



**UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA**  
**ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DE DOCTORADO**  
**TESIS DOCTORAL**

MEMORY, RACE, IDENTITY, AND AUDIO-VISUAL  
EXPERIMENTATION IN THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS  
CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE, AND SANKOFA.

MEMORIA, RAZA, IDENTIDAD Y EXPERIMENTACIÓN  
AUDIOVISUAL EN LOS COLECTIVOS CINEMATOGRAFICOS  
CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE Y SANKOFA.

**D.<sup>a</sup> MARÍA PIQUERAS PÉREZ**

**2024**





**UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA**  
**ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DE DOCTORADO**  
**TESIS DOCTORAL**

MEMORY, RACE, IDENTITY, AND AUDIO-VISUAL  
EXPERIMENTATION IN THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS  
CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE, AND SANKOFA.

MEMORIA, RAZA, IDENTIDAD Y EXPERIMENTACIÓN  
AUDIOVISUAL EN LOS COLECTIVOS CINEMATOGRAFICOS  
CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE Y SANKOFA.

Autor: D.<sup>a</sup> MARÍA PIQUERAS PÉREZ

Director/es: D. JUAN ANTONIO SUÁREZ SÁNCHEZ  
D. DAVID WALTON





**DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y ORIGINALIDAD  
DE LA TESIS PRESENTADA PARA OBTENER EL TÍTULO DE DOCTOR**

*Aprobado por la Comisión General de Doctorado el 19-10-2022*

D./Dña. María Piqueras Pérez

doctorando del Programa de Doctorado en

Programa de Doctorado en Artes y Humanidades: Bellas Artes, Literatura, Teología, Traducción e Interpretación y Lingüística General e Inglesa

de la Escuela Internacional de Doctorado de la Universidad Murcia, como autor/a de la tesis presentada para la obtención del título de Doctor y titulada:

MEMORY, RACE, IDENTITY AND AUDIO-VISUAL EXPERIMENTATION IN THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE, AND SANKOFA  
MEMORIA, RAZA, IDENTIDAD Y EXPERIMENTACIÓN AUDIOVISUAL EN LOS COLECTIVOS CINEMATOGRAFÍCOS CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE Y SANKOFA.

y dirigida por,

D./Dña. Juan Antonio Suárez Sánchez

D./Dña. David Walton

D./Dña.

**DECLARO QUE:**

La tesis es una obra original que no infringe los derechos de propiedad intelectual ni los derechos de propiedad industrial u otros, de acuerdo con el ordenamiento jurídico vigente, en particular, la Ley de Propiedad Intelectual (R.D. legislativo 1/1996, de 12 de abril, por el que se aprueba el texto refundido de la Ley de Propiedad Intelectual, modificado por la Ley 2/2019, de 1 de marzo, regularizando, aclarando y armonizando las disposiciones legales vigentes sobre la materia), en particular, las disposiciones referidas al derecho de cita, cuando se han utilizado sus resultados o publicaciones.

*Si la tesis hubiera sido autorizada como tesis por compendio de publicaciones o incluyese 1 o 2 publicaciones (como prevé el artículo 29.8 del reglamento), declarar que cuenta con:*

- La aceptación por escrito de los coautores de las publicaciones de que el doctorando las presente como parte de la tesis.*
- En su caso, la renuncia por escrito de los coautores no doctores de dichos trabajos a presentarlos como parte de otras tesis doctorales en la Universidad de Murcia o en cualquier otra universidad.*

Del mismo modo, asumo ante la Universidad cualquier responsabilidad que pudiera derivarse de la autoría o falta de originalidad del contenido de la tesis presentada, en caso de plagio, de conformidad con el ordenamiento jurídico vigente.

En Murcia, a 17 de mayo de 2024

Firmado por María Piqueras Pérez el día 17/05/2024  
con un certificado emitido por la Fábrica Nacional de  
Moneda y Timbre.

Fdo.: María Piqueras Pérez

*Esta DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y ORIGINALIDAD debe ser insertada en la primera página de la tesis presentada para la obtención del título de Doctor.*

Información básica sobre protección de sus datos personales aportados	
Responsable:	Universidad de Murcia. Avenida teniente Flomesta, 5. Edificio de la Convalecencia. 30003; Murcia. Delegado de Protección de Datos: dpd@um.es
Legitimación:	La Universidad de Murcia se encuentra legitimada para el tratamiento de sus datos por ser necesario para el cumplimiento de una obligación legal aplicable al responsable del tratamiento. art. 6.1.c) del Reglamento General de Protección de Datos

Finalidad:	Gestionar su declaración de autoría y originalidad
Destinatarios:	No se prevén comunicaciones de datos
Derechos:	Los interesados pueden ejercer sus derechos de acceso, rectificación, cancelación, oposición, limitación del tratamiento, olvido y portabilidad a través del procedimiento establecido a tal efecto en el Registro Electrónico o mediante la presentación de la correspondiente solicitud en las Oficinas de Asistencia en Materia de Registro de la Universidad de Murcia

Esta investigación ha sido financiada por la Fundación Séneca–Agencia de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Región de Murcia–bajo la convocatoria de 2019 de ayudas para la formación de personal investigador en Universidades y Organismos Públicos de Investigación de la Región de Murcia en los ámbitos académico y de interés para la industria.

**A mis padres, Juan Pedro y María Ángeles.**

**Gracias por todo  
siempre**



## Acknowledgements/Agradecimientos

Pensé que escribir los agradecimientos de este proyecto sería lo más fácil pero no es cierto ya que han sido muchas las personas que me han inspirado y a las que quiero dar las gracias. En primer lugar, quiero agradecer a mis dos directores: Dr. Juan Antonio Suárez Sánchez y Dr. David Walton. Sin ellos nada de esto habría sido posible. Dos personas a las que admiro profundamente y de los que he tenido la suerte de seguir aprendiendo desde que fueron mis profesores en el grado en estudios ingleses. Gracias por vuestro consejo, tiempo, palabras de calma, ánimo e inmenso conocimiento. Pero sobre todo gracias por vuestra eterna paciencia.

De igual forma me gustaría agradecer a la fundación Séneca. Sin su contrato predoctoral y sus becas de estancia esta investigación no se podría haber llevado a cabo. En especial quiero agradecer a Viviane Barelli por ser la persona al otro lado del teléfono que siempre intentaba ayudar de la mejor manera posible. También agradecer al proyecto de investigación Queer Temporalities in Contemporary Anglophone Cultures y a todos los miembros y compañeros que pertenecen a él. Sin este proyecto de investigación no habría podido asistir a los congresos y cursos que han sido clave en mi formación como investigadora.

En la universidad de Murcia me gustaría agradecer todo lo aprendido en la asignatura de estudios culturales, un antes y un después en mi vida académica. Asignatura en la que tuve la suerte de aprender más de Dr. David Walton durante mi formación predoctoral. También a los profesores que he tenido la suerte de tener en la universidad de Murcia en el grado en estudios ingleses y que instauraron aún más cariño al estudio de la lengua inglesa y su cultura. En especial recuerdo con cariño lo aprendido con Juan Manuel Hernández Campoy, Joaquín Martínez Lorente, Remedios Perni Llorente, Rosa María García Periago y Jennifer Ruiz Morgan.

I am extremely thankful to my two supervisors in the UK: Dr. Lucy Reynolds (Westminster University) and Dr. Michele Pierson (King's College London), who I profoundly admire. They welcomed me and made me fall in love with London and its artistic and cultural atmosphere even more. I also want to thank CREAM (Westminster University) and the department of Film studies at King's. The seminars and events they organised were crucial in my training and a constant source of motivation. They helped me leave aside my fears and actively participate and voice my thoughts. I also want to thank my tutor Dr. Chris Pierce and the department of languages, histories, and cultures at the university of Liverpool for giving me the opportunity to carry research in Liverpool and see a different part of the UK.

I have been able to conduct research in places I could have never imagine and for that I feel extremely lucky. My archive quest would have never been possible without the help of the research institutions which opened their doors to me and every single person who went above and beyond to help me and, sometimes, got as frustrated as I did when material was not available. I would like to express my gratitude to the British Library, the Stuart Hall Library: InIva, the George Padmore Institute, the Black Cultural Archives, LUX, the London Metropolitan Archive, Tate Britain, V&A, Channel 4 archive service, the BFI, the June Givanni Pan-African Archive and the Maritime Museum in Liverpool. The BFI deserves a special mention. I spent so many hours there that it became my second home in London, a place I always felt welcomed and excited to come back. Special thanks to Sarah Curren, David Eagle and the Lord of the basement, Stephen Tollervey. I cannot wait to come back and visit what is my safety academic space in London. Thank you as well to Imruh Bakari for giving me the opportunity to interview him and access the living archive of Ceddo which he is and June Givanni for her inclination to answer my questions both in person and via email.

On a more personal level, I will never forget the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2021. On this day I embarked on my journey to London to start my first research stay/archive quest after months thinking Covid was never going to allow for it. After many passenger locator forms and PCR tests I made it to London. I was equally excited and scared. Little did I know this was going to open a new chapter in my life. There, I met wonderful people who welcomed me and made me feel at home while being away from home. Ángela, Cristina, Dani T, Franco, Jonasz, Jordi, Jorge, Miguel y Meri More, thank you. Gracias a Cris por ser la amiga murciana que conocí allí y a quién puedo seguir teniendo aquí, siempre ocuparás un lugar muy especial. Jonasz and Jordi thank you for taking such good care of me. My love and admiration for you cannot be put into words, you always have the right words. Jorge, algún día encontraré las palabras exactas para expresar lo importante que has sido para mí estos años. Gracias por siempre tener un lugar para mí en tu casa, por ser mi amigo/hermano/guardaespalda en Londres y estar tan cerca de mí siempre a pesar de los kilómetros que nos separan.

A Corpus y Rodri por estos diez años juntas. Por acompañarme en el camino y ofrecerme un espacio de comprensión y apoyo. Pero sobre todo por cuidar con el mismo amor con el que yo cuido un vínculo que permanece a pesar de los muchos cambios y el paso del tiempo. A Abraham, Adri, Carmen, Edu, Ester y Miguel Mars en Garlic Town (Molina). Ester gracias por tu apoyo incondicional, tus consejos y tu ojo que no se equivoca. Adri gracias por recordarme que las cosas buenas vendrían. También a Elena Sancho con quien reconecté justo a tiempo y supo ayudarme a hacer camino. I also want to thank Rhoda Madu, Rodrigo Faustini

and my dear friend Hans Ruedi Keller for his help and support throughout these years. A mis compañeros de la sala de precarios pasados, presentes y futuros, pero en especial a Melania y a Ángela, a quien me llevo como amiga y fuente de contraste y análisis de crossovers musicales.

En otro nivel más personal aún, le doy las gracias a mi familia. A todos ellos desde mis cuatro abuelos hasta mis tíos y primos. Gracias a mi abuelita Consuelo por siempre tener las palabras correctas sin necesidad de explicación por mi parte. A mi hermana por ser mi hermana y la mejor compi. Siempre guardaré tu viaje con Josan, a quién también agradezco, a Liverpool con mucho cariño a pesar del frio, la lluvia y el viento. A mi tío Cesar, a quién admiro tanto, gracias por tus consejos y tu escucha activa. A mi Kira por llegar en el momento justo, acompañarme y darme tan buenos momentos especialmente en los últimos meses de escritura. Gracias por recordarme que tenía que levantarme del ordenador y había que dar paseos y desconectar. Pero, sobre todo, gracias a mis padres Juan Pedro y María Ángeles, a quiénes dedico esta tesis, por intentar entender lo que hacía siempre, por recordarme que todo esfuerzo llevaría su recompensa en algún momento y por ser la fuente de estabilidad y comprensión más importante de mi vida, os lo debo todo.

