catastrophe. An almost necessary catastrophe as he suggests:

It is a kind of disaster studies, an act that breaks down the formal structures of space and time. In the mimicry of this approach to electronic music, both in science and in music, the formal structures of time collapse, regress to mud, and space is pushed back and forth until it bends to be trampled by the pulsations of alien music, while the thinking space becomes seasick. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 66;² translated by Holger Schulze)

The formal structures of time collapse, regress to mud, and space is pushed back and forth until it bends to be trampled by the pulsations of alien music, while the thinking space becomes seasick: this is the disruption as it can be experienced when ultrablackness hits you. When the all-consuming, all-absorbing and all-imploding might of ultrablackness exercises its power of radical, pervasive and fundamental negation. The one message, the one action, the one intervention of ultrablackness is taking an axe and ramming it into the fake common ground or shared table and says: NO.

The critical step here is the construction of the exclusive opposite. Underground Resistance say somewhere that disappearance is our future, and according to Eshun the Black Power of UR should therefore be invisible, not identifiable, hidden, unrecognizable and not public. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 71;³ translated by Holger Schulze)

This unidentifiable blackness of the exclusive opposite is represented by ultrablackness. The sonic warfare performed, enacted

and facilitated by artists, designers and musicians is unhidden as a revolting practice:

With this, the war machine is completely ready for action. As a mob of machinists with technical apparatuses, the guerrilla unit fights against the machinic-urban machine body of capital. Writing and music can also be war machines. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 74–75;⁴ translated by Holger Schulze)

NON

The radical restart of a revolutionary disruption in the sciences and humanities then sets in for Szepanski with the non-philosophy of François Laruelle. Laruelle's project of a *non-philosophy* is driven by comparable desires as they have been articulated by Michel Serres, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari or Brian Massumi. All these authors and thinkers come to the painful diagnosis that the long tradition of academic philosophy has actually left all the pressing and actual issues of thinking, sensing, living and doubting in everyday life and in the individual struggle of existence smugly behind. Such an attack against academic philosophy is, obviously, one of the most noble rhetoric figures in the history and in the arsenal of philosophy itself. It represents, again and again, the overly excited signal horn and fanfare before introducing yet another branch of philosophy that will be assimilated, sooner or later, into academia. In this case here, though, this urge to bring the untamed, the wild and unordered, the chaos of sensation and desires, of practices and sensibilities, of fears and of the real back into a discursive format of thinking actually *did* generate and still generates radically new forms of writing, of conceptualizing, and even of sensing. However, it also contributes to the establishing of new forms of academic philosophy – which needs to be considered a major flaw, in this case, alas; I will come back to this paradox later in this chapter.

This *non-philosophy* – and equally any kind of *non-studies*, *non-science* or *non-research* – does not actually signal the end or a prohibition of scholarly research activity. The prefix or epithet *non* more specifically puts a halt to one common, rather unquestioned

and fundamental practice in research: the practice of excavating and then distinguishing dialectically the fundamental and ontological categories in, what researchers call, *The World* or *The Reality*. Such first distinctions, enshrined in the notorious, scholarly phrase ‘Draw a distinction!’ (famously ascribed to mathematician George Spencer Brown, and later almost compulsively cited by German systems theorist Niklas Luhmann) apparently are the foundation of any endeavour, any effort, any project or argument in modern scholarship. Whereas such distinctions seem to be fundamental to the established habits of scholarly research and academic writing, they can effectively hide some more contestable if not questionable insights, findings or *worldviews*, *Weltanschauungen*, in exactly these unquestioned axioms before drawing the first distinction. It is a well-known sleight of hand in theory and philosophy to hide all the potentially most contested propositions or claims precisely in the prerequisites *before* the first distinction – so not many readers might even question those.

In contrast and in resistance against this practice of hiding crucial interpretations a non-philosophy following Laruelle goes back to this very start. In this very respect it is neither an *anti-* nor a *meta-*philosophy. Both interpretations can be found in the history of philosophy – each time implying and operating carefully with yet just another major distinction or a series thereof – for example taking the *body* or *perception* or *energies* or *infinite regress* or *continuous processuality* as a prerequisite for all subsequent distinctions, categorizations, reflections and arguments. So, if one would translate non-philosophy’s effort as: *We must go back to the things themselves!* then this would only recall the efforts of phenomenology since its beginnings around 1900: ‘Wir wollen auf die “Sachen selbst” zurückgehen’ (Husserl [1913/21] 1984: 10). The efforts in this case have indeed primarily achieved the establishment of a new branch, a new school, and a number of new chairs, departments, academic societies, journals, handbooks and encyclopaediae along its path of doing philosophy in a new way, *phenomenologically*. Yet, following Laruelle and other non-philosophers this precisely is what they do not intend to achieve. A non-philosophy to the contrary does continually reject any operating within the philosophical realm of a spectrum of interpretations, branching out ever further and further, into ever more detailed differentiations and distinctions, ever more departments, journals and handbooks. These instalments though

could be, from one point in time onwards, a possible side effect of this research activity but it surely is not the first desired goal of non-philosophy. ‘Decisional closure’ (Tilford 2017: 140) is being infinitely postponed.

