



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

BLOW YOUR MIND! SHARDS HAILING, ON SUPERFLUOUS VIOLENCE TO STOP SURVIVING

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Admittedly, it is a hard place to begin, with the avowal that violence is not an exception but rather that it defines the horizon of her existence. It is to acknowledge that *we were never meant to survive*, and yet we are still here.

—Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019, 29–30)

I saw I wanted to be beaten up. I didn't understand. This isn't enough. Nothing is enough, only nothing. I want to get to what I don't know which is discipline. In other words, I want to be mad, not senseless, but angry beyond memories and reason. I want to be mad.

—Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless* (1988, 51)

We are sitting on a countryside terrace in France, sipping a beer. Summer. We don't really know each other, just two different kinds of foreigners who bonded over an emergency at our shared holiday horizon: a fire in a farmer's field, caused by drought and an overheated tractor. We called the emergency number, using Google Translate to explain what we saw, '*un feu, un feu,*' failing to localize the field. No one got hurt. She tells me her name is Ada. We speak English with each a different accent.

I tell her about David Buckel. On April 14, 2018, David Buckel set himself on fire in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. He chose a quiet spot on an early Saturday morning and burned till his body had nearly vanished. Minutes before this act of self-immolation, he sent an email to *The New York Times*, stating his act was meant to raise awareness of the horrors of climate change. Buckel was a well-known and respected lawyer fighting for LGBTQ rights, while volunteering all of his spare time to making his Brooklyn neighborhood more sustainable. As he lived for political change, his death became an activist gesture, a careful choreography. I lived close to Prospect Park when it happened and would perform a commemorative gesture every time I jogged past his spot, sometimes drawing a clumsy cross over my shoulders and head.

Ada tells me '*something else*' must have been '*wrong*' with David Buckel. By which she means: it cannot just be a political act. Such self-inflicted violence, such a destructive gesture must mean that he was also severely depressed, a tiny bit crazy, or at least an unhealthy fanatic. '*If you do such a violent thing and make it public with an open letter and all, you must really like attention.*' I listen, not in agreement, but fascinated by her certainty.

It is hard to hear desperation where we don't imagine to find it. We don't imagine it in the shape of a wealthy white cisman with a job that's considered influential, powerful. David Buckel, lawyer: an institutionally recognized voice that both shapes and is shaped by the infrastructures that define our societal hearing. Such a voice should ring like a great recommendation at a scheduled meeting, explaining a logical step towards improvement. It cannot be a shriek that signifies total failure, world loss. If it does, it must be a psychological hiccup, an individual problem.

Where is the threshold between learning about another person's point of view and becoming complicit through listening? I'm already listening less to Ada, speaking more. The beer makes my blood thin and anger creeps to the surface. In an attempt to claim Buckel's action as a political gesture—not to be pathologized for the sake of our own comfort—I bring up Gayatri Spivak's writing on 'sati', sometimes framed as 'widow burning'. Sati is an outlawed Hindu practice where widows in India joined their deceased husbands on the funeral pyre. The British colonialists called it 'suttee' and prohibited the practice in 1829 (three decades before criminalizing homosexuality)—'white men saving brown women from brown men', writes Spivak in "Can The Subaltern Speak?" She asks white feminists to imagine an ontology in which performing sati or suttee is a form of freedom, an act of the will through an act of piety and subordination. Actually, I ask white feminists to imagine this: Spivak mostly proposes to acknowledge that there are ways of being, convictions and understandings, knowledges, that we have no access to. White feminists imagine themselves able to imagine the unimaginable. This claim to feel eligible to mark what is unimaginable and what isn't is a fundamental problem. '*I'm trying to be respectful and all, but I just cannot fathom that that's considered freedom*', says Ada. The colonial kind of freedom: the kind that becomes valuable through forcing it upon others.

I'm convinced Buckel's response is less violent than the violence he responded to. How much daily violence do we normalize just to keep on living? It is said that climate change is one of many symptoms of rape culture in the west—to take without asking, to dig without giving, to expect, to

possess. You have to centralize your own human survival to be able to be part of such a system. 'They want me alive so I can stay in prison. But if I'm not alive, then I'm not in prison', explains character Taystee in the final season of *Orange Is The New Black*, after attempting suicide—she would prefer to be human-dead and free than human-alive and imprisoned.