Joe thank you for standing by me through this process and making 1982 km be just numbers. It would be easy and cheesy to say that every memory we've made together was always playing in my head when we were apart, but it is true. Thank you for always being present, showing me the many ways in which one can be present and helping me de-dramatise my content creating ability. You're constant: "you'll be fine....." "you've got this" helped me fake it and think that one day I would somehow make it. Thank you for all the trips to unwind (specially to h&b), making sure I didn't skip meals, the many walks, flowers, letters, the 1975 concerts, films, museums, matches, shindiggers and, specially, for putting the same effort I put into the adventure we are living and building together between two different yet similar worlds. I've had the time of my life challenging expectations and transcending borders with you. I also want to thank Joe's family for welcoming me and specially his mum, Gillian Parry, who took great care of me and encouraged me to do my very best.

I would like to finish this section by highlighting how lucky I feel to have embarked on this journey. I started my PhD when I was 23 and I finish it being 27. I'm definitely not the same person. So many things have changed, lessons have been learnt –and many more to come!–and new experiences and people have accompanied me. This PhD journey has helped me discover and learn more about myself. It opened a path filled with beautiful experiences, places, and people even if it was equally tough, super uncertain, extremely isolating and challenging. The films and theories I've watched and read have accompanied me during these

four years and have equally changed the way I see reality. My PhD kit (my four hard drives, my computer—thank you for making it to the very end!— charger, UK adapter and archives' notebook) came with me everywhere, becoming a part of me and, strangely enough, the only certainty and constant in this journey. I want to believe that the uncertainties I navigated throughout this journey (Covid, Brexit, sickness) will help me maintain a somewhat positive attitude towards the future or, at least, I want to manifest it. Somehow I made it here (whatever that means) and even if I do not know exactly what comes next, this journey has taught me valuable lessons. It showed me that there was always a way and being honest, I don't think there was a better way to live my early to-mid-late twenties than doing this. It helped me find support and love in scattered geographical places where I left different pieces of me. In turn, I also took on board new insights and discovered new parts of me I did not know could exist before. In my imagination, all these parts of myself coexist. This journey—with its many ups and many downs—created the person I am today and, even if many of the past versions of myself cannot believe it—my present self has managed to finish so I thank the past versions of me who thought they could not make it but continued fighting for it in spite of everything.



## MEMORIA, RAZA, IDENTIDAD Y EXPERIMENTACIÓN AUDIOVISUAL EN LOS COLECTIVOS CINEMATOGRAFÍCOS CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE Y SANKOFA

Durante la década de los ochenta surgieron en Reino Unido diferentes colectivos cinematográficos con el objetivo de dar respuesta al descontento social al que se enfrentaba el país bajo el gobierno conservador de Margaret Thatcher. Entre estos colectivos destacan Ceddo (1982-1994), Black Audio Film Collective (1982-1988) y Sankofa (1983-1988). Estos colectivos, compuestos por cineastas británicos con ascendencia afrocaribeña son el objeto de estudio de esta tesis doctoral. La novedad de estos colectivos estribaba en que sus miembros pertenecían a minorías étnicas hasta entonces ignoradas en el país: se trata de colectivos compuestos por cineastas afro-británicos que gracias a su producción original, vanguardista y capaz de integrar en una misma pieza diferentes disciplinas como la imagen videográfica y cinematográfica o la música fueron capaces de reivindicar la importancia de la cultura afrocaribeña en Reino Unido, de articular importantes reflexiones sobre las identidades post-coloniales contemporáneas y la memoria colectiva.

Antes de la aparición de estos colectivos cinematográficos, los cineastas afro-británicos—al igual que otras minorías afectadas por el colonialismo británico—eran escasos y dependían de instituciones que destinaban limitados fondos a potenciar el cine afro-británico (Hall 1988; Mercer 1994) potenciando la idea de que el cine afro-británico era inexistente. Además, la cultural de las comunidades migrantes, especialmente las llegadas tras la segunda guerra mundial, invitadas a reconstruir el país como fue el caso de la generación Windrush, apenas recibían atención. Esto iba ligado a la falsa idea de que las comunidades migrantes tenían una cultura inferior en comparación con la británica y por lo tanto la cultura migrante era infravalorada y obviada (Fusco 1988) dando lugar a que las comunidades afrodescendientes de África y el Caribe experimentaran una marginación cultural y social, acompañada por el efecto del racismo. No fue hasta la aparición de Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa que hubo una proliferación de representaciones afro-británicas en el cine y la televisión británica que rompía con los estereotipos y prejuicios desminados en contra de ellos ya que, por ejemplo, la televisión o la prensa construía a estas minorías como peligrosos enemigos dentro del país que ponían en riesgo la cultura y tradiciones británicas. Gracias a Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa, los críticos, artistitas y audiencias de la época se enfrentaron a un nuevo paradigma donde hubo una reconfiguración de concepciones previas sobre lo que se esperaba de un cineasta afro-británico ya que estos colectivos rompieron con las categorías

de antaño (1988). Ceddo y Black Audio Film Collective produjeron un arte que quiso ser popular y accesible, pero que también era vanguardista e intelectual, siempre vinculado a la historia y las preocupaciones específicas de las minorías étnicas. Su trabajo cuestionó la representación de los pueblos Afrocaribeños en la televisión y cine británicos más convencionales, reivindicó su importancia cultural e intelectual, y buscó expandir las definiciones al uso de la identidad británica en un tiempo de movilización de-colonial y de reconceptualización de las identidades sociales y nacionales hacia moldes más fluidos e integradores.

Sankofa y Black Audio estuvieron formados por cineastas con formación académica en diversas escuelas de artes londinenses como Central Saint Martins o la politécnica de Portsmouth; los cineastas de Ceddo, sin embargo, se habían formado principalmente en la industria cinematográfica y televisiva y tenía experiencia previa al marco legislativo que potencio la aparición de estos colectivos. De hecho, algunos de los cineastas de Ceddo ya eran conocidos en televisión británica a través de la compañía cinematográfica Kuumba, la cual operó en tándem con Ceddo durante algunos años. Tras los disturbios de 1981 en Brixton (Londres) se evidenció la situación de marginalización de las minorías étnicas, las cuales no iban a seguir calladas y se manifestaron en diferentes puntos del Reino Unido demostrando como las comunidades afro-británicas experimentaban una situación de marginalización en todo el país históricamente. Como respuesta a esta situación diversas instituciones con fondos económicos decidieron ayudar económicamente a colectivos formados por minorías para darles representación y un espacio (Mercer 1994). Un ejemplo fue el Greater London Council. A la vez Channel 4 (1982-) apareció y tenía como objetivo dar representación a minorías por minorías. Estas dos instituciones junto al British Film Institute y asociaciones como la Independent Filmmakers Association (IFA) o Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) crearon la Workshop Declaration. Esta declaración animaba a colectivos cinematográficos a producir cine y experimentar también supuso un espacio protegido donde poder crear. Bajo esta declaración surgieron Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa.

A pesar de que estos colectivos desarrollaron su producción por separado y de las diferencias generacionales, como esta investigación demuestra, comparten numerosas influencias estéticas e intelectuales como por ejemplo las obras de pensadores afrocaribeños como Franz Fanón, Aimé Césaire, C. R. L. James y, casi coetáneo, Stuart Hall, todos concernidos con las identidades híbridas y con el papel de la raza en los procesos sociales. De hecho, estos autores son mencionados en las producciones o incluso aparecen entrevistados en

ellas como es el caso de Stuart Hall. Igualmente, estéticamente, su trabajo surge de un cúmulo de influencias tanto populares como experimentales pasando por el tercer cine latinoamericano (Solanas y Gettino 1969). A estas influencias, habría que añadir el ejemplo de pioneros afro-británicos, como Lionel Ngakane (1928-2003), Lloyd Reckord (1929-), y Horace Ové (1939-), primeros directores de cine británicos afrodescendientes con cierta visibilidad y con los cuales su cine ha sido compado. Con su cine, donde en la mayoría de los casos, el cine ensayo era el medio elegido, Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective y Sankofa abordaron las identidades híbridas que aparecieron como consecuencia del imperialismo británico y combinaron referencias vernáculos africanas y caribeñas, la lengua y culturas tradicionales británicas, y una herencia afrodescendiente y transnacional conocida como *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993b). Estos colectivos abordaron temas no vistos previamente en Reino Unido y cambiando las preconcepciones sobre qué era cine afro-británico derivando en una mayor experimentación temática y formal.

Sankofa, Ceddo y el BAFC han conseguido mostrar qué significa ser británico y de etnia negra desde la perspectiva de las propias comunidades afrodescendientes, tomando la imagen y la palabra en un ejercicio de autodefinición sin precedentes, ya que tradicionalmente estas comunidades eran representadas a través de los ojos de las comunidades británicas hegemónicas difusoras de estereotipos y prejuicios. Pero este esfuerzo de autodefinición no se traduce en una identidad esencialista y estática, sino en una práctica dinámica, de articulación diferencial de modos de hacer.

Aunque existen algunas publicaciones acerca de estos colectivos, el tratamiento que reciben es escaso (Fusco 1988; Eshun and Sagar 2007a). Las aportaciones de Fusco (1988) y Eshun y Sagar (2007a), siendo fundamentales, son un tanto preliminares y panorámicas por ser las primeras en surgir más allá de escritos ocasionales y reseñas de prensa. En publicaciones más divulgativas no figuran de forma extensa: o bien no son mencionados o bien, cuando aparecen, no son tratados en profundidad (Dixon 1988). Ceddo, directamente no es contemplado por estas publicaciones ya que su estética, menos vanguardista, no atrajo suficiente atención (Williamson 1988).

Por tanto, el objetivo principal de la investigación es precisamente producir un estudio pormenorizado de la producción de Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa demostrando, a la vez, que Ceddo debe incluirse en el estudio de los colectivos cinematográficos afrocaribeños que surgen en los ochenta. Como objetivo secundario esta tesis recoge en un mismo espacio la información archivística disponible sobre estos colectivos, la cual está repartida en diferentes archivos. Además, esta tesis también ha conseguido unos objetivos parciales:



-Estudiar las conexiones laterales de estos colectivos con la teoría crítica y postcolonial de los años ochenta y noventa (el pensamiento de Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, o Kobina Mercer). La producción de estos colectivos no son fenómenos meramente audiovisuales ya que las actividades de estos colectivos emergen en un rico contexto de interconexiones entre las artes, así como en diálogo con el pensamiento crítico del momento, como lo demuestra el hecho de que varios de los cineastas de estos colectivos también hayan publicado ensayos teóricos.

- Mostrar la relación de estos colectivos con el momento social y político en que desarrollan su actividad y analizar su obra como diálogos, más o menos mediados, con los conflictos y tensiones de su momento histórico. En otras palabras, estas producciones demuestran qué significa ser negro y británico en los años ochenta y principios de los noventa al igual que las conexiones intergeneracionales y espaciales con otros miembros de la diáspora negra.

-Explorar las nociones de identidad y memoria colectiva que estos colectivos ponen en juego al igual de las diversas formas (no ortodoxas) de acceder al pasado. Además, se explora la conexión entre la memoria y la identidad y como esto se manifiesta visualmente en las producciones ya que el cine ensayo ayuda a dar forma a conceptos e ideas abstractas.

-Establecer las diferencias o similitudes con previas manifestaciones audiovisuales afrocaribeñas en Reino Unido demostrando como Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa consiguieron ir más allá gracias al espacio institucional abierto que les permitía una mayor experimentación.