If a non-philosophy now indeed makes a strong effort *not* to become just another part of the scholarly philosophical canon, what then is it? How can one operate and not be quickly assimilated or find oneself drifting into a new branch of philosophy? Or, more pragmatically: what kind of activity – if it is not drawing distinctions, arguing, proving and reflecting – are non-philosophers then actually performing? *What are non-philosophers?* François Laruelle gives the following answer in the form of an almost literary description of non-philosophers:

I see non-philosophers in several different ways. I see them, inevitably, as subjects of the university, as is required by worldly life, but above all as related to three fundamental human types. They are related to the analyst and the political militant, obviously, since non-philosophy is close to psychoanalysis and Marxism – it transforms the subject by transforming instances of philosophy. But they are also related to what I would call the ‘spiritual’ type – which it is imperative not to confuse with ‘spiritualist’. The spiritual are not spiritualists. They are the great destroyers of the forces of philosophy and the state, which band together in the name of order and conformity. The spiritual haunt the margins of philosophy, Gnosticism, mysticism, and even of institutional religion and politics. The spiritual are not just abstract, quietist mystics; they are for the world. This is why a quiet discipline is not sufficient, because man is implicated in the world as the presupposed that determines it. Thus, non-philosophy is also related to Gnosticism and science-fiction; it answers their fundamental question – which is not at all philosophy’s primary concern – ‘Should humanity be saved? And how?’ And it is also close to spiritual revolutionaries such as Müntzer and certain mystics who skirted heresy. When all is said and done, is non-philosophy anything other than the chance for an effective utopia? (Laruelle 2004)

Non-philosophy is, therefore, closer to activism, to a pragmatic lifestyle that intends to transform everyday life, maybe the arts and

sciences, but surely politics and public discourse: *should humanity be saved? And how?* Non-philosophy asks the questions of *science fiction* in *science's reality*. Again in this case the imaginative, suggestive and viral potential of science fiction is taken up and employed to energize and to accelerate the effects of an intellectual practice. The literary richness and elaborated details, the realistic complexity of issues and their possibilities of manifesting in science fiction and its thought experiments make it also here a very versatile genre to enhance even, against all clichés, the realism, the pragmatism and the activism of a theory. This theory practice of non-philosophy, is – and this brings it very close to the writings of Serres and Eshun, also of Badiou or Debray – characterized fundamentally by its *radical immanence*. Non-philosophy does not primarily intend to erect yet another interpretative edifice on top of other insights, research findings and artefacts and ‘to manufacture artificial problems to suit its own pre-determined and ideologically imposed solutions’ (Tilford 2017: 140); to the contrary, the goal of this new and non-standard philosophy is to describe and to analyse the immanent reality indeed in its immanence. Non-philosophy rejects therefore traditional philosophy’s,

Peculiar arrogance toward its object of inquiry ... the pretension of philosophy to elevate itself above any object or discourse in order to offer a philosophy of it: a philosophy of science, of art, of music, etc. ... Convinced that its object is fundamentally ignorant about itself, philosophy is little concerned with what that object has to say on its own behalf. (Cox 2013)

Non-philosophy, hence, sides with its *object of inquiry* and assumes it as the actual and leading *subject of inquiry*. Non-philosophy is in this very sense non- and unphilosophical. It does not elevate itself above its objects, yet it thinks with the practice theory inherent to the subject in question: it explores what this research subject has to say on its own behalf. Should one call this then a *barbarian philosophy* in the best sense? Or, when inverting an insult into a noble epitheton: a *crude philosophy*? Because a non-philosopher rejects thereby any actual separation between certain crafts, sciences or practices on the one side of everyday life – and their reflection, modelling or theoretization on the other side of an academic hermitage. Non-philosophy recognizes that

such a separation is factually and methodologically an ancient and dead distinction that bears next to no reference in the reality of commodified research activities acting in a market of funding bodies. Non-philosophy claims that the best and most appropriate description of a field in reality emerges almost inevitably, *generically* out of the intrinsic actions, operations and reflections present in this very field that is being reflected, indeed an *effective utopia*. Achim Szepanski, probably one of the most energetic and rigorous agents of non-philosophy these days in the German language, translates this non-philosophy then into a *non-musicology* – enmeshed with Kodwo Eshun’s approach of sonic fiction:

