ous peoples in the Americas, far from the disasters of French colonisation, a parallel current of 'Africanists' maintained a rather different relationship with their imperial history. This current worked, in opposition to Lévi-Strauss, under the tutelage of the 'political anthropology' of Georges Balandier, a student of Michel Leiris and anticolonial militant who had realised early on that the colonial situation made it impossible to do ethnography in the synchronic, depoliticised manner of Lévi-Strauss and his followers. In light of this minor history, it is notable that most of the proponents of today's comparative metaphysics appear little interested in probing the relationship between their effervescent new discipline and the memory apparatus of the French state. If anthropology is set to change the future of philosophy, including its most foundational questions such as universalism, then we had better make sure it's the right kind of anthropology.

Miri Davidson

Who is the subject of violence?

François Cusset, *Le déchaînement du monde. Logique nouvelle de la violence* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018). 240pp., 20.00 euro pb., 978 2 70719 815 0

Elsa Dorlin, *Se défendre. Une philosophie de la violence* (Paris: Zones, 2017). 200pp., 18.00 euro pb., 978 2 35522 1103

Just over two years ago, on 19 July 2016, Adama Traoré died in custody after being suffocated by three members of the *gendarmerie*, a branch of the French military that also possesses a policing power. Adama died in the yard of the police station of Persan, in the region of Paris, on his 24th birthday. His brother – who was also under arrest – and the firemen who were called by the *gendarmes* to give first aid to the young black man testified that Adama, who had passed out, was still handcuffed, face against the ground, when the latter arrived and that they had to insist the policemen take the cuffs off in order to revive him. Yet, despite their efforts, it was too late. To the family, who arrived rapidly at Persan, the police initially maintained that Adama was still alive. They kept up this lie for four hours before allowing his mother and his brother Yacouba to enter the station, where they were asked: 'If we tell you something, will you take it badly?'

While neither addresses the Adama Traoré affair specifically, it is in the context of deaths like this, and the responses that they have engendered, that two books on violence, by François Cusset and Elsa Dorlin, have recently been published in France. Each helps us to better understand the case by analysing both state violence and violence as resistance outside of the common frames of an opposition between violence and non-violence or in relation to a notion of legitimacy. At the same time, they also raise awareness of the ways in which the government of the suburbs in contemporary France shares much with the government of former French colonies.

In *Le déchaînement du monde. Logique nouvelle de la violence* [A Ruthless World: New Forces of Violence], François Cusset identifies three minorities that are, today, subjected to what he calls a 'postcolonial violence': black people, the majority of Muslim people and indigenous people in the former colonies. Adama Traoré was French, black and Muslim. It should come as no surprise, then, that in a country where those who have power generally try to prevent a debate about postcolonialism from happening at all, he was used to facing systemic violence from the state. Cusset reminds us that the law of the 'imperial man', according to which 'might is right', is not an accidental and unfortunate flaw of power, but its rule. The failure of the state to provide protection to some of its citizens – most obviously, the residents of the suburbs – rather than acting only to control and assault them, means the state is not a third party which helps to resolve social conflict for such residents, but a stakeholder in such conflict and confrontation. In Adama Traoré's case, the state has too much to lose. Indeed, the judges deliberately neglected to interrogate the gendarmes involved. Cusset links this situation, in

turn, to the neoliberal world-system which has turned the state into the operator of two logics: those of finance and police. The impoverishment of the suburbs at the expense of their inhabitants and the daily instances of police brutality there tend to confirm this. The state is 'depoliticised', as Cusset puts it, explaining the deafening silence of two successive Presidents of the Republic – François Hollande and Emmanuel Macron – in the face of the Traoré family's calls for a commitment to justice. For the population of the popular and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, Cusset argues, the state's 'repressive stalemates are incomprehensible' unless one remembers that what is now applied there was first tested in the former colonies, where 'the worst of the twentieth century was developed … in order to quash any mere wish to revolt.'