In his suicide note, Buckel wrote: 'Pollution ravages our planet, oozing inhabatability via air, soil, water and weather. Most humans on the planet now breathe air made unhealthy by fossil fuels, and many die early deaths as a result. Our present grows more desperate, our future needs more than what we've been doing. My early death by fossil fuel reflects what we are doing to ourselves. [...] This is not new, as many have chosen to give a life based on the view that no other action can most meaningfully address the harm they see. Here is a hope that giving a life might bring some attention to the need for expanded actions, and help others give a voice to our home, and Earth is heard.' Part of his letter was published, staged, in *The New York Times*, but the staging was disappointing: the article mostly honored Buckel's work as a lawyer, only a single paragraph of his letter was cited.

It's not my aim to make Buckel into a hero while others die anonymously. What happens in this moment, on a terrace in France, is that someone refuses to politicize a demand for attention. I have a strong desire to see any disruption—large or small—as a potential political act. Here, I don't situate Buckel carefully in the body of literature on self-immolation. What flares in this moment is that I cannot bear the psychological and individual approach that sustains white people's inability to see oneself as part of a pattern, as part of a sociality. I do not analyse whether or not it's appropriative of Buckel to refer to the self-immolation protests worldwide and by monks in Tibet specifically. I localize my thoughts in response to a faraway *feu* in a French field in an attempt to claim Buckel's act as political desperation. To claim that, from a position of privilege, it is possible to truly wish to end the world as we know it and (dis)organize it differently. How to stop surviving if survival is kept from the obvious surface of your daily life?

It's early morning, six something, when David Buckel lights himself on fire. The firefighters will arrive at 6:30 am. It's 6:23 a.m. when an Uber drops me off near the Church Avenue subway station, at the south of Prospect Park. I'm coming home from a queer party and I've survived another cab driver asking me whether I have a boyfriend and whether he can have my number. He survived another slow night of being underpaid inside the cycle of speculative demand—needing more exploitation to suffer less from exploitation. I've jumped into a car to extend the warm fuzzy feeling of the party, to go from the dark backroom packed with dancing bodies into the quiet of my bedroom. I may have jumped into a car to escape the growing reality of day, but I cannot say I've jumped into a car to be safe. Because the car isn't safe and because my feelings of safety aren't trustworthy when white cis men have decided what is and what isn't.

Before pouring petrol on himself, Buckel arranged a neat circle of dirt around himself, so that the fire wouldn't spread. A polite gesture. Buckel used a laundry cart to bring the dirt and petrol to the park. He offered his id-card and a note at the outer edge of the ring, to avoid confusion about what

happened. On the note, he apologized for the mess. Restraint is an activist aesthetic, if not a strategy.

The Suffragettes deliberately dressed conventionally to disguise their radical ideas. Afraid to be exposed before carrying out their carefully planned protests, they would make sure to appear like polite ladies. A different time, another activist in a pretty uniform to disguise her intentions was “Lolita” Lebrón. In her book *Ricanness: Enduring Time in Anticolonial Performance*, Sandra Ruiz devotes a chapter to Delores “Lolita” Lebrón Sotomayor and her sensational act during a session of US Congress. The chapter is called ‘Lipstick Revolutionaries’, as Lebrón looked impeccable, in a skirt suit, on elegant heels and with lipstick, coiffed hair and a chic scarf around her neck. Together with three other members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, she entered with a concealed gun. ‘They sat armed in the second row, peering down at an assembly of white men in lawmaking suits’ writes Ruiz, restaging the scene. Then they fired multiple shots towards the ceiling, ‘not with the intention to harm, but to free herself of colonial domination’, calling out *¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!* ‘The year was 1954, and Lebrón was dressed to die, not to kill’ (35). Several congressmen were wounded, no one died. Lebrón had a ‘desire to offer death, not take life’ (36).