-Analizar la intersección entre raza y otros axis como son el género, la sexualidad o la enfermedad ya que estos colectivos rompen con ideas esencialistas de identidad y demuestran la pluralidad de experiencias afro-británicas (Hall 1988).

-Estudiar la importancia del trabajo de archivo para estos colectivos con el objetivo de reconstruir el pasado para poder entender el presente y el futuro.

-Mostrar el importante contexto institucional en el que estos colectivos surgen.

-Finalmente, aunque la investigación se articula en la metodología que menciono a continuación y en las ideas que ya he descrito, busca, al mismo tiempo, investigar el estilo y las características distintivas de cada colectivo. Sin embargo, el objetivo no es demostrar qué colectivo produjo la mejor forma filmica. Al contrario, esta tesis demuestra las diferentes formas de hacer cine afro-británico y las diversas temáticas que se pueden abordar, las cuales conviven y no están en oposición.

La metodología de la investigación se caracteriza por su eclecticismo abordando teorías y lentes de análisis provenientes de diversos campos de estudio entre los cuales destacan los estudios culturales, los estudios de memoria, los estudios postcoloniales y los estudios fílmicos. Todos estos campos no deben verse en oposición sino en colaboración ya que contribuyen a un estudio detallado y crítico del corpus visual que compone esta investigación. Estas áreas de estudio incluyen una exploración de la identidad y la nación, el rol de la cultura popular en la sociedad, el cúmulo de influencias intelectuales que llegó a denominarse teoría «postcolonial», las percepciones de los estudios sobre la memoria y la representación e interacción de estas áreas con el cine, que da forma física a los conceptos abstractos procedentes de estos campos de estudio (Alter 2018). Las producciones de los colectivos son el objeto de estudio para explorar nociones relacionadas con estos campos.

Los resultados hacen a esta tesis el primer estudio detallado de estos colectivos audiovisuales al igual que el primer espacio donde todas las producciones de Ceddo han sido exploradas en su totalidad dándoles la relevancia e importancia que merecen. Esta tesis demuestra el complejo cruce de diversas metodologías y líneas de trabajo. Al igual que ha producido exploraciones contextualizadas y detalladas tanto. Históricas como formales de las producciones audiovisuales de Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa dándoles la atención crítica y teórica que no habían recibido con anterioridad. En todos estos sentidos, esta tesis ha rellenado una laguna significativa en el conocimiento. Las producciones y esta tesis muestran que Ceddo, Black Audio y Sankofa interactuaron con diferentes géneros cinematográficos, especialmente el cine ensayo, introduciendo estrategias discursivas y formales provenientes de su ascendencia cultural y étnica. También consiguieron proponer nuevas nociones de identidad y colectividad gracias a la relevancia de la memoria y el uso de archivo, y produjeron un arte que quiso ser popular y accesible a la vez que vanguardista e intelectual, vinculado a la historia y las preocupaciones específicas de las minorías étnicas. Finalmente, demostraron qué significaba ser británico y de etnia negra desde la perspectiva de las comunidades afrodescendientes en un ejercicio de autodefinición sin precedentes.

## MEMORY, RACE, IDENTITY, AND AUDIO-VISUAL EXPERIMENTATION IN THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE, AND SANKOFA

During the eighties, several film collectives emerged in the United Kingdom and responded to the social unrest the country was facing. Among these collectives, Ceddo (1982-1994), Black Audio Film Collective (1982-1988) and Sankofa (1983-1988) stand out. These collectives, British filmmakers with an Afro-Caribbean heritage, are the subject of study of this thesis. They were able to integrate different disciplines in their productions, which helped them to claim and articulate important reflections on postcolonial identities. Previously, Afro-British filmmakers were scarce and relied on institutions that allocated limited to Afro-British cinema (Hall 1988; Mercer 1994). It was not until the emergence of Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa that there was a proliferation of Afro-British representations. Critics, artists, and audiences of the time were confronted with a new paradigm where there was a reconfiguration of previous conceptions of what was expected of an Afro-British filmmaker as these collectives broke with the categories of the past (Williamson 1988).

Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa underlined the significance of the cultures of migrant communities, which were often overlooked and undervalued (Fusco 1998). Although these collectives developed their production separately, as this research demonstrates, they share numerous aesthetic and intellectual influences such as the works of Afro-Caribbean thinkers like Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, C. R. L. James and, almost contemporaneously, Stuart Hall, all concerned with hybrid identities and the role of race in social processes. Although there are some publications on these groups, they received little treatment (Fusco 1988; Eshun and Sagar 2007a). The contributions by Fusco and Eshun and Sagar (2007a), while fundamental, are somewhat preliminary and panoramic. In more popular publications, they do not appear extensively: either they are not mentioned or, when they do appear, they are not dealt with in depth (Dixon 1988). Ceddo, for example, is not directly covered by these publications because his less avant-garde aesthetic did not attract enough attention (Williamson 1988). The main aim of the research is precisely to produce a detailed study of the production of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa while demonstrating that Ceddo should be included in the study of Afro-Caribbean film collectives emerging in the eighties.

The methodology is characterised by its eclecticism, drawing on theories and lenses of analysis from the fields of cultural studies, memory studies, postcolonial studies, and film studies. These areas of study include an exploration of identity and nationhood, the role of popular culture in social processes in society, the cluster of intellectual influences that came to be called ‘postcolonial’ theory, the insights of memory studies, and the representation and interaction of these areas with film, which gives physical form to the abstract concepts from these fields of study (Alter 2018).

The results show how the collectives interacted with different film genres, especially the essay film, introducing discursive and formal strategies stemming from their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They also managed to propose new notions of identity and collectivity thanks to the relevance of memory and the use of archives. These collectives produced an art that wanted to be popular and accessible as well as avant-garde and intellectual, linked to the history and specific concerns of ethnic minorities. They demonstrated what it meant to be British and black from the perspective of Afro-descendant communities as they were involved in an unprecedented exercise of self-definition.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

INTRODUCTION.....	15
CHAPTER 1: THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS AFTER 1981: CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE AND SANKOFA.....	21
1.1. Mapping Black Britons: the Historical Black in the Union Jack.....	21
1.2. The Black British Workshops are Coming! Black British Cinema and Thatcherism.....	27
1.2.1. Oppositional British Cinema before Thatcherism.....	28
1.2.2. Black British Cinema: the Opportunity of the Eighties.....	30
1.2.3. Debating Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa: Different kinds of Experimentalism.....	36
1.3. Positioning Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa.....	43
1.4. Conceptualising Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa.....	53
1.4.1 Black British Preposterous Counter-memory.....	54
1.4.2. Different Modes of Remembering the Past: Cultural Memory Studies.....	55
1.5. Conclusion.....	58
CHAPTER 2: EXCAVATING BLACK BRITAIN: ACCESING THE PAST.....	60
2.1. Countering Mainstream Media: <i>Territories</i> .....	61
2.2. Mining the Remnants of the British Empire: <i>Expeditions I: Signs of Empire</i> and <i>Expeditions II: Images of Nationality</i> .....	68
2. 2.1 Signalling Myths in <i>Expeditions I: Signs of Empire</i> .....	70
2.2.2. Staging Memory: <i>Expeditions II: Images of Nationality</i> .....	74
2.3. The Call of Time: <i>Time and Judgement: a Diary of Exile of 400 Years</i> .....	76
2.4. Conclusion.....	86
CHAPTER 3. THE MULTIFACETED BLACK BRITISH EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES.....	89
3.1. A Domain of Passionate Identities: <i>The Passion of Remembrance</i> .....	91
3.2. “Feel no Guilt in Your Desire”: <i>This is not an AIDS Advertisement</i> .....	101
3.3. Is This Our <i>Perfect Image</i> ? Black Women and Self-representation.....	107
3.4. <i>Omega Rising: Women of Rastafari</i> Shaping Rastafarianism .....	113
3.5. Conclusion.....	118

CHAPTER 4. LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF MISREPRESENTATION:	
RESHAPING BLACK BRITISHNESS.....	120
4.1. Black Britons and Disability: <i>The Flame of the Soul</i> .....	121
4.2. <i>Three Songs on Time, Pain, and Light</i> : Donald Rodney’s Art and Activism.....	126
4.3. Black Britons are not Lazy Criminals: Here Comes the <i>Street Warriors</i> .....	130
4.4. Uniting against “The White Banket of Forgetfulness” in <i>Racism: A         Response</i> .....	134
4.5. Conclusion .....	138
CHAPTER 5. THE TWILIGHT ZONE OF (NON)-BELONGING: THE	
CONFIGURATION OF BLACK BRITISHNESS.....	141
5.1. Fearing the Loss of Roots while Being <i>Home away from Home</i> .....	142
5.2. Sometimes Our Dreams Depend on What is not Available: <i>Dreaming Rivers</i> .....	148
5.3. Black Scottishness: <i>A Family Called Abrew</i> and British Entertainment .....	154
5.4. “I’m Black and I’m British:” <i>A Touch of the Tar Brush</i> in Liverpool.....	159
5.5. Conclusion.....	165
CHAPTER 6. THE PHANTOM OF THE PAST: OPRESSION, COLLECTIVE	
ESTRANGEMENT AND RESILENCE.....	168
6.1. <i>Handsworth Songs</i> and the Ghosts of Other Stories.....	170
6.2. This is the Truth Behind <i>The People’s Account</i> .....	181
6.3. Breaking Silence Through Remembrance: <i>Culture for Freedom</i> .....	187
6.4. <i>The Mysteries of July</i> : Collective Mourning, Grief, and the Prison System.....	191
6.5. Conclusion.....	197
CHAPTER 7. IS LONDON THE PLACE? REWRITING THE SELF IN	
TRANSCULTURAL BRITAIN.....	199
7.1. “London Has Left me Exhausted:” Change, Return and Urban Decay in <i>Twilight City</i> .....	200
7.2. <i>In-Between</i> Sri Lanka and London: Black Skin, White and Black Masks.....	209
7.3. Calling on History: The <i>Testament</i> of Ghana’s Socialist Revolution.....	215
7.4 Conclusion .....	223

CHAPTER 8. TRANSCENDING BRITAIN: LIBERATION BEGINS IN THE	
IMAGINATION.....	226
8.1. <i>Who Needs a Heart?</i> The Enigma Behind Michael X.....	228
8.2. <i>We are the Elephant</i> : South African Apartheid.....	237
8.3. “Exile Does Many Things to You”: Music as Resistance in <i>Blue Notes and Exiled Voices</i> .....	244
8.4. Conclusion.....	250
CHAPTER 9. THERE ARE BLACK PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE: AFROFUTURISM	
AND BEYOND .....	253
9. 1. Flying into the Future with <i>The Last Angel of History</i> .....	254
9.2. Unbounding the Future: <i>Memory Room 451</i> .....	262
9.3. What Comes Next? .....	269
9.4. Conclusion.....	271
CONCLUSIONS .....	274
REFERENCES.....	279
APPENDICES.....	318