Against this systemic violence, Cusset thinks that it is important to establish, explicitly, those who are responsible, to name the agents of violence, not as part of an individualising approach (which would be complicit with power), but in order to act collectively so as to open up the fight against the institutionalised powerlessness of minorities. In the wake of Adama's death, his sister, Assa Traoré, formed a collective demanding 'Truth and Justice for Adama' and has become one of the faces of the struggle against police brutality and anti-racism. Assa Traoré is, to be sure, asking for the conviction of the three individual *gendarmes* who caused her brother's death, but she also aims further, targeting the police force, its command, law, the judiciary, prisons and the state. With regards to any actualisation of the ideal of justice through rights, minorities have a singular relation to the law: they know that to emancipate themselves, they have to denounce, often physically, the limits or the lies inscribed in some rights. Truth and Justice for Adama did this brilliantly when they decided to walk at the head of a demonstration against Emmanuel Macron's economic and social policies on 26 May 2018, leaving the usual representatives of the 'social movements' (and any other demonstrator) with no choice but to walk behind the inhabitants of the suburbs and therefore symbolically support their fights.

As much as violence has been durably 'integrated' (*incorporée*) as a form of subjectification for the inhabitants of the suburbs, the latter can also 'stick together' (*faire corps*, literally 'become one body') in order to resist, in Cusset's words, state violence 'below politics, through a subversive and non-programmatic logic'. Two months after her brother's death, Assa Traoré was interviewed on TV about what happened to her brother. While she walks around Beaumont-sur-Oise, the city where she was raised with her siblings, she is joined by her friends and family members who walk behind her, silently and with determination. For many people, this footage showed the latent, almost intrinsic aggressiveness of 'uncivilised' bodies. All those racialised bodies going forwards in solidarity could not but constitute a threat. Yet, following Cusset, one can see instead here 'a new ritual which proceeds from a collective self-governance of violence', one that is very different from traditional political forms of organisation that have always excluded young suburban people – mainly because the old ideals of 'democracy' that they represent have never taken such people into account. Nonetheless, Cusset insists on the role that young people, in particular, might play in the corporeal struggle for emancipation, in so far as, he argues, they have always

been at the core of insurrections and at the centre of major historical change. Cusset suggests a need to 'politicise biology' in order to counter, at once, ageism, political exploitation or betrayal by elders, and the supposed link between the temporary nature of youth and equally temporary left-wing convictions. As Cusset argues, 'joining forces through generations has always been one of the only means likely to challenge the order of things.' Notably, Truth and Justice for Adama produces this kind of generational conjunction by situating their struggle in line with the struggles for independence in the former colonies and with the American Black Power movement – Assa Traoré and Angela Davis were recently interviewed together by *Ballast* – as well as by gathering together the families of victims of police brutality (of whom there are several generations in France), and by paying tribute to the memory of those who have died over a number of decades. In doing so, they foster what Cusset calls a 'memory with archives' which is necessary to maintain the energy and intensity of struggle.

At the same time, they also fight against what Cusset describes as a 'triple violence': first, 'a violence *upon us*, caused by the structural constraints and arbitrariness of power'; second, 'a violence *among us*, caused by the unquestioned rivalry between economic subjects'; and, third, 'a violence *within us*, caused by the unknown and untreated psychic ravages of the nightmare that working can become' and by a symbolic violence that causes the dominated to endorse the way in which the dominant see them. The refusal to give up on Adama's case, the now famous 'Without justice, you will never get peace' that is inscribed on the supporters' t-shirts, the black pride asserted in their press releases, social network posts or pictures, and their physical occupation of an alternative political scene, show how they are able to fight against feelings of shame, helplessness and self-hate – thus experiencing, through this resistance, a powerful form of subjectification.

Cusset's argument echoes, in this respect, Elsa Dorlin's in *Se défendre. Une philosophie de la violence* [Self-Defence: A Philosophy of Violence]. Indeed, both authors assert that what Cusset calls a 'collective subject', and Dorlin 'the subject of self-defence', each come into being through their self-defence within a space of confrontation. At the same time, each analyses a (state) power that meticulously targets this political subject's ability to act or react in order to reduce this to the point of its complete annihilation.