Expecting that security guards would shoot her, she carried a suicide note in her purse. Instead, Lebrón was arrested and sentenced to a vague sixteen to fifty-six years in prison, a penalty less severe than her male comrades got. Ruiz studied the court reports and proposes that the lyrical language used to describe the crime is ‘foreshadowing the event’s phenomenological and performative weight’. Ruiz cites from the formal documents: “a wild hail of bullets” hit five congressmen after a “fantastic sudden shooting” by Lolita Lebrón, one of the “would-be-assassins” who “boldly claims she is [the] instigator of the murder plot” and “brazenly sprayed bullets”. Then analyzes: ‘Hailing, here, becomes significant for both its physical fracturing of space and time and its ideological interpellation of the subjects involved’ (36). Ruiz continues: ‘Lebrón walked into the Capitol building wearing the desire to die as fervently as the glamorous attire, lipstick, and gun that have since become her signature accessories. For Lebrón, politics and aesthetics are inseparable, all of her aesthetic choices are inherently political ones, and she alone retains the pleasure of performance, at the extremity of her own horizon’ (38). When politics and aesthetics are inseparable, the presence of violence doesn’t necessarily exclude pleasure. At the same time, for those who can separate politics from aesthetics and live with the threat of violence instead of living *with* violence, violence is an isolated event. A feared potential, an endpoint: the absolute worst that could happen; the last resort. The ability to distance oneself from violence is seen as a marker of the ‘well-organised’, civilized. Violence, then, is never part of a myriad experience: violence just shuts down, violence subsumes (and pleasure and violence are marked as fully contradictory).

Some time ago, I was on stage talking about feminism. It was a panel discussion coming to its gentle end—a shared horizon was expected. The closing question was: what do we do next? I suggested the possibility of violence. If people don’t just wake up and say, ‘oh hey here is my privilege, come and take it, have it’ as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie once said it, how else do we force a redistribution of wealth and privilege? There is a difference between acknowledging one’s privilege and the actual attempt to dismantle the structures that uphold these inequalities. The

audience booed as a response. 'Never turn to violence!' the room full of white feminists exclaimed! Even just thinking about violence appeared dangerous. How to imagine a world otherwise if that which already exists is a threat, and thinking it extra present is not allowed?

In a 1970 TV interview, philosopher and activist Angela Davis was asked whether she agreed with the Black Panthers' use of violence. The journalist had to visit her in jail, where Davis would be for two years, charged for a crime she didn't commit. Davis replied: you are asking me about violence? It's impossible to *turn* to violence if you live in and with violence every day. How could she make an intellectual statement about approving or disapproving violence? Judgment, (dis)approving, requires a distance, the possibility to choose whether to invite something as part of your life or not. In response, Davis started accumulating examples of the daily violations black and brown people experience. To be constantly surrounded by white policemen; mass incarceration; to be maimed and murdered by KKK bombs, such as the 1963 bomb that killed four teenage women in a Birmingham, Alabama church.

Portraying the experience of daily violence can be a commemorative act, claiming the tangibility of a collective experience that is silenced as personal trauma. Portraying the experience of daily violence can also be prophetic. Claiming space for violence can create visionary tales. The 1983 documentary-style fiction *Born in Flames* imagines an attack on the Twin Towers in New York City. The attack is organized by a radical lesbian anti-racist and anti-capitalist army of feminists to prevent further distribution of heteronormative messages. The movie ends with an image of the World Trade Center burning. Octavia Butler's dystopian *Parable of the Talents* includes a newly elected president who promises to 'make America great again', while protagonist Lauren Oya Olamina survives rape and slavery. The book is set in 2032. Butler's novel was published in 1998, almost twenty years before Donald Trump's campaign. In *Ricanness: Enduring Time in Anticolonial Performance*, Sandra Ruiz introduces a series of images titled *Puerto Ricans Underwater/Los ahogados*. Photographer ADÁL portrayed people in a bathtub. They seem to be drowning, gasping for air, while their profession, societal role or religious practice is recognizable by the tools floating in the water or suggested by the clothes they wear. ADÁL portrayed the sense of an island in debt. Ruiz describes: 'in seeing this breathless subject, we, too, are left without breath' (5). *Puerto Ricans Underwater* was made before Hurricane Irma hit. The characters of *Born in Flames*, Octavia Butler, and photographer ADÁL are often conceived as marginalized, as lives supposedly waiting for improvement by the linear progression of time. But, the future was already in their present. They didn't wish away the violence they experienced—buying into the repeated promise that someday they too will have access to a prosperous future—they used it as a lens, a frame, a speculative quality.

I'm running out of breath accumulating examples of violent, sensational acts that attempt to refuse the status quo. I propose to experience a common lack of air. Hold your breath while reading what's next. There will be three symbols, each meant to designate thirty seconds: one for slow readers (!), one for average readers (#), and finally one for quick readers (\$). Categorize yourself and start breathing again only when you encounter your personal symbol. We start now. Breathe in, not out.