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. June Givanni's Pan-African Archive.....	35
Figure 2. Third Eye Struggle Symposium.....	37
Figure 3. Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa: Fully ACTT Franchised Workshops.....	44
Figure 4. Collage of Some of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa's Courses and Screenings...	52
Figure 5. <i>Territories</i> ' Juxtaposition of a Policeman and a Black Man.....	67
Figure 6. Opening of <i>Expeditions I: Signs of Empire</i> .....	71
Figure 7. "In the Beginning." <i>Expeditions I</i> .....	71
Figure 8. Beginning of <i>Expeditions II: Images of Nationality</i> .....	74
Figure 9. The Time-Traveller Ready to visit the Years 1980-1987 in Time and Judgement...	77
Figure 10. Queen Judgement with her Scales and the Lion in Time and Judgement.....	79
Figure 11. Telephone Wall with Some of the Words in Time and Judgement .....	82
Figure 12. <i>The Passion of Remembrance</i> 's Allegorical Space.....	93
Figure 13. Maggie's Montage in <i>The Passion of Remembrance</i> .....	97
Figure 14. Maggie, Tony, and Lou Watching Maggie's Montage in <i>The Passion of Remembrance</i> .....	100
Figure 15. Cohen's Moral Panic as Applied to AIDS.....	103
Figure 16. Unknown Faces in <i>This is not an AIDS Advertisement</i> .....	104
Figure 17. Phallic Symbols in <i>This is not an AIDS Advertisement</i> .....	104
Figure 18. Photographic Gallery in <i>Perfect Image?</i> .....	108
Figure 19. A Photograph in <i>Perfect Image?</i> Coming to Life.....	109
Figure 20. The Receptionist and the CEO in <i>Perfect Image?</i> .....	110
Figure 21. An Imperfect Mimicry in <i>Perfect Image?</i> .....	111
Figure 22. Changing Eye Colour in <i>Perfect Image?</i> .....	112
Figure 23. Queen Omega in Space in <i>Omega Rising</i> .....	114
Figure 24. Some of <i>Omega Rising</i> 's Women between London and Jamaica.....	116
Figure 25. Complementary Rasta Education.....	117
Figure 26. Britannia Hospital 2 by Donald Rodney.....	122
Figure 27. Beginning of Three Songs on <i>Pain, Time and Light</i> .....	127
Figure 28. Tableau of Donald Rodney Leaving Hospital Surrounded by Sunflowers in <i>Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light</i> .....	128
Figure 29. Donald Rodney's Tribute to Tate Gallery in <i>Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light</i> .....	129



Figure 30. Southbank's Undercroft (London) .....	132
Figure 31. Miriam Weeping at the Airport in <i>Home away from Home</i> .....	143
Figure 32. Miriam's Epiphany in <i>Home away from Home</i> .....	146
Figure 33. The Hut and Sunflowers in <i>Home away from Home</i> .....	147
Figure 34. Miss T.'s Children in <i>Dreaming Rivers</i> .....	149
Figure 35. Some of Miss T.'s Trinkets in <i>Dreaming Rivers</i> .....	151
Figure 36. Miss T. Anointing and Appointing Herself in <i>Dreaming Rivers</i> .....	153
Figure 37. Manuel and Lottie Abrew.....	155
Figure 38. Charlie Abrew by Maggi Hambling.....	158
Figure 39. John Akomfrah Walking Interviews in <i>A Touch of the Tar Brush</i> .....	161
Figure 40. Liverpool's Albert Dock.....	164
Figure 41. A Young Black Briton Being Chased by the Police in <i>Handsworth Songs</i> .....	173
Figure 42. Footage of Lord Kitchener Singing "London is the Place for me" in <i>Handsworth Songs</i> .....	176
Figure 43. The British Empire, a Tableau in <i>Handsworth Songs</i> .....	180
Figure 44. <i>The People's Account</i> Wondering Who the Next Target Will Be.....	185
Figure 45. Newspapers Traditionally Scapegoating Black Britons, <i>The People's Account</i> ...	186
Figure 46. Mourning Room in <i>Mysteries of July</i> .....	192
Figure 47. Olivia Driving at Night Past the National Gallery (London), <i>Twilight City</i> .....	202
Figure 48. Olivia Writing her Reply in <i>Twilight City</i> .....	205
Figure 49. <i>Identity: The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity</i> (ICA 1987) .....	212
Figure 50. Robert Crusz in <i>In-Between</i> .....	213
Figure 51. Abena Returning to Ghana in <i>Testament</i> .....	219
Figure 52. Abena Reconnecting with Ghana's Past in <i>Testament</i> .....	221
Figure 53. On the Left: Louis, Sydney, and Jack. On the Right: Faith, Naomie and Millie in <i>Who Needs a Heart?</i> .....	232
Figure 54. Michael X and Carmichael in London, 1967. <i>Who Needs a Heart?</i> .....	235
Figure 55. Footage of Michael X Receiving John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Peace Hair in <i>Who Needs a Heart?</i> .....	236
Figure 56. Steven Bantu Biko.....	239
Figure 57. <i>We are the Elephant Flyer</i> .....	241
Figure 58. Hugh Masekela and Louis Moholo.....	246
Figure 59. Peggy Phango and Miriam Makeba.....	247

Figure 60. The Data Thief in the Computers' Room in <i>The Last Angel of History</i> .....	257
Figure 61. The Data Thief Visits Ghana in <i>The Last Angel of History</i> .....	229
Figure 62. The Time-Traveller in <i>Memory Room 451</i> .....	264
Figure 63. The Time-Traveller Moving through Water in <i>Memory Room 451</i> .....	265
Figure 64. Some of the Prisoners in <i>Memory Room 451</i> .....	266
Figure 65. Edward George in <i>The Strangeness of Dub</i> (Barbican Centre 2021).....	270
Figure 66. <i>What Freedom is to Me?</i> (Tate Britain 2023).....	270
Figure 67. Bakari in <i>Conversation with Linton Kwesi Johnson</i> (198 Contemporary Arts 2022) .....	271



## INTRODUCTION

“To be black is to be political”  
(Araeen 1982, 24)

In January 2014, *The Guardian* published an article featuring actor Lenny Henry, who highlighted the need for access to the television and film industries for Britain’s ethnic minorities. Since 2020, following the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been a renewed global interest in black issues. In Britain, this is evidenced by features on black Britishness in magazines, exhibitions, and screenings of black British films. Examples of exhibitions are “Life between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s-now” (Tate Britain, 2021), “There are Black People in the Future” (Hayward, 2022), “Sixty Years: The Unfinished Conversation” (Tate Britain, 2022-2023), “PerAnkh: The June Givanni Pan African Cinema Archive” (Raven Row, 2023), Sir Isaac Julien’s retrospective “What Freedom is to Me” (Tate Britain, 2023), or June Givanni’s BAFTA award for her significant contribution to British cinema through her Pan-African archive (2024).

By February 2024, artist Thomas J. Price asserted in *The Guardian* that Black British artists could no longer be disregarded. The exhibitions I mentioned are examples of this. The issues addressed in some of the aforementioned shows had previously been underlined by past black British artists, indicating a revived engagement with and resurgence of conversations left unfinished in the past. In a post-Brexit Britain, retrospectives on black British experiences appear to offer frameworks for interpreting present contingencies. This is particularly evident in the realm of black British filmmaking, where questions regarding memory and identity were already raised in the eighties. A field of research as large as black British filmmaking is too varied and complex to cover fully. My primary focus here is on the black British workshops Ceddo (1982-1994), Black Audio Film Collective (1982-1998), and Sankofa (1983-1998), which emerged in the aftermath of the riots of 1981, through the subsidised spaces facilitated by institutions such as Channel 4, the British Film Institute, and the Greater London Council.

Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa responded to the longstanding social unrest experienced by black Britons, exacerbated during Thatcherism. Through their productions, they challenged distorted representations of black British communities and identities, demonstrating the critical relationship between white normative Britishness and black identities. Their dynamic and interdisciplinary approaches redefined Britishness and black British filmmaking. Additionally, they vindicated the significance of their cultural

backgrounds as post-colonial British identities and underscored the interest of memory and the return to the archive.

Previous literature on the collectives is limited to Coco Fusco's *Young British and Black: Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa* (1988), Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar's *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective* (2007a), along with articles in various film and art magazines. However, there is currently not a work solely dedicated to studying their productions in depth and examining their interrelations, rather than setting them in opposition to each other. This thesis argues for the equal value of these three collectives, established under the same legal framework, while considering their differences and similarities. By investigating their works, including Ceddo, traditionally overlooked, this thesis aims to create a space where the productions are given equal recognition. Therefore, my objective is to study the productions of the three collectives in detail. This will showcase Ceddo's importance and will place the collective in the narrative of black British filmmaking resulting from the eighties' workshops together with Black Audio and Sankofa. I pioneer research on all of Ceddo's works here, providing the first extended inquiry on their work. I show how Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa reshaped black British cinema and challenged existing ideas and structures of black British filmmaking and representation. By exploring these works together, this thesis addresses the question of what it meant to be black and British in the eighties and early nineties, underscoring their significant contribution to the arena of identity formation, memory, and culture. A secondary objective is to assemble the scattered information present in different archives and sources in the same space.

The methodological eclecticism employed in the thesis reflects the diverse theories and practices influencing the workshops, which include the introduction of post-structural approaches to the exploration of identity and nationhood, cultural studies takes on the role of popular culture in society, the cumulus of intellectual influences that came to be called "postcolonial" theory, insights from (cultural) memory studies, and the interaction of these areas with film, which gives concrete iconicity to the abstract concepts (Alter 2018) coming from these fields of study. In the forthcoming chapters, I propose analyses of the works of these collectives deriving from this interdisciplinary approach.

Before delving into these analyses, it is essential to clarify my usage of the term black, which I use with deliberate imprecision to refer to Afro-Caribbean communities in Britain. As Stuart Hall explained in "Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Post-War History" (2006), in the seventies the term black was a political label which "[e]ncompassed all the minority migrant communities without the careful discrimination of

ethnic, racial, regional, national, and religious distinctions which has since emerged” (2006, 2). The narratives within the works I examine utilise the term black with this political sense. Additionally, the black filmmaking collectives appearing at the time, conferences, and events also adopted the label black to encompass Anglo-Indian narratives, symbolising the solidarity among minority communities. Throughout this thesis, though, when I use the term black I am mainly referring to Afro-Caribbean communities unless I specifically signal the contrary. In my title, I’ve also chosen the term race since it “[i]ndicates a historically, socially and culturally constructed notion” (Doy 2020, 4). I am aware of the inconsistencies and differences between the terms race and ethnicity. However, race allows me to discuss ideas around prejudices, dominance, and nationalism (Walton 2007, 165). As Paul Gilroy argued, “race is a political category that can accommodate various meanings which are in turn determined by struggle” (1987, 35). Therefore, race is socially and politically constructed and affected by change across time.

After this introduction, chapter one addresses the socio-historical and political context surrounding the establishment of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa. It studies the filmmaking structures that influenced them, the institutional support they received, their characteristics, similarities, and the debates around their film practices and political stances. Additionally, it deals with the methodological framework of the thesis. Chapter two excavates black British identities, demonstrating how the collectives combated national amnesia and began constructing their own narratives from the raw material they excavated. The chapter presents three case studies: *Territories* (1984) by Sankofa, *Expeditions I: Songs of Empire* (1984) and *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality* (1984) by Black Audio Film Collective and *Time and Judgement* (1988) by Ceddo.

Chapter three initiates the fight against tokenism following the initial excavation phase, highlighting black Britain’s diversity and varied identities. The works included are *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986) by Sankofa, *This is not an Aids Advertisement* (1987) by Sankofa, *Perfect Image?* (1988) by Sankofa and *Omega Rising* (1988) by Ceddo. These films counter misrepresentation. Chapter four continues this fight against stereotypes initiated in chapter three through the productions *The Flame of the Soul* (1990) by Ceddo, *Three Songs on Pain*, *Time and Light* (1995) by Black Audio Film Collective, *Street Warriors* (1986) by Ceddo and *Racism: A Response* (1990) by Ceddo. Even if they pursue the same objective, I develop the analysis of the works in two different chapters following a thematic divide: chapter three deals with gender and sexuality and chapter four focuses on other diverse identities and stereotypes like the convergence of black Britishness and disability.