Sonic thinking or non-musicology composes theory as its own object, writes an autonomous music fiction Fiction implies performance, invention, artifact and construction, not only in a non-expressive and non-representational sense, but rather as immanence. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 63;⁵ translated by Holger Schulze)

Sonic thinking as non-musicology emerges, according to Szepanski, from sound practices and sonic artefacts. It is *not* separated from them but is their adequate continuation (Fowler 2015; Steinbach & Szepanski 2017). The craft of musicking and sonicking is not distinct from the craft of theorizing, investigating, or analysing sonics and musics. Non-philosophy insistently demands *not* to separate the research practices of a discursive reflection from precisely those particular material practices they are actually reflecting on. Following Laruelle, this non-separation is even one of the main characteristics of a non-discipline. This ‘non-decisional immanence’ (Tilford 2017: 141) though does not entail that there could never exist separate fields of practice or of social experiences. Yet, this non-separation implies that any scholarly approach to a field of practice has first to acknowledge the generic, the field-specific and the materially informed discourse and reflections grounded in the practice of the field in question. Scholarly reflection, then, must *not* open up a new and superior (and often detached, patronizing and condescending) discourse outside this field of practice. A non-discipline is grounded and based in these practices and their generic forms of knowledge. Again, Eshun’s famous dictum resonates here with a strong repercussion: ‘music today is already more conceptual

than at any point this century’ (Eshun 1998: -004—003) Or, again in Michel Serres’s concepts, Syrrhesis trumps analysis.

Rhythmight

For Szepanski and his approach to sound the *rhythmight* is essential. Like in other areas of non- or de-disciplinization following François Laruelle’s non-philosophy, also the non-discipline of sound and music revises established idealist and historically tainted concepts – tainted by strategic and political concepts of *The Human*, of *Freedom*, of *Wealth*, of *Liberation*, or of *Democracy*. This materialist revision is, obviously, not a merely academic endeavour. As Terry Eagleton recently pointed out, it is an epistemological urge rooted in the fact that ‘the senses...are constitutive features of human practice, modes of engagement with the world’ (2016: 62) – and at the same time, following Klaus Theweleit (2018): ‘People live in bodies, people are bodies.’ This new materialism then in all its manifold varieties, be it as sensory, as sonic or as feminist materialism, then seems to ground contemporary and progressive research in a more fundamental sense.

Non-philosophy and *non-musicology* undoubtedly follow this path, yet without the common pathos or fervour often to be found in more recent approaches to materialism. Instead, non-musicology and non-philosophy both undercut and undermine contemporary edifices of theories as they are taught in universities and regarded as *common sense* – in the worst, most ideologically repressing sense of this word. Programmatically, this new musicology, *non-musicology* or *Musicology?*², with a question mark significantly added to the word, starts out with the physiological and the material substance of sound and listening at its core as postulated by composer, performer and producer Jarrod Fowler (2015):

Musicology? [*sic*] is the proper start of non-musicology nearly freed from the vicious circle of the musical composition. Musicology? strikes from samples to pulse ‘rhythmight’ with rudiments through an anticausal method of percussive dialectics (rhythmics), which (inconsistently) counter-counts.

Such an explication of non-musicology – cited by Steinbach Szepanski in *Ultrablack of Music* (2017) – is primarily referring to musical and sonic substances, their physical and physiological effects as well as their complex meshwork made out of affects and reflections. Eshun is following with sonic fiction such an explication. Experiential phenomena are being explored and narrated here that probably hadn't been thought of by listeners, critics or even researchers for quite a while – yet, they constitute possibly the major object of reflection for generic practitioners, producers and musicians. The material and affective substance of sound, the oscillations, amplitudes, the swinging and the percussive rhythms are inextricably melted together in this generic approach by assuming a deeply monist *hearing perspective* (Auinger & Odland 2007). Rhythmight, hence, is one of the typically generic categories a non-discipline such as *non-musicology* would propose:

A rhythmight is the non-musicological term for a non-musical practice of indifferent hearing that replaces the formerly narcissistic music of X. (Fowler 2015)