Of course, this shared lack (of air) is a performance of collectivity. It's a way to underline how we are similarly implied, similarly addressed. I don't mean to say we can claim similarity on the basis of experiencing something similar. How do we share without reducing, untangling, grasping, understanding, categorizing into overlaps? We cannot claim someone else's nerves, successes, struggles and wounds and say 'yours is just like mine'. *Love is love: your gay love may be like my straight love.* (!) Understanding another person's position, perceiving another person's humanity, may well be where cruelty ignites, writes Paul Bloom in a *New Yorker* piece titled "The Root of All Cruelty?". To humiliate another person is to be able to understand what would humiliate them. (#) Wherever shared experience is marked enthusiastically, there must be a constructed lack of a shared ontology. Bridges are built to emphasize gaps. Where something is marked as a negative difference, amends can be sold. (\$)

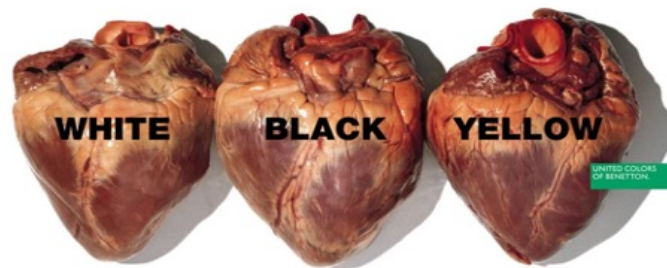


Image 1: "United Colors of Benetton hearts
White Black Yellow"

Thirty seconds. For the slow readers timed at 'straight love', for the average reader at 'humiliate them' and for the fast reader at 'be sold'. An imprecise thirty seconds is how long it took for Eric Garner to stop breathing after he was grabbed by a New York police officer and brought to the ground. It happened on Staten Island, near Garner's own house. The police suspected Garner was selling cigarettes. Garner was, as he exclaimed, just minding his own business. Video footage released on social media reveals him saying: 'I'm minding my own business officer, why do you keep bothering me?' In one exhausted sentence Garner addressed the repetition of it all: 'keep bothering' addresses continuation and Garner very clearly calls the cop 'officer', underlining he cannot possibly forget or ignore the power of this uniform.

Violence happens upon you. But that's not really true for everyone. As a white cis woman with passport privilege, I can say I'm interested in violence. *Interested in, interested in.* Violence doesn't surround me. It may happen to me, but I would perceive it as an extraordinary event, a happening. I approach violence. *I approach, I approach*—there's enough comfortable distance to repeat my sentence and imagine it echoing.

I saw Aleshea Harris' play *Is God Is* performed in New York, in the Soho Rep Theatre. It tells the tale of twin sisters who visit their mother on her deathbed. They haven't seen their mom in ages: they thought she had died in an accident. Upon their visit in the hospice, their barely breathing mother tells them what actually happened: she ran away and pretended to be dead, after their jealous father set her on fire. The mother's story explains why the sisters have burn scars visibly covering their bodies: they tried hugging her to stop the fire. As the girls were young enough to forget, the mother was convinced her daughters would be better off without her—an angry woman with alligator skin. But now, she cannot die. She cannot die in peace while their father is alive. The mother demands of her daughters to hunt him down and kill him. To release his haunt on her. 'I want him dead, real dead', she dictates, adding 'real'—knowing there are different kinds of dead like there are different kinds of snow. The sisters want to please their long-lost mom and promise her to do it: 'Yes god'. Out of god's sight, however, the twins agree: we are not killers. They will soon find out that you don't have to *be* something in order to *do* something.

The twins go down south, into the US desert. The trip is difficult and exhausting, but they find their father, who is living with a new wife and a new pair of twins; sons this time. One of the sisters exclaims: I'm so so tired. She is too tired to do anything. It's so hot she can barely move. But when everything goes sour, she resorts to violence and kills. Her weapon: a stone in a sock, swinging till blood. She is too tired for anything, but violence energizes.