Chapter five offers specific case studies where black British-born subjects construct their own sense of identity against family frameworks. Britain serves as a space for the development of their senses of self, indicating how individual memories and stories are created against collective and social notions. This chapter explores individual estrangement, focusing on displacement and the failed dream of belonging to Britain. *Home away from Home* (1993), by Sankofa, concentrates on the fear of losing one's roots. *Dreaming Rivers* (1988), by Sankofa, deals with the nostalgia for the colonial home with no possibility of return. *A family Called Abrew* (1992), by Sankofa, and *A Touch of the Tar Brush* (1991a), by Black Audio, explore Black Scottishness and the black community in Liverpool, respectively, illustrating that in Britain there are black British stories beyond London and predating post-war migration. These four works focus on individual and family spaces, unlike chapter six.

Chapter six depicts collective estrangement and notions of non-belonging in the public and social sphere. Several of the works analysed have as a background the riots of 1985 and the historical neglect of black Britain's memory and history. The productions are *Handsworth Songs* (1986) by Black Audio Film Collective, *The People's Account* (1986) by Ceddo, *Culture for Freedom* (1990) by Ceddo and *Mysteries of July* (1991) by Black Audio Film Collective, offering insights into police custody and the lack of justice for black Britons.

Chapters seven and eight present a transcultural vision of Britain. Chapter seven positions Britain as a global country where post-colonial identities undergo a process of rewriting or reconstruction, away from colonial pressures. This chapter also acknowledges the role of Britain in the histories of violence of former colonies. *Twilight City* (1989), by Black Audio, *In-Between* (1992), by Sankofa, and *Testament* (1988), by Black Audio, are the chosen examples. Chapter eight shows the transcultural side of cosmopolitan memory and underlines the connection of Britain to various parts of the world through acts of solidarity and ideological influences. In this chapter figures of black intellectuals like Michael X, Malcom X or Steven Biko are explored. *Who needs a heart?* (1991b), by John Akomfrah, and *We are the Elephant* (1987) and *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (1992), both by Ceddo, are included here. *Who Needs a Heart?* investigates activist Michael X and his impact on British Black Power. Both Ceddo productions deal with apartheid in South Africa and how it relates to Britain. *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* shows how music and musical performance are vehicles for expression, protest, memory, and solidarity.

Chapter nine deals with black futurity and Afrofuturism, illustrating how black British identities interact with and envision the future and hold insights into its uncertainties and possibilities. The works covered are *The Last Angel of History* (1996) and *Memory Room:*

*451* (1997b) by Black Audio. This chapter also investigates the trajectories of the collectives and their members following the dissolution of the workshops.





## **CHAPTER 1. THE BLACK BRITISH WORKSHOPS AFTER 1981: CEDDO, BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE AND SANKOFA**

“We all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture”  
(Hall 1988, 29)

In this chapter I provide a socio-political and historical context for the works I analyse and the film and video workshops who produced them. I begin tracing the presence of black British subjectivities in the United Kingdom, which predate post-war migration. In this section, I focus on the events taking place in the eighties as the backdrop for the productions I explore. Next, I consider the oppositional cinematic landscape preceding and influencing the workshops Ceddo (1982-1994), Black Audio Film Collective (1982-1998), and Sankofa (1983-1998). Subsequently, I survey earlier examples of black British filmmaking, prior the institutional opportunity opened by policies such as the Workshop Declaration or the emergence of Channel 4 in the eighties. These policies, as I will show, facilitated the establishment of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa. I also examine the various perspectives on black British filmmaking, aesthetics and positions presented by these workshops. Following this, I investigate the foundation of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa, their primary objectives, and the activities they developed to forward their productions and ideas, highlighting their contribution to black British filmmaking not only through their productions but also theoretically and socially. Here, I delineate their differences and similarities. In the final section, I offer the theoretical assumptions that underpin this research, and which will be explored in depth in each of the analytical chapters I present subsequently.

### **1.1. Mapping Black Britons: the Historical Black in the Union Jack**

“The black experience in England is increasingly revealed to possess a certain uniqueness, particularity and peculiarity that distinguishes it from the history of black populations elsewhere in the diaspora” (Gilroy 1993a, 54).

The presence of black peoples in Britain predates post-war migration, stemming from the global reach of the British Empire and the legacies of colonialism and slavery. By the time the ship HMT Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury in 1948—a symbol of post-war migration—several black British communities across the country were already established advancing the multicultural shape of Britain. Earlier ships from the Caribbean, like the SS Ormondane in

Liverpool (1948) and the *Almanzora* in Southampton (1947) had docked in Britain. Unlike the Windrush, they did not receive media coverage. The media, as I demonstrate in this thesis, contributed to the demonisation of black Britons.

The oldest black populations in cities like Liverpool, Cardiff, or Bristol can be traced back to the legacy of slavery and colonialism. In contrast, the arrival of post-war migration followed the British Nationality Act of 1948, which invited Commonwealth citizens to migrate to Britain for work since they held British passports.<sup>1</sup> The Windrush Generation is an example of this. As Ron Ramdin wrote:

Shortage of labour from the mid-fifties was made good through Britain's continuing relationship with the Commonwealth, a 'legal legacy' which is central to the presence of black and Asian migrant labour in the country in that as Commonwealth citizens these were workers who had the right to live and work in Britain. They were not legally alien. (1999, 212)

The Windrush "[s]ailed through a gateway in history, on the other side of which was the end of Empire and a wholesale reassessment of what it meant to be British" (Phillips and Phillips 1988, 6). Post-war postcolonial identities emphasised the process of decolonisation, challenging essentialist notions of Britishness. This moment underlined the reality of black Britons, disputing Britain's colour bar.

The different black British positions across time highlight Paul Gilroy's writings on new racisms. For Gilroy (1993a) and Mercer (1994) the forms of racism during the imperial era differed from those during post-war capitalist Britain. For Gilroy the eighties racism was a consequence of national decline (Gilroy 1987). An idea also advanced by Stuart Hall, a central figure of the British New Left and British Cultural Studies, who wrote: "blacks become the bearers, the signifiers of the crisis of British society. . . . Race is the lens through which people come to perceive that a crisis is developing" (1978, 31-32). The different analyses in this thesis will investigate diverse ideological positions and racisms affecting black Britons. By acknowledging plurality, this thesis puts "[b]lackness into history outside the categories of problems and victim and [establishes] the historical character of racism in opposition to the idea that it is an eternal or natural phenomenon" (Gilroy 1987,19) since

---

<sup>1</sup> The freedom of movement for Commonwealth citizens ended with the Commonwealth immigrant Acts of 1962 and 1968. These forced Commonwealth citizens to have a UK passport, rather than a British passport (issued by colonial authorities).

these productions challenge misconceptions behind inherently racist historical episodes of black Britons' history.

During the fifties, sixties, and seventies, racial tensions escalated between black British communities and hegemonic Britain, reflecting a profound crisis across political, economic, and ideological spheres in the country. This crisis manifested in everyday confrontations with the police, who implemented the suspected person law (sus law), which was a law part of the 1824 Vagrancy Act giving the police power to stop and search individuals deemed suspicious (Gilroy 1987). Further evident conflicts with the police were in riots such as the ones in Notting Hill in 1958 and 1976, or in murders like Kelso Cochrane's in 1959. The uprisings underscore a "[n]arrative of national crises under which the cause of the crisis was constructed through ideas about externality and criminality which supported a view of blacks as an 'outside' malaise affecting British society" (Mercer 1994, 8). This idea underlines how black Britons were strategically demonised and scapegoated.

This aligns with John Solomons et al. assertion that "[t]he seventies were agonising years for British people, who felt frustrated, humiliated and insecure" (1982, 25). Further examples of black British identities portrayed as threatening include Peter Griffiths' slogan "if you want a nigger as your neighbour vote labour" (1964), widespread graffiti with phrases like "Keep Britain White," the rise of the National Front, or the framing of migrants' as dangerous for the nation's future in Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech (1968). The words in this speech were echoed in Margaret Thatcher's 1978 "Swamp Speech," in which she claimed that people in Britain were afraid since they were overwhelmed by different cultures (see *Handsworth Songs*, chapter six).

These views laid the groundwork for the eighties and the rise of conservative hegemony with Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) and John Major (1990-1997).<sup>2</sup> I focus on this period because it encompasses the years during which the workshops I study were active. Thatcherism, a term coined by Hall, in *Marxism Today* (1979a), describes the ideological basis behind the economic strategies, the rise of the National Front, and the marginalisation of minorities under Thatcherism. As he wrote later on, Thatcherism has "[c]ontributed to the destruction of the social fabric, the assault of the welfare state and punishment of the poor and disadvantaged at home" (2006, 21). However, Thatcherism, embodied a new hegemony (Mercer 1994) that appealed to the working class, who believed the press—an ally of Thatcher. As Gilroy argues, Thatcherism created a "[l]anguage of nation which finds populist power

---

<sup>2</sup> Major substituted Thatcher after she left on November 29, 1990.

from calculated ambiguities that allows it to transmit itself as a language of race” (1987, 22). The left was unable to contain Thatcherism (Eshun and Sagar 2007b). However, subversive groups within the social fabric, such as migrant communities or sexually diverse individuals, were opposed to it. This resistance is evident in various displays, such as the anti-Nazi League demonstrations, events such as Rock against Racism, community associations or protest marches. This defiance and resistance is present in the works I explore.

Among black British communities, episodes of opposition to Thatcher’s policies reveal the inability of her government to control the anger latent among generations of black migrants who had long been pushed to the margins of society. One crucial incident was the New Cross Fire in Deptford, South-East London, on the eightieth of January of 1981, where thirteen teenagers lost their lives in a fire, yet indifference was the main response on the part of the British Establishment. As Gilroy wrote, these deaths would “[h]ung over the race politics of Britain for the next few months like a pall of thick acrid smoke” (1987, 129). There was suspicion of foul play with Black Britons believing the fire was deliberate and an act of racial violence. As Mike and Trevor Phillips argue, “in the wake of an inconclusive investigation, the opinion of the vast majority of black people was that the fire was a racial crime” (1998, 324). The police’s investigation was slow and not reported fairly by the media prompting black Britons to march in hope of an inquiry, which happened in April 1981. The report on the New Cross Fire did not consider racial motives behind the fire and the coroner, Arthur Gordon Davies, in charge of the investigation only considered police’s statements. The police believed that the fire could have been caused by a firebomb thrown outside the house, a random arson attack, a deliberate fire inside the house or an accident inside the house (George Padmore Institute 1981, n.p).

The black British community in Deptford created the New Cross Fire Action Committee and organised the Black People’s Day of Action on the second of March of 1981. It was a peaceful march to the centre of London aimed to bring visibility to black Britons’ neglect on the part of the Establishment. Their march was for hegemonic Britain a reminder that they were in Britain to stay.<sup>3</sup> This march was a demonstration of black Britons solidarity since people from all parts of the UK joined in. In it, black, white, working-class, and young individuals united against the common enemy: Thatcherism (see *The Passion of Remembrance*, chapter three). As Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillip indicate, the fire became

---

<sup>3</sup> These happenings are encapsulated in *Blood Ah Go run* (1982). As it states, after the fire, there was “no going back for the black community.... This is the beginning not the end.”

“one of the great focal points of black history in Great Britain” (Phillips and Phillip 1998, 325), marking a significant turning point for black British communities.