With this definition the detour from an anthropocentric focus on individual expressions and a dynastic genealogy of artists, schools, styles and music history is performed. This pervasive genealogy is replaced instead by a transhuman, a situated, and a relational category; a category encompassing all sorts of agents, intensities and effects. Fowler (2015) writes further:

So, for instance, instead of some 'music of science' or some 'music of philosophy' one unstably pulses with non-musical axioms some rhythmight of music and science or some rhythmight of music and philosophy. A rhythmight is unstable because the theory is also only occasional, such that non-musicology's axioms are damped, but the practice of the theory is utterly dependent on the samples available and revisable upon the availability of new samples. In both cases the rudiments retain their counts: neither music, science, nor philosophy is subsumed within the other, because the rhythmight is constructed from the axiomatic anticausality of Rhythm as counter-counted and the method of Rhythmics that hears from rhythmicity.

Neither music, science, nor philosophy is subsumed within the other: they are constructed as mutually dependent and interpenetrating each other, emerging out of a monist practice of axiomatic anticausality – all in tune with Laruelle’s non-standard philosophy. Like the practice of sonic fiction also the monist term of rhythmight is developed out of the experienced and generic practice of musicians, of listeners, and of composers. It is not developed out of the urge to construct a superior and secondary, an external and thoroughly consistent and self-indulgent system of thoughts, definitions or recursive definitory processes to explain all musics on all occasions and all situations, in all contextual and cultural and societal frameworks. This rather obsessive compulsive desire, I might add, of nineteenth-century research – driven to a large part by imperialist and territorialist desires – is abolished by non-philosophy. It gets also abolished by theorists and musicians such as Jarrod Fowler or Achim Szepanski who put thereby the heuristics of sonic fiction into practice. As a consequence, Szepanski’s request resembles here indeed a sort of renaissance of musicology – as non-musicology:

Non-musicology by no means demands a new musicology, but a generic science of music, or to put it another way, not a science, but rather a heresy or fiction in the face of music. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 62;⁶ translated by Holger Schulze)

This heretic scholarship is precisely what *More Brilliant than the Sun* proposes. It is a generic exploration of sounds and performativity that can be found in the articles, performances, lectures, artworks and books that continue to work with mixologies, mutantextures and mythsciences. In the process of writing and thus contributing to sonic fiction, these concepts foundational to this *heresy or fiction in the face of music* might seem at first radically erratic and inconsistent; and yet, they are actually more consistent to musical practices and sonic experiences than the vast amount of historically established conceptualizations that are factually external to musicking and sonicking. The concepts emerging from sonic fiction are generic to sound and music – and that is their primary quality. The concept of rhythmight is such a generic concept because it puts a monist understanding of rhythm and hearing at its centre:

The interaction between Rhythm and hearing is unilateral because the relationship only goes one way, hearing cannot affect Rhythm, Rhythm is foreclosed to hearing. Non-musicology radicalizes this notion by subtracting hearing from the framework of experimental music and setting hearing within an exological realist framework where Rhythm is what is unilaterally anticausal, without that then anything is simply reduced to Rhythm, but rather everything music claims to master is heard from Rhythm. This axiomatic description of the anticausal interaction of Rhythm with hearing frees music from the pretence that music can adequately listen to Rhythm, this is music's condition of negative freedom, while at the same time freeing music to hear inadequately, that is non-musically, the various fulcrums, we may even say 'silences', of Rhythm that experimental music has concerned itself with, experimental music's condition of positive freedom. (Fowler 2015)

One could now claim that rhythm is here transformed into a new unquestionable axiom, maybe even a new metaphysical foundation of musicology. And indeed, this very heresy can be considered its most noble goal:

Although Non-musicology is critical of musical doctrine, Non-musicology does not goad the absolute destruction of music, but strikes some unknown invention of music. The program of Non-musicology is to use musicology to construct alien theories without those theories being yielded by the Principle of Musical Sufficiency: 'All is not musical, this is our news.' (Fowler 2015)

Sonic fictions precisely are these alien theories of sounding, receiving, transmitting and experiencing sonics and musics. It imagines, conceptualizes and builds the *futurhythmachines* (Eshun 1998: -010-009) of which Eshun writes. This non-musicology reacts to a non-music, a radical music as described by Szepanski:

Radical music resembles a kind of black box: it is a music box of and for blackness, and the thinker and the consumer of music take a place in the black box themselves and do not approach the box from the outside. There is a non-musical triangularity to

report: The (multiple) producer who lets the transversality of the black be sounded; the black jukebox as an infinite sounding of the incomprehensible/black; the consumer who hears extracts of infinity in the black jukebox. (Steinbach & Szepanski 2017: 69;⁷ translated by Holger Schulze)

The rhythm might in this non-music of ultrablackness requires then an adequate non-musicology, capable of exploring and scrutinizing the generativity and the effects of sonic artefacts. These generic artefacts then, in their radical negation and rejection presented as monist rhythm might, are constituting and promoting an ultrablack resistance. Rhythm might is, if you will, the resisting substance of material affects that enables ultrablack performers to act in sound.