On 19 July 2016, Adama was with his brother, Bagui, in the town centre of Beaumont-sur-Oise when they saw policemen walking in their direction. Since Adama did not have his ID card – which is mandatory in France; one of the extensions of colonial techniques over the entire population – and since it was his birthday, he decided to run away. This attitude is rarely understood by white French people: 'Why would he run, they ask, if he did nothing wrong?' The answer probably lies in what Elsa Dorlin calls 'dirty care'. Such 'negative care' is the result of 'a long process of sidestepping, of taking distance, of withdrawing, of preparing for confrontation' in which the members of an oppressed minority forget themselves and develop an acute knowledge of their persecutors, but not to their own benefit. Indeed, what Dorlin terms 'dirty care' implies the oppressed's ignorance of their potential power. As such, an ethics of care is necessarily linked with 'an ethics of impotence', with 'a dirty care for oneself'. Racialised men and boys in the French suburbs know precisely how any stop and search can end – especially if they do not have their ID, or are more than three in the hallway of their block of flats, and so on. They have known the characteristic ways in which the police act and react towards them from their earliest days. They know what to say, how to behave in order to avoid an escalation of the situation, to apparently defend themselves. So, if there is an exceptional reason not to go through an umpteenth public humiliation – like his birthday for Adama, or the breaking of the fast during the Ramadan month for Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré who were killed running from the police in 2005 – then they run away.

Yet Dorlin notes that this 'dirty care' is not empowering for the members of minorities, but rather gives a tremendous power to their aggressors. Chased by police, Zyed and Bouna, 17 and 15 years old, ran away, hid in an electricity substation and were electrocuted. Their deaths led to the 2005 suburban revolts, which were, in turn, repressed by considerable po-

lice force and the imposition of a state of emergency – a process that dates back to the 1950s and the Algerian War of Independence. In the words of Garnette Cadogan, 'walking' or, even more so, running 'while Black' is enough to be considered a threat and to trigger an irrational, disproportionate, but perfectly legitimated cycle of violence for which the black person is ultimately considered responsible. As Dorlin writes, black people 'are the cause and the effect of violence, its beginning and its end. … Violence is the one and only intentional action of a black body, which forbids them to legitimately defend themselves.' Hence the fact that, although they had absolutely no reason to chase Adama, the policemen still pursued him and, when they finally found him at a friend's place, unarmed and ready to surrender, three men enforced a prone position on him which caused positional asphyxia – the weight of three equipped *gendarmes* is close to 530 pounds – which caused his death. Every one of Adama's acts, from the moment he started running till the moment he was asphyxiated, was interpreted as violent – he pushed one of the men who were chasing him, hid himself and resisted the prone position because he felt he 'ha[d] trouble breathing', according to one of the policemen – rather than as a form of self-defence or resistance to arbitrary power. As Dorlin observes, the possibility of self-defence is denied to resisting bodies like Adama's, while police violence is almost never considered that of an aggressor. Typically, the prosecutor of Pontoise first claimed that Adama died of a blood infection, then of a weak heart and finally – when the Traorés asked for a second autopsy – of positional asphyxia. On 26 June 2018, the French equivalent to the UK's IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission) released its first – and incomplete – report on the number of deaths and injuries caused by the police in France. Introducing the 14 deaths and over 100 injuries, the head of the commission immediately warned 'this report is not an inventory of police blunders', and, arguing that the police killed terrorists, added that the commission 'did not presume the illegitimacy of those deaths and injuries.'

Adama's family, led publicly by his sister Assa Traoré, has not given up on his case and still asks for truth and justice. Yet, as Dorlin argues, the repression of power is proportional to the strength of the victims and the more they defend themselves, the more they are attacked and suffer. As of today, five Traoré brothers are in jail. Bagui, who was the main witness to his brother's death, has been sentenced to 30 months with no remission for extortion. Yacouba is in detention pending trial for allegedly setting a bus on fire (after another detention for intrusion into the Persan police station where he assaulted the *gendarme* who told him that his brother had died); so is Youssouf, but for drug trafficking. Serene has been sentenced to four months with no remission for insulting the mayor of Beaumont-sur-Oise the night she irregularly refused access to the town council to the collective Truth and Justice for Adama. Finally, Samba has been sentenced to 30 months with no remission for severe aggression. Whether those five men actually committed what they are accused of is not what matters here, because their very 'interpellation' is enough to justify the violence that killed Adama and the violence the Traorés are exposed to today. The police, legal and penal harassment directed against a family whose spokeswoman 'makes too much noise' tells us much about the French legal system's priorities and about the way this repressive and colonially-inspired *dispositif* 'considers', in Dorlin's words, 'that the one who is submitted to it *can do something*, so it precisely targets, stimulates, incites this last momentum of power and pushes into a corner in order to interpellate it as *un*-efficient, to make it powerless.' Dorlin argues that resisting this power therefore implies '*un*learning how to *not* fight' rather than 'learning how to fight'. Indeed, if racialised people are not expected to know how to fight, it is because, like women and LGBTQI people, they have been forbidden to do so. When they carry on regardless of this interdiction, their defensive and/or violent potential is acknowledged, and they are represented as intentionally aggressive and therefore legitimately stoppable.