The Police tried to hold up the march at Blackfriars bridge, a symbolic bridge. Crossing it would signify that marginalised minorities, forced to exist on the margins of London, would disrupt the power dynamics of the city of London. The march proceeded through Fleet Street, a metonym for the British National Press, which remained silent about marginalised communities and contributed to the perpetuation of stereotypes. This march marked a milestone for black British communities, showcasing unity and resistance against oppression. As Rob Waters argued, the march “existed through the temporal structure of a present lived as if it were the object of a future memory” (2019, 844). The riots occurring in the following months and the institutional responses to them confirm how the fire became a future memory reminding black Britons of their solidarity across generations.

The march was a defeat for the police and hegemonic Britain. A few weeks later, perhaps as a reaction to the defeat in the Black People’s Day of Action, Operation Swamp ’81 was launched in Brixton to contain alleged black criminality. Swamp ’81 was a mass stop and search operation where for four days the police stopped and searched 943 black Britons and charged seventy-five black Britons (Gilroy 1987). This led to the Brixton riots and the long hot summer of 1981, with uprisings erupting across the country. Brixton served as a catalyst for Toxteth (Liverpool)—where the police used CG gas for the first time in mainland Britain—Moss Side (Manchester), Handsworth (Birmingham), Chapeltown (Leeds), and other areas. The reasons behind these disturbances were several, including the historical marginalisation of black Britons as I have stated, the racial tensions and police brutality experienced by black British communities and the conditions of Thatcherism such as unemployment. For Gilroy, the riots of 1981 “[a]re important to the history of anti-racism in Britain. They forced attention away from the marginal antics of the Neo-fascists. The riots reasserted a definition of racism as something intrinsic to the political process of Britain in crisis” (1987, 177).

After Brixton, Lord Scarman was commissioned with the elaboration of a report to investigate the causes of the riots. For him, “there was a strong racial element in the riots” (Gilroy 1987, 135). As Ian Law noted, the report identified “[c]omplex political, social, and economic factors’ which created a ‘disposition towards violent protests’ but did not explicitly condemn police racism and denied that ‘institutional racism’ even existed...the police were ‘heroes who made mistakes’” (2015, 2). The problem persisted, as evidenced by a second wave of riots in 1985 in Handsworth, Tottenham, and Brixton. The deaths in police custody,

such as Colin Roach's in 1983, further underscore the ongoing tensions with black British communities.

Under Labour control, the Greater London Council (GLC, 1965-1986) acknowledged institutional racism and took steps to combat it (Phillips and Phillips 1988) in 1981, initiating an experiment in municipal socialism (Mercer 1994). The GLC aimed to represent the diverse social identities in London. As Sankofa argued, "after the uprising of 1981 some funding bodies became sensitised to the demands of the black communities; the GLC was the first founding body to recognise and actively encourage black film and video groups in London" (1988a, 7). The GLC's policies focused on socially disadvantaged groups, placing minorities at the centre of their agenda. However, it also made them dependent on the GLC's whims. For Gilroy, this situation was "[c]onfusing and confounding the black community's capacity for autonomous self-organisation" (1990, 82) and gave anti-racism only "[i]nhouse effectiveness but not always applicable to non-institutional settings" (Gilroy 1987, 144). The GLC promised to change social reality and even if for some, such as Gilroy and Kobena Mercer, it failed, it posed a threat to Thatcherism. In fact, Thatcher in 1986 dismantled the GLC and cancelled its cultural and community programs. As Benjamin Zephaniah wrote, "after she'd effectively destroyed the miners, Thatcher's next target was the GLC, which she abolished in 1986, making thousands of people redundant and obliterating countless community initiatives and resources that acted as a safety net for London's disadvantaged people" (2018, 184). The GLC's effort to recognise the diversity of London played a role in the emergence of the workshops I examine.

Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa reflect the socio-cultural changing London of the eighties while being imbedded in underrepresented narratives of the past. According to Mercer what made "[t]he proliferation of black art so exhilarating somewhere between 1982 and 1986 was that it was immanent to a political-historical moment marked by the rupture and reticulation of black identity" (1994, 250). This increase was not just in filmmaking but in different artistic areas such as poetry or theatre with the GCL sponsoring associations, spaces, and events to encourage the formation of groups. An example is the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre, or cultural weeks devoted to people such as C. L. R James. I have focused on the black British film workshops but each of the associations and events organised at the time deserve equal attention.

The changing socio-cultural atmosphere of London in the eighties coincided with significant intellectual inquiries into the current crisis from a postmodern perspective (Chambers 1986). Questions surrounding subjectivity, language, and representation of black

British communities (Hall 1988; Hall 1996a) could no longer be eschewed, contributing to cultural debates actively challenging Powellite and Thatcherite ideologies. The filmmakers I explore, as Gilroy (1993a) argues, embody the desire to create an art that embraces both black and British identities while encompassing resistance to violence and opening new British positions where black Britons could represent their subjectivities.

Black British communities drew inspirations from activists and thinkers fighting for liberation elsewhere, such as Malcom X, Martin Luther King, or Steve Biko (see chapter eight), whose ideas contributed to the shaping of black British identities. This signals how they were not oblivious to events affecting the Black Diaspora, to which they belong. The representations of black Britons in the works I explore indicate how Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa demonstrated that “[t]he edge is never still” (Cammock 2021, n.p) and that the margin serves as site of creation and liberation where different rules operate, challenging mainstream ideas and resisting the dominant language (hooks 1994). As Viviane Sobchack argued, “this is something that all marginalised peoples recognise. They desire a ‘new’ language that will articulate the specificity of their experience, and they struggle to find the grounds from which they can speak it” (1991, xvii). The workshops I explore used cinema as a tool of liberation. The following section investigates the cinematic influences on these workshops and on how they were established.

## 1.2. The Black British Workshops are Coming! Black British Cinema and Thatcherism

Thomas Elsaesser (1993) highlights how black British cinema experienced a Renaissance during the eighties. Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa produced examples of counter-cinema characterised by thematic and formal experimentation. In fact, their productions are instances of experimental, oppositional, or Deleuzian minor cinema, influenced by previous filmmaking structures and filmmakers around the globe given their position as members of the Black Diaspora and black filmmakers living in Britain, where they drank from Anglo-American, European and other international influences, which were disseminated in Britain.

Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa were London-based collectives, but they were not the only black British film and video collectives producing in the UK. There were other black British workshops in various parts of the UK, including the Liverpool Black Media Group, Black heart Radio (Sheffield), DD T Film Workshop (Nottingham), Endboard Productions LTD (Birmingham), Face Films (Middlesex), and Zodiac arts (Nottingham). However, I have concentrated on the London collectives because they were more prolific, a reason deriving



from the UK's London-centrism which facilitated Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa's access to bigger budgets. Additionally, there was the need to keep the thesis within manageable boundaries, and considering I am not a UK-based researcher, Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa were easier to track and access.

### 1.2.1. Oppositional British Cinema before Thatcherism

Throughout the seventies and eighties, the United Kingdom witnessed the reconstitution of film workshops and cooperatives as integral to the film industry and not marginal to it (Bakari 2024, n.p).<sup>4</sup> Coops such as the London Film-makers' Co-op (LFMC, 1966), Sheffield Film Co-op, Berwick Film Collective, Cardiff Film Workshop, or Amber Film Collective, among other, offered a platform for experimentation, distribution, collaboration, and innovation (Curtis 2007), which influenced filmmakers coming afterward and the workshops I explore (Dickinson 1999). The UK has a long-standing tradition of workshops. However, what distinguishes the eighties' workshops from previous ones is not only the focus on a political agenda but also the interest in the audience's views (Malik 1998). The opinions included in this thesis by Channel 4's callers after the transmission of a work reflect this.

The LFMC served as an inspirational model and space for young aspiring filmmakers, contributing to the consolidation of the avant-garde counterculture.<sup>5</sup> Faithful to its underground origins, as Lucy Reynolds argues, the LFMC "[d]efined its organisational operation in opposition to cinema's industrial model of production and exhibition, and similarly, identified its methods of practice to those of other arts, from painting to contemporary music, rather than narrative formulas associated to cinema convention" (2022, 677 ). Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa equally challenged formulaic cinema, as can be seen in how their productions do not offer ready-made solutions or conclusions and resorted to an eclectic practice. Ideas from members of this workshop, such as Peter Gidal's inquiries into representation or Malcom Le Grice's expanded cinema, would influence the productions of the workshops I explore. In fact, Sankofa organised workshops at the LFMC, as I explore in an upcoming section, and Peter Gidal participated in discussions with some members of these

---

<sup>4</sup> This information derives from an interview I conducted to Imruh Bakari. It remains unpublished. However, the ethical permission to carry it is available in appendix E.

<sup>5</sup> The LFMC included David Curtis, Annabel Nicholson, Lis Rhodes, or Sally Potter among others. In 1977, the LFMC, The London Electronic Arts and London Video Arts joined becoming LUX.

collectives such as Isaac Julien and Martina Attille in “Aesthetics and Politics working on two fronts?” (2003).

The Independent Film-Makers’ Association (IFA) was also an important network for the advancement of oppositional film culture in Britain in the late seventies, comprising activist filmmakers and members of the aforementioned coops engaged in countercultural filmmaking (Perry 2020). The IFA promoted independent filmmaking, comprised diverse perspectives, fostered innovation and creativity and worked as a united front, in spite of differences, to oppose to dominant ideas on filmmaking. I take the IFA as an equivalent or an inspirational model for the creation of the Association of Black Film and Video Workshops in 1984 by Black Audio and Sankofa and which I mention later. In fact, the IFA “[r]emained almost entirely white until the early eighties, when newly formed black groups, initially Ceddo, Sankofa, Black Audio, Retake and Liverpool Black Media Group, began to participate forcefully in the Association and in related events and activities” (Dickinson 1999, 55).

This shift was emphasised by Michael O’Pray, who noted the profound changes in oppositional filmmaking in the eighties, exemplified by filmmakers who examined new social themes, such as the black independent filmmakers who challenged the theories and practices of the British avant-garde. Black independent filmmakers rejected avant-gardism as a description (O’Pray 1999) and embraced experimentalism, which is the term I use throughout this thesis. Furthermore, following June Givanni’s classification (1988a), black independent film in Britain is categorised into three groups: black film workshops, independent black filmmakers, and production companies—commissioned by institutions such as Channel 4, or black productions companies exclusively producing for Channel 4. I concentrate on black film workshops.

For Colin Perry, groups such as the LFMC, provided spaces for filmmakers to discuss and access equipment (2020). Black Audio acknowledges having used the LFMC spaces (Dickinson 1999). With the advancement of the Workshop Declaration, as I explain in the following section, Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa received founding to purchase their own film material and became the ones providing access to filmmaking courses and equipment for members of the community interested in doing so. This exemplifies the GLC’s social experiment. In the following section I focus on the Workshop Declaration and how it shaped the emergence of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa.

### 1.2.2. Black British Cinema: the Opportunity of the Eighties

The lack of visibility for black filmmakers before the eighties perpetuated the dangerous notion that “[b]lack people were either not seriously engaged in film and video related activity, or, if they were, that their work was not relevant to a wider constituency” (Pines 1996, 186). As highlighted by Menelik Shabazz, the truth was that black filmmakers were trying to “[s]urvive individually, dependent on the whims of Network Television. Both BBC and ITV companies have shown a consistent reluctance over the years to take on black filmmakers” (1986, 59). For Bakari, “[w]hite filmmakers already understood how they could navigate the film industry in a way that black filmmakers could not because we were excluded generally” (2024, n.p). This underscores why the previous section was important in providing examples prior to these workshops as well as indicating how the eighties’ workshops were instrumental in changing the way black filmmakers intervened in British media.