Ultrablack Resistance

The extremist endpoint of this resistance – that can be traced back to ultrablackness, as this chapter showed – is a sensory practice that is activism and aesthetics at the same time. It can be represented by the very moment – introduced at the beginning of this chapter and included in Steinbach and Szepanski's book on ultrablackness (2017: 83–86) – when Nikel Pallat axes a table at a talk show on public television. This moment can and maybe must be regarded as a *non-musical* action. Definitely, it constitutes an object of non-musicology; but also an act of corporeal resistance, without doubt. This becomes very apparent when Paul C. Jasen writes towards the end of his *Low End Theory* the physio-logics of three *bass cults* Jungle, Dubstep and Footwork:

The aim of jungle's breakbeat science is a body in flight, or maybe more accurately, a molecular body pulled out of itself along multiple, fractal trajectories by the heterogeneous momentums of its broken breaks. (Jasen 2016: 178)

Toothy, envelope-filtered pulses play a slow back and forth with a cleaner, heavier sub. One rises roughly out of the chest and smacks against the walls, the other is more barometric, weighing on the room as a whole In this new rhythm machine

[of Dubstep], it was the undulations of multilayered basslines, rather than the beat, in any familiar sense, that gave the physiologic its rhythmic texture. (Jasen 2016: 180)

Footwork is a competitive dance culture Here, sonic body and rhythmachine become difficult to separate, as blurring feet under strangely still torsos become the rhythm that seems to be missing-but-implied in the stripped-back tracks. (Jasen 2016: 182)

In these three steps Jasen contributes to a non-musicology of electronic dance music. The three dance practices are constituted by a bass materialism of corporeal practices that organize the bodies of its dancers as well as the sono-machinic generators of their beats, sound events and bass lines. The transformation of these examples of non-music as well as the guidance and control they exert on dancers represents precisely the aforementioned amalgamation of aesthetics and activism. These dances and bass cults are resistance as they are ultrablack:

All music was a variation of the human machine interface. Suddenly sound machines were just as cyborg as gigantic corporate simulations. (Eshun quoted in Weelden 1999)

They are not entertaining or occupying your supposedly *disinterested appreciation*, your *interesseloses Wohlgefallen*, as traditional Kantian aesthetics would have demanded. They are indeed and more directly, technopoetically and in siturelational effects, exerting sonocorporeal control. This control operates radically colourless, in *uchromia* as Laruelle calls it, in black:

Our uchromia: to learn to think from the point of view of Black as what determines color in the last instance rather than what limits it. (Laruelle 1991: 3)

From this ultrablack *non-decisional immanence* of sound the effects of *black technopoetics* (Chude-Sokei 2016) begin to unfold and to expand. A diffracted non-musicology can now set in – maybe even as another, convincing and radical example of decolonizing research – following the famous reminder by Audre Lorde:

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.
(1984: 112)

These new and decolonized tools of non-music and of non-musicology indeed complete one of the main projects of the CCRU in Warwick to which at least some figures of thought and pervasive desires in Eshun's writing can be traced back. This non-musicology in alliance with Eshun's sonic fiction is indeed – citing Simon Reynolds's (2009) description of CCRU's approach:

Theory melded with fiction, philosophy cross-contaminated by natural sciences (neurology, bacteriology, thermodynamics, metallurgy, chaos and complexity theory, connectionism). It's a project of monstrous ambition. And that's before you take into account the most daring deterritorialisation of all – crossing the thin line between reason and unreason. But as they say, later for that.

This monstrous project quite consistently converges with François Laruelle's non-philosophical project; the latter though more widely discussed and indeed performed and adapted, the former yet still in its brief period of existence more lastingly materialized and institutionalized. Non-musicology, understood as a sort of reinvented musicology in the tradition of the CCRU, returns to the ultrablack resisting immanence of sound:

See black! Not that all your suns have fallen – they have since reappeared, only slightly dimmer – but Black is the 'color' that falls eternally from the Universe onto your Earth. (Laruelle 1991: 4)