On 29 April 2018, the collective Truth and Justice for Adama organised a day of activities in Beaumont-sur-Oise in order to raise funds and awareness of their case. Among the activities on offer, the female world champion Aya Cissoko conducted a boxing workshop for local kids. As soon as the workshop started, the organisers observed several trucks of soldiers – not

the *gendarmerie*, but the actual army – arriving, and driving in circles around them, before armed soldiers came to meet the members of the collective. (See the Justice et Vérité pour Adama Instagram page.) The presence of the army in the suburbs is more proof, if it were needed, of the still essentially colonial approach taken by the French state when it comes to popular and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Of course, the only people who did not see the powerful potential of young racialised kids learning how to box were the kids themselves or, rather, the youngest among them. When the organisers and the elders probably looked at those beloved young bodies learning how to defend themselves against police brutality in the future – Dorlin talks in this context about the British suffragists who learned jujitsu but also of the Warsaw Ghetto insurgents, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and of queer self-defence patrols – the representatives of the government (and a lot of people in France) saw only training for violence and criminality.

Dorlin argues that when 'a politics of self-defence' and 'a politics of self-representation and self-affirmation' are articulated, 'an explosive-defence' occurs. The subjects thus produced 'declare war … that is, establish the modalities of an equal fight.' If Dorlin adds that this hope to restore equality often mobilises people in vain, she also notes that such a 'war' 'makes the now-belligerent persecuted minorities proud and honourable' and it allows them to use 'violence and its semiology as long as the revolutionary struggle demands it.' Thus, if self-defence is 'a lever for political awareness' and a (re)action through which a more emancipated subject can come into being, one can also appreciate how significant it is that such collective self-defence should be led by a black Muslim woman – Assa Traoré. A social worker who quit her job after Adama's death, she is also the mother of three children. Assa Traoré is the archetype of what a defensive government hates. Being black, it is true that, as Dorlin argues, she is less protectable and protected than a white woman. But while many would like to regard her as defenceless – and, indeed, actually 'in danger' among the suburban racialised men that centuries of racism have pictured as the only figures of patriarchy and the only agents of sexual violence in France – she is impressively consistent, proud and respected. While she should be submissive according to the mainstream representation of her cultural background and her religion, she leads an anti-racist movement, challenges the penal system and the political authorities, faces the media and allies with people she should supposedly not be able to reach or convince.

Among the improbable allies that the suburban collective Truth and Justice for Adama have been able to gather around them are the Bernanoses (a white upper-class family whose well-educated sons have been sent to prison for demonstrating against François Hollande's Job Act), Geoffroy de Lagasnerie (a white philosopher and sociologist who has stated on several occasions that 'the system who made [him] an intellectual is the same system that puts black and Arab men in prison'), and Edouard Louis (a white writer who comes from a lower-class family). The latter two are both well-known supporters of LGBTQI self-emancipation. Thus, led by Assa Traoré, the collective has managed to reach beyond their 'natural' (that is, constructed) political sphere in a way that is particularly unsettling for a power that has ended up believing its own lies according to which racialised men must inherently be sexist and homophobic, and, indeed, 'racist' against white people. This is not to deny the actuality of sexism or homophobia in the French suburbs (although it is important to contest the validity of the notion of 'racism' towards whites). But it reveals how racialised men, on the one hand, and women and LGBTQI people, on the other, have been made mutually threatening. It helps us to understand the conditions of possibility of femonationalism, or homonationalism, and of the feeling described by Huey Newton in a 1970 speech, 'The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements', which is cited by Dorlin: 'We want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we are afraid that we might be homosexual; and we want to hit the women or shut her up because we are afraid that she might castrate us.' Following Dorlin, one could argue that Assa Traoré, her family, her collective and their friends manage to produce – through self-defence and against systemic violence – 'a "we" who, because it is nothing without the action that is realised in its name, possesses nothing, a "we" who can do anything.'

Emmanuel Jouai