Individual Black independent filmmakers working throughout the sixties and seventies in Britain were Horace Ové, Lionel Ngakane Frankie Dymond Jr, or Lloyd Reckord, among others. Examples of their productions are *Reggae* (Ové 1971), *Pressure* (Ové 1976), *Jemima and Johnnie* (Ngakane 1966), *Death May be your Santa Claus* (Dymond, 1969) or *Ten Bob in Winter* (Reckord 1963). Their productions addressed issues surrounding black Britishness, with a special focus on racism. However, because of the lack of access to film production, they did not manage to produce as much as the film and video collectives I study. The works of Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa symbolise a “[n]ew threshold of cultural struggle in the domain of black cinema and image-making. Their productions deepen and extend the narrative and documentary framework for black filmmaking established by Horace Ové [...] and others in the sixties and seventies” (Mercer 1988a, 50), emphasising the significance of content and form.

In conversation with Coco Fusco, Isaac Julien contended that there was a gap between “[t]he first black films that were made in the sixties by Lionel Ngakane and Lloyd Reckord and our work. There had not been a full development of Black film culture until the development of the workshops” (1988, 23). Therefore, black British filmmaking existed before the workshops I study, but there was a lack of institutional support and visibility for it. In the eighties, this began to change because of various contributing factors, such as access to higher education for members of the workshops and the institutional response to the social crisis revealed by the riots of 1981.

As Isaac Julien pinpoints in the BBC documentary *Black and White in Colour Television, Memory, Race, 1936-1968*:

The main thing that most people who look back at the era of the beginning of the 80s and they get wrong is that they see it as a product of the riots of 1981, and that is only partially true. A lot of the black workshops, Sankofa and Black Audio particularly, are the products of going through a higher educational system of learning. (1992)

Ceddo is not mentioned by Julien, and this is because their trajectory is different. Some members of Ceddo, such as Bakari and Shabazz, were already producing before the eighties. They had received television training and began exploring their creativity outside a protected and subsidised context as were the workshops. In contrast, Black Audio and Sankofa found a subsidised context, which encouraged experimentation, as they completed their education (Fusco 1988). This meant that for some of Ceddo's members participating in the new filmmaking context entailed negotiating their previously established ideas about filmmaking and engaging in conversations about their place and relationship to the new space opened by the workshops and the expanding film industry (Bakari 2024). Additionally, there is a generational gap. The majority of Ceddo's members had not been born in Britain and migrated when they were children. Most of Black Audio and Sankofa's members had been born in Britain, as I will show in the following section. However, those members born in British colonies arrived in Britain before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, and, as I explained, this implied that all of them held British passports. Inevitably, this gap made the collectives' members articulate their subjectivities differently impacting on their conception of black British representations and their relationship to the Black Diaspora.

Bakari provides as an example of this generational gap the confrontation between Sonia Boyce, accompanied by Akomfrah, and artist Aubrey Williams (2024) in a lecture Williams was giving in 1986-7 on black aesthetics. Here, he argued that younger generations had abandoned the freedom of abstraction and the project of modernity of African artists (Orlando 2014). For Boyce, Williams spoke to a generation who did not say anything about her generation, as a black British woman. Bakari recollects Boyce and Akomfrah confronting Williams while arguing he was not black enough because he was not confronting racism overtly (2024, n.p).

For filmmaker and London Film-makers' Co-op founder David Curtis, the seventies, and eighties marked the decades when institutions such as the Arts Council, Channel 4, and the British Film Institute (BFI) began to respond to the developing talent from arts schools

and higher education (2007) through the sponsor of independent films and creation of units arranging funding to encourage it. However, it Channel 4's advent in 1982 what altered the reference point of film culture in Britain, making it possible for a new film culture to emerge, including the workshops I investigate. It opened a space for alternative content, which promoted diversity and the appearance of new content, unlike the BBC. An example is the television programmes *Eleventh Hour*, *People to People* or *Britain: the Lie of the Land*, where some of the works I study where shown (Perry 2020). Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa complied with Channel 4's demands of portraying a multi-racial Britain by means of diverse ethnic groups (Hobson 2007).

Among the principles of channel 4 were trying to support and publish the work of independent filmmakers. It was intended to be a “[c]ompany that contracted and commissioned productions from independents” (2024, n.p). Alain Fountain, Channel 4's commissioning editor for independents and workshops, oversaw the monetary investment and emerged as a key figure in the workshop sector (Shabazz 1986; Curtis 2007). By 1984, Channel 4 was perceived as a “[v]ictory, a vindication of all that energy invested in discussion, writing, and lobbying over the preceding decade. But it proved a limited and temporary victory” (Dickinson 1999, 62), given that by the end of the eighties, there was a shift towards a more populist approach (Bakari 2024), coinciding with the end of the collectives' franchise, who sought support from other institutions even in other countries like ZDF in Germany, as was the case of Black Audio.

Channel 4 was not the only defining element since the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT)'s Grant-Aided Workshop Production Declaration, drafted from 1982 to 1984, was a key document of the time configuring the existence of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa. It was “[p]romulgated by the ACTT in consultation with the representatives of the English Regional Arts Associations and the Welsh Arts Council, the Channel Four Television Company and the British Film Institute” (Dickinson 1999, 163). This initiative was the result of years of effort by previous organisations such as the IFA or the LFMC. It generated a space for protected cinematic experimentation, supporting filmmakers working in a workshop set up and fostering education and training. As Claire Holdsworth wrote, the Workshop Production Declaration “[p]recipitated a diversification of British cinema and television, giving younger groups of filmmakers opportunities to gain support” (2017, 310). The emerging workshops had to hold a good previous track-record in obtaining grants and having involvement in the independent sector. The workshops had to be

controlled by its members and actively foster activities around production, research, education, and community work (ACTT Workshop Declaration 1984).

The ACTT Declaration (1982-1989) sought to unionise film production while aligning with the IFA's goal of establishing a publicly funded sector for workshops. Consequently, the ACTT membership was restricted to self-managed workshops meeting a series of criteria, distributed in thirty-four clauses, which specified its requirements from the conditions to associate to paternity and maternity provisions. These included being non-profit organisations, as the Declaration states: "sources of revenue funding are derived from public bodies, charities and other organisations and individuals, where it is explicitly stated and understood that funding is provided on a totally non-profit distributing basis" (Dickinson 1999, 163). It also aimed to foster the "cultural, social and political contribution made to society by the grant-aided and non-commercial production activities historically undertaken by persons and organisations" (Dickinson 1999, 164) in the film sector. Contractual agreements had to be "[a]pproved collectively by the staffs employed under the terms of this Declaration" (Dickinson 1999, 164). This explains why I consider each production a collective product without distinguishing who directed it. Workshops had to elaborate a record of activities so that they could re-apply for financial help in upcoming years. Additionally, a minimum of four members had to be employed and the workshop had to engage in production, exhibition, education, distribution, administration and/or research (Dickinson 1999).<sup>6</sup> Analysing the different clauses elucidates that Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa were involved in a myriad of cultural activities like screenings, workshops and courses whilst also producing cinema of high quality.

Workshops meeting the criteria imposed by the declaration were granted a franchise by the ACTT that enabled them to produce under the agreement and seek financial founding from institutions such as Channel 4 or the BFI. Without this franchise, it was virtually impossible to receive financial help. The agreement helped groups who were already working on "[p]olitically and socially engaged filmmaking" (King 2017, 207), as was the case of Ceddo—who was already active through Kuumba, as I indicate in the upcoming pages—and precipitated the appearance and diversification of new collectives (Holdsworth 2017), as Black Audio and Sankofa. The subsidised productions introduced audiences to previously unseen black British experiences on screen. The productions move away from stereotypes,

---

<sup>6</sup> The Workshop Declaration was replaced by the Broadcast Act in 1990 (Robson 2020).

giving authority and validity to black voices and opening the path of black british experimentation.

The agreement excluded filmmakers operating outside of workshop organisations, despite their equally significant contributions to the conversation on black British cinematic representation. However, black workshops were “[t]otally dependent on the whims and agendas of institutions and individuals outside of the black community” (Malik 1998, 17). This criticism was corroborated by Michael Maizière, who argued that despite Channel 4’s presence, there was not a true advancement of independent cinema because of the need to be franchised under the ACTT agreement (2003). Bodies like the GLC sometimes provided money based on a tick-in-the boxes basis rather than on genuine engagement with the proposed content. The reports the collectives had to fill in were bureaucratically draining (Malik 1998) and at times conflicted with their creative impulse. The Workshop Declaration is also an indication of how institutional support needs to be carefully assessed.

Additional bodies collaborating with the agreement included the BFI, the Arts Council, or the London Council Grant Scheme. As Curtis wrote, there was “[a]n unwritten agreement that made the funding of film and video workshops—which benefited the whole spectrum of independent makers—a responsibility shared by the BFI and the arts council. . . often in partnership with local authorities such as the labour-controlled greater London Council (GLC), and, after 1982, Channel 4 television” (2007, 68). These bodies deserve a special mention. The GLC under Ken Livingstone (1982-1988) played a pivotal role in setting the black arts sector and reshaping funding priorities through an anti-racist discourse, which in turn influenced bodies like the BFI and the Arts Council (Mercer 1994), reflecting London’s diverse social fabric (Mercer 1994; Curtis 2007). As Hall signalled:

The period of the GLC in London was very prefigurative, but it cannot be repeated elsewhere. It was the bringing together of groups and movements which remained the same, and yet retained their differences. Nobody who came into the GLC said ‘I will forget I am an activist black group because I am now in the same room as a feminist group’. What you heard there was the very opposite of what we now usually think of as the conversation of a collective political subject coming into existence (1991, 65).

Hall’s testimony reminds us why the productions of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa are intersectional. He indicates how racial and gender issues, for example, coexist and intersect rather than being mutually exclusive and prioritising one over the other. I analyse the works following this idea.

After the riots, the GLC established a Race Relations Unit and an Ethnic Minorities Committee. Within the Ethnic Minorities Committee, the Black Arts Division, overseen by Parminder Vir, who had previous experience from working at the Commonwealth Institute, allocated a budget for grants aimed at supporting black cultural activity, particularly in the areas of film and video which had lacked access before (Gilroy 1987; Fusco 1988). As Lina Gopaul, member of Black Audio Film confesses in an interview with Dickinson, “the GLC was important to us, because there was the ethnic-minorities unit which began to nurture black arts as well as putting money into established black art forms and we were one of the nurturing projects” (1999, 311). After the dissolution of the GLC, different London Boroughs provided finance to the workshops, such as Haringey Arts Council, Hackney, or Camden Council.

The BFI financially supported independent filmmaking. The African-Caribbean Unit, led by June Givanni was crucial. This unit initiated the production of the *Black Film Bulletin* magazine in 1993, contributing to the creation of a specific publication dedicated to black cinema in Britain. Givanni, while at the BFI, also elaborated the first Black and Asian Film & Video List (1988a), facilitating the documentation and progression of independent filmmaking. Her efforts persist through her Pan-African archive.<sup>7</sup> This archive is located in the MayDay Rooms, Fleet Street (London). The archive, as Bakari indicates, “[h]olds a unique collection of artefacts and archival material, which has at its core the interest of Pan-African cinema and its relationship with Black British cinema and culture” (Bakari 2023, 3). It developed from Givanni’s personal archive as a curator and promoter of African and diasporic cinema and culture in Britain. Givanni and Bakari are the directors of this archive, which is still engaged in the curation and dissemination of cinema, as can be seen through the workshops and exhibitions they organise. The archive is funded by donations, partnerships, and grants.



**Figure 1. June Givanni’s Pan-African Archive, my picture**

---

<sup>7</sup> Givanni obtained the BAFTA for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema in February 2024.



These institutions provided crucial financial support for black film and culture in the eighties, demonstrating that as Thatcherism was advancing in public institutions, the black independent sector was progressing simultaneously (Mercer 1994).