When tired turns violent. Last summer, I broke my hand. I was so angry that I was tired of being angry and being tired made me violent. I was in the countryside of France that summer as well: no fire on the horizon just a horizon of fire. I broke my hand hitting a white wall. The white wall stood firm. I looked for a mark, even just a sigh of hurt on the wall's surface. But nothing. My pinky broke at its joint and the doctors and the internet told me how common this is, 'a boxer's hand' they call it. The French doctor was surprised, he usually only encounters men with this extremely common injury. I've heard this before. I've also learned that on a scale from one to ten I should never say five because they'll let you go home with a broken bone. Five is only a medium sad face, and medium is nothing because women are expected to exaggerate their pain.

A queer party, unrelated to the early morning that David Buckel lit himself on fire, but also in Brooklyn. Someone is wearing a shirt that says *Queer Army, We are recruiting*. They invite me to a self-defense training for queer and trans people. We are flirting—which may be the nighttime version of recruitment. I tell them I'm interested, but that I'm unsure about the 'defense'. Could it also be a queer attack training?

We speak about the word army on their t-shirt, which we both feel maybe shouldn't be reproduced even though the addition of 'queer' to army is clearly meant to subvert. As the night proceeds, my vision becomes creamy, 'creamy as a library'. The shirt starts to blur and instead of Army I read Amyra, a singer whose work I greatly admire. Amyra Leon made a song called 'Burning in Birmingham', to commemorate the 1963 attack on the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. One of the many violent events Angela Davis mentioned in her TV interview from jail. Amyra's song was inspired by Sarah Collins. As a young girl, Collins lost her sister and best friends. They were all

together in the bathroom of the church when the bomb went off. The names of those who died live on, but Collins, who survived, is barely mentioned. The attack left Collins nearly blind. She is now over seventy, missing an eye. She has worked her whole life as a maid to pay medical bills. State funding or reparations were never offered to her. So Amyra wrote 'Burning in Birmingham' and started a fundraising to collect financial support and recognition for Sarah Collins. Amyra, Army.

Playwright Aleshea Harris, in an interview about *Is God Is*, says: 'it's like women don't even get to be Jesus. Jesus gets beaten and then dies right after being beaten, so he doesn't even have to endure'. Surviving is a form of violence. Survival doesn't just mean 'getting through'. Survival is also used as a methodology to inflict violence. In *The Right To Maim*, Jasbir K. Puar describes how the Israeli government deliberately wounds and maims Palestinians and inhabitants of Gaza, rather than kill them. Casualties are international news. Maiming people—aiming to hurt and creating disability—is less of a newspaper story, but it effectively damages a community. When the mobility of one person changes, their whole family and surrounding kin have to change their daily infrastructure.



Image 2: Shaun Leonardo drawing

I once participated in a self-defense exercise, taught by visual artist and martial arts fighter Shaun Leonardo. Leonardo has extensively studied the footage that showed how Eric Garner was attacked, telling the cops sixteen times: 'I can't breathe'. Leonardo showed us the drawings he made. Drawings in which the police officers are white shadows.

Leonardo then proposed to practice a gesture of self-defense: we had to pair up in twos—an attacker and a defender. The performed attacker grabs your wrists. Leonardo showed how to release this grip. You turn your thumbs up, so that for a split second your palms are facing each other. Then you push up and out, your thumbs now point away from your body. All of this happens in one quick move. It's a very simple gesture that always works, regardless how strong your attacker is. After we all got the hang of it, Leonardo explains that the same gesture was performed by Garner. When an officer grabbed his wrists, he pulled up and out the same way as we had just practiced, freeing himself from the clutch of the cop. The cop perceived this as an aggressive, antagonistic move. His colleague quickly jumped in to assist, attacking Garner from behind and wrestling him to the ground. Self-defense only tightened the cop's control. The difference between

attack and defense is not hidden in the act, differentiation isn't granted to Garner because he is black. Leonardo is teaching us that no amount of self-defense practice can protect from a racist imagination.

Because white men can't
police their imagination
black men are dying.

– Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014, 135)

Claudia Rankine and John Lucas, 'Situation One'

▶ <https://poets.org/text/video-situation-one>



Is a pre-emptive strike anything different from attack? If we are stuck in a cycle of violence, can it be broken by queering our methods of attack—aimed to dismantle a societal reality that's so deeply attached to inequality that the tools to tear down are the same that construct? Should a queer attack have an aim at all? What would an armless aimless army of vulnerables look like, move like? *Army* like Amyra, sweetening the term the way feminine names are used to describe an approaching hurricane. I imagine a broken, fragmented unit. Fractured and brazenly sprayed. There is no need for an initiation ceremony to create a sense of collectivity. We are already broken—it has already been done. An army of vulnerables does not own shit. We do not own shit—we do not own big expensive weapons nor can we give them to countries in order to coerce them into commercial trade with us. We are not part of a country. We are neither defined by lines nor by borders. We do not own shit. We do not know our shit, we are not professionals, we are not trained over and over repeating the same exercise to carry out a plan and protocol when shit hits the fan. The shit hitting the fan has been our repetitive exercise. We do not turn to shelters to hide from the trouble, as any safety measure that's offered can also be withheld. We are amateurs, we learn as we practice and forget what we have learned because sometimes the lesson and the pain are too closely related. We change and transform our methods and weapons and love tactics before we know them well. We sleep long nights, we rest, refusing capitalist burn-outs that make us protocol-zombie through motions. The future is not a factory product, the future is our past that wasn't recognized. We do not own shit. If anything, we steal. As an impeccable warrior uniform, I conceal my lips with a lipstick of a brand name I cannot share, because it is covered with a 'Tester' sticker. Other lips have tried this. Everything continues in a testing phase.

Weapons

Shard #78 of the armless aimless army of vulnerables

A gun only shoots one way. You can fire hundreds of bullets by pulling the trigger once, but the bullets always shoot one way. The bullets go where you point the barrel. Imagine a weapon that would always fire two bullets at once: one forwards, the usual way, and one backwards, towards the shooter, the person holding and aiming the gun. Or, in the case of a drone discharging: the person that's holding the joystick. How many bullets would be fired then? Would the amount of people dying from gun assault logically double - two for every shot - or would the rates actually drop below the current number? In homicide cases with a female victim, half of the time it is an incident of 'domestic violence'. If guns were designed with a two-way pointing barrel, the nuclear home would finally be blown. Fuck queer politics trying to disrupt heteronormative family structures, the dudes themselves would do it.

Why are we so accustomed to the shape of a gun, to the barrel going one way, one direction. Why do we assume this is 'the nature' of a gun, as if guns are growing from trees?

When do we recognize violence as violence?

Shard #12 of the armless aimless army of vulnerables

Prison abolitionist activist and transformative justice organizer Mariame Kaba stresses that we recognize some people as predators and criminals while 'Uncle Joe' can behave however he wants, because 'that's just Uncle Joe' (Hayes 2019). Whom we recognize as violent and whose behavior we view as normal is completely dependent on how we categorize the person that hurts us, how we estimate their intention and whether we are dependent on their approval.

As an exercise to recognize: choose a curse word that you have heard often. Possibly the curse word is not easily recognizable as a curse. It could be a care-taker telling you you are gaining weight, it could be a girl told they're loud, a boy told they're shy, it could be anything *too*. Too much. Or not enough. It could be the bumper sticker that says 'Baby On Board' - implying some life is worth more than others, saying reproduction is awarded with special care. It could be a touch, a smell, a phrase or a repeated reductive compliment. Take this curse, write it down or draw it. Repeat it, and with each repetition, imagine every time you have heard it. You may repeat as many times as you wish - adding beyond your memory as a pre-emptive strike for future assault. Continue from the past into the future, write a script for the curse that has been haunting you. By imagining and designing future hurt, it becomes your script. It becomes easier to recognize an attack, a violation as you have designed it. It no longer happens upon you. You have seen it coming.

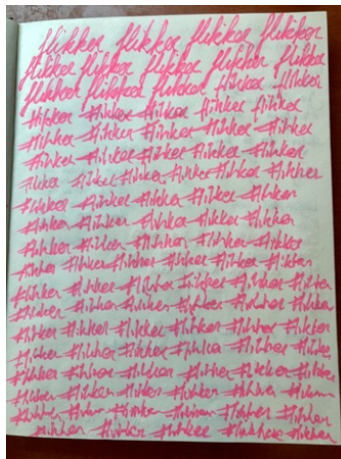


Image 3: "Flikker" by Paul Boereboom. Image description: Paul Boereboom wrote down all of the times he was called Flikker, 'Faggot' in Dutch.

In school, we learn about conflicts in history books. Our vision on violence can grow more attuned to subtle and small and quotidian events. Our focus should be on recognizing violence in different forms, instead of celebrating the ability to spot and call out predators. If we train our vision to see predators and violators, we tend to recognize what we have seen before. We target instead of think.