### 1.2.3. Debating Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa: Different Kinds of Experimentalism

The intellectual and artistic space inhabited by Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa sparked debate throughout the eighties, as various positions developed regarding representation, language, and a potential black British aesthetic. As Bakari contended, “the eighties were a very interesting moment because what we find is the ways under which it was determined that certain acceptable black voices would be nurtured and others would be marginalised or dismissed because they did not quite fit into what was the dominant discourse of the time” (2024, n.p). A discourse, as I indicated, which depended on the wishes and opportunities offered by the institutions I mentioned in the previous section.

Members of the workshops participated in similar events and conferences where discussions surrounding black British filmmaking took place. Three notable events were the conferences “Third Eye: Struggle for Black and Third World Cinema” organised by GLC Race Equality Unit at the National Film Theatre, London in 1983; the “Third Cinema Conference” following the 40<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh Film Festival in 1986 organised by Jim Pines, Paul Willemen and June Givanni in Edinburgh; and “Black Film, British Cinema” organised by Kobena Mercer and Erica Carter at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in February 1988. Additionally, the workshops belonged to the Association of Black Film and Video Workshops (1984), where the concerns and demands of black filmmakers were addressed (Julien 1986). This association was created to mobilise around the BFI, ensuring they were committed to the development of black film and video culture. They also aimed at highlighting how there were different black British experiences and filmmaking practices. As Attile confessed to Fusco, “one of the crucial things about media education in Britain is that you’re involved in very Eurocentric theories, and if you have any sort of black consciousness you begin to wonder where there might be room for your experience within these theories” (1986-87, 12), the multiple black British experiences and different ways of visually portray them are present in their productions.

The question of representation, or as Hall labelled it “the burden of representation” (1998), was crucial. This entailed how there was an expectation on these workshops to speak

for the whole of black British existences. An idea they challenged since they did not speak for anybody (Mercer 1994). They emphasised how black British experiences differ from other narratives in the Diaspora and how their stories have often been compared to African-American experiences and cinema to the detriment of black Britons. For Lester Friedman, “the British cinema industry has benefited and suffered from sharing an ostensibly common language with its powerful American competitor” (1993, 1). As Akomfrah revealed to Fusco, while people focus on what black Americans are doing, what is happening in Britain is overlooked (1988) and the context of black Americans and black Britons is different since the UK deals with “[a] larger postcolonial crisis that has forced them to rethink national and cultural identity” (Fusco 1988, 20). The reception of *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986) by Sankofa exemplifies this problem. The work was compared to *She’s Gotta Have it* by Spike (1986) which was taken by critics such as *The Voice*’s commentator Louis Heaton (1987) as a good example of black filmmaking unlike Sankofa’s since viewers, as I explain in the following chapter, did not understand what Sankofa was trying to achieve and found its experimentalism alienating.

The Third Eye Struggle Symposium aimed to reassess “[b]lack artists’ access to media production” (Diawara 1993, 149). In the festival preceding the symposium, Third World films and black American films were shown such as films by Miguel Littin (Chile), Haile Gerima (Ethiopia-USA), Bill Gunn (USA) or Shyaman Bengel (India). During the symposium, these filmmakers, along with members of the workshops, exchanges of ideas. The insights gained from this symposium prioritised the financing of black film and video workshops by the GLC. Over the years, various symposiums and festivals signalled how Third Eye was “the starting point of critical discussions on the nature and the role of black film in Britain” (Prescod 1986, 57). In this symposium the influence of third cinema was evident but three years later it would mark a clear division between Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa’s positions.



**Figure 2. Third Eye Struggle Symposium**

At the Third Cinema Conference, debates revolved around cultural theory, criticism, and media production (Cooper 1989). Ceddo, Black Audio, Sankofa, and Retake participated on a panel on third cinema in Britain.<sup>8</sup> The imperative to find their own voices, theories and practices was underscored by members of the workshops, highlighting how third cinema no longer played the same role it did in the past (Cooper 1989). However, claiming it no longer works was not possible either (Cooper 1989). The conference unveiled the different opinions of the members of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa, with Ceddo disputing the view that third cinema was dead.

As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, the definition of Third World derives from discussions on colonialism and racism where Third World refers to the “[c]olonised, neocolonised, or decolonised nations and ‘minorities’ whose structural disadvantages have been shaped by colonial process” (2014, 25), situations which the films of the three collectives encapsulate. In relation to cinema, the term “[c]alls attention to the collectively vast cinematic productions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America and of minoritarian cinema in the First World” (Shohat and Stam 2014, 27). Minoritarian cinema in the first world characterises the productions of these workshops as the own initiatives of the GLC to promote the cinema of minority communities highlighted. Ceddo’s paper for this conference “Culture of Resistance: Reflecting a True Image” was not included in the conference’s publication, as was evident they held a different ideological stance, considering third cinema fundamental to their productions and perspective. Instead, it was published in *Black Film Review* (1986).

In it they state their position as Afro-Caribbean filmmakers from the Black Diaspora living in Britain and trying to disrupt Eurocentric ideas (Bakari 1986). For them, they are a minority producing in Britain, which highlights the importance of third cinema. Bakari also argues how one of the most radical ideas behind using third cinema in Britain is how it allows to use a universal language which destroys previously established structures and enables to create new ones (1986). For Ceddo, through their workshop, they were trying to create a new structure and language following the parameters of third world cinema.

The contributions at this conference spoke for a small section of the many black British perspectives and Ceddo stood outside the dominant discourse (Bakari 2024). Scott Cooper agrees with Bakari. As he argued, third world cinema is an example of the many ways

---

<sup>8</sup> Retake was Britain’s first all-Asian collective. It was a fully franchised workshop established at the same time as Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa. I have chosen to limit my research to the Afro-Caribbean workshops.

of responding to the current cultural and political diversity (1988). This indicates the impossibility of defining a homogeneous black British film aesthetic or finding a unique black British filmic language. However, while Black Audio and Sankofa's productions have been praised as examples of innovative black British cinema by critics such as Kobena Mercer or Manthia Diawara, Ceddo's work has not received the same formal level of attention, as I will explain.

Even if some workshops may have felt that third world cinema was not entirely suitable, the productions I examine can be subsumed under the categories outlined by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino in "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969). They included a classification of third cinema into "pamphlet films, didactic films, report films, essay films, witness bearing films" (1962, 126). For Solanas and Gettino, "any militant form of expression is valid, and it would be absurd to lay down a set of aesthetic norms" (1969, 126). The works I explore use these forms. They depict the formal variety involved in narrating diverse black British experiences and reminds viewers how their institutionally produced cinema is political, revolutionary, and militant at heart.

The Black Film, British Cinema conference featured significant contributions revolving around the concepts of representation, language, and aesthetics. Notable presentations included Kobena Mercer's "Recoding Narratives of Race and Nation," Stuart Hall's "New Ethnicities," Colin MacCabe's "Black Film in 80s Britain," Judith Williamson's "Two Kinds of Otherness: Black Film and the Avant-garde," June Givanni's "In Circulation: Black Films in Britain" or Alain Fountain's "Channel 4 and Black Independents." This conference served to identify shifts in black British filmmaking and cultural politics. As Hall wrote, "there is no sense in which a new phase in black cultural politics could replace the earlier one. Nevertheless, it is true that the struggle moves forward and assumes new forms" (1988, 165). He discussed the politics of representation, the intersection between black cultural politics and Eurocentric discourses, and the rejection of essentialist notions of blackness (1988). Hall highlighted how films are not necessarily good because they had been done by a black filmmaker or because they deal with the black experience (1988) encouraging a premature attempt to discuss these works not as black films but as British films.

Williamson stresses the diversity of black perspectives, noting that there are different approaches to making black British films. She agrees with Hall regarding the necessity of moving beyond simplistic dichotomies to deal with "[m]ore complex ways of understanding the politics of ethnicity" (1988, 33). Williamson contends that apart from the conventional

good/bad dichotomy, there is another “[k]ind of orthodoxy [...] realist, narrative, mainstream cinema: bad; non-narrative, even difficult, even boring, oppositional cinema: good” (1988, 33). She suggests that the concept of third cinema serves to transcend the opposition between mainstream and avant-garde, aligning with Ceddo’s ideas at Edinburgh’s conference. However, the black British works that have generated more interest tended to be those categorised as avant-garde. By relying to a previous structure or category such as avant-garde, critics and scholars prevented these workshops from truly finding their own language and self-definition away from preconceived ideas and expectations. On these grounds, Fusco explicitly excludes Ceddo from her discussion in *Young, British, and Black* (1988).

Williamson also proposes that it seems easier to confront the political other when, cinematically speaking, it also occupies the space of the good, meaning the avant-garde. She observes how films by Black Audio and Sankofa have been praised for their formal innovation and avant-garde qualities, whereas Ceddo’s productions have been simply referred to as black cinema.<sup>9</sup> She maintains that it is time to move away from questioning what constitutes good black British cinema, given the multitude ways of making black British films, and instead focus on exploring the challenging questions raised by the workshops mentioned. (1988). Following Williamson, I focus on the questions the collectives raised without falling into the narrative of considering a film better than other simply because it may be more experimental under a European avant-gardist lens. In fact, applying this lens to the productions of the three workshops was part of the problem since they reinvented black British cinema and did not fit into previous categorisations.

The ideas of Hall and Williamson underscore the dynamic debate that emerged around the productions of these workshops. Williamson gives as example Sankofa’s *The Passion of Remembrance*, Black Audio’s *Handsworth Song* and Ceddo’s *The People’s Account*. Williamson points out how traditionally Sankofa and Black Audio were taken as good because of its innovative form, or “[f]or lack of a better term, avant-garde” (Williamson 1988, 33) whereas a Ceddo work like *The People’s Account* was referred to as just black since its form was not as experimental enough. In fact, in this conference, Mercer only mentions *The People’s Account* controversy with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (see chapter six) and Hall does not mention any of Ceddo’s productions, which shows how difficult it was for some well-established scholars to engage with the collectives. Manthia Diawara in

---

<sup>9</sup> Black is a stark word in this context. However, I am following Williamson who wrote, “yet, say...a Ceddo production like *The People’s Account* is just [referred to] as ‘black’” (1988, 33).

“Power and Territory: the Emergence of Black British Film Collectives” (1996) refers to the three work’s content (not the form) and Mercer’s *Welcome to the Jungle* (1994) mentions the three collectives but devotes more space and analysis to Black Audio and Sankofa. This signals how the lack of engagement with Ceddo continued after Williamson’s warning.

Critics and scholars have perpetuated this division, as Williamson argues, by creating a rigid dichotomy between good (avant-garde) and bad (non-avant-garde) cinema. This mirrors the lack of skill among audiences to comprehend the new terrain opened by these works, and the need for critics and scholar to stop imposing classifications so that audiences can equally approach with a new lens the new material in front of them. These workshops produced equally relevant representations of black British experiences which should not be seen in opposition. The three workshops show how there are diverse aesthetics. As Attille confessed to Fusco, “there are many aesthetics, not just one. There are many experiences.” (1986-7, 37). This debate highlights how Black Audio and Sankofa were seen through an Anglo-European lens as examples of formal innovation, while Ceddo was not. In fact, Bakari resents how, “there has been no interrogation of [Ceddo’s] practice . . . . We were the bad boys and girls of the workshop movement” (2024, n.p), because their approach did not align with artificial categories and filmic expectations. An idea even Fusco advanced but did not engage with. As she wrote, Ceddo’s “[f]ilmic strategies set them apart from the rest of the black workshop sector” (1988 23). This lack of consideration and historical neglect is precisely why