Most things portrayed as an inevitable side-effect - 'it comes with the job' - signify naturalized violence. A lack of intentionality can be a form of violence in itself. Ava DuVernay directed and wrote the fiction series *When They See Us*, about the men who were convicted and media-known as the 'Central Park Five'. As young boys from Harlem, New York City, they were accused of attacking and raping a jogger in the park. *When They See Us* reveals how they were set up as predators, while there wasn't any real evidence against them. The 'exonerated five' appeared in Oprah's show to talk about the series and how it felt to see their story played by actors. The prosecutor in charge of their case was Linda Fairstein, a white woman who could have easily been read as a feminist, as her main motivation to solve this case seemed to be her anger about the assault women experience every day. Her strong-headed, career-oriented attitude could also easily be read as feminist, living the *Lean In* dream. Korey Wise, the one teen charged as an adult because he was sixteen, then tells Oprah about prosecutor Fairstein: "She was just doing her job."

It's the most painful truth: her abuse is not personal, it is not extraordinary. It's her job. Anyone doing a job probably violates. Many are violated into the jobs that violate. We recognize violence where there is a job to be done.

**Who do we fight against? To spot opposition without defining an enemy.
Shard #1086 of the armless aimless army of vulnerables**

As an army of vulnerables, we are not fighting to redeem our pain or to fulfill a desire for revenge. We will break the link between punishment and justice. In response to harm, we will attempt and fail and attempt to perform transformative justice. Without preset methodologies to counter evil, we will always doubt who and what defines evil. We ourselves have been defined as evil, simply because we were caught in the gaze that decides. 'because white men can't / police their imagination / black men are dying.'

We are fighting, because we cannot accept the current status quo. We cannot accept the accepted that shapes our society. Thus it is very easy to find our allies: we become a 'we' with everyone who longs to radically disturb the status quo. We fight with everyone who does not wish to keep things the way they are. We fight against everyone who only aims to improve what already exists. The aimless don't take what already exist as a beginning to build from.

Our aimless aim: to end the world as we know it. To end the world as we know it (as formulated by Denise Ferreira da Silva, or proposed by sci-fi writer N.K. Jemisin in *The Fifth Season*: 'Let's start with the end of the world, why don't we? Get it over with and move on to more interesting things'), means to centralize the perspectives of those who have been living like survivors and see the end of the world as a future.

Then who do we fight? Those who want to keep things the way they are. Those who may say they dislike inequality and injustice, that we can do a bit better, but that we should be careful. Careful not to destruct our current position, our current wealth or welfare state, our current hegemony, our enlightenment. Those who cling to the way things are, maybe even dream of past eras in which, supposedly, things were a little less 'complex', a little less multitude. Those who would like to remain in the present.

It is thus very easy to spot opposition. Just ask: would you like to keep things the way they are? If the answer is yes, fight.

Back to France, sipping beer, a summer's terrace. Back to where this wander started, making a neat circle. Inspired by the far away *feu* in the field, Ada, the woman who I'm strangers with, tells me about her work as a blacksmith and sculptor. '*To manipulate a material as persistent as iron into something organic; the beauty of that. It's the oldest practice in the world. It all started with making tools. Tools became weapons.*' Her cheeks glow red: '*Did you know that Jesus' cross is an upside-down sword?*'

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Biography

Simon(e) van Saarloos (1990, Summit, New Jersey) is a writer, philosopher and performer living between Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and Brooklyn, New York City. They published several books in Dutch including *Ik deug / deug niet* (a collection of columns originally published in the Dutch national newspaper NRC), *De vrouw die* (a novel on a molecular biologist running the NYC marathon in a burqa) and *Enz. Het Wildersproces* (a feminist and queer report of the trial against the Dutch right-wing politician Geert Wilders). Their latest book, titled *Herdenken herdacht*, is a non-fiction work about queer forgetfulness, white erasure and embodied commemoration. Simon(e)'s first book, *Het monogame drama*, was recently translated into English and is now titled *Playing Monogamy* (published by Publication Studio). Simon(e) also writes and performs theatre and regularly appears on stage as a lecturer and interviewer. Currently, they're an MA student at the Dutch Art Institute. Their recent artist residencies include the Deltaworkers in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Kavli Institute of Nanoscience, Delft and the Be Mobile Create Together at IKS, Istanbul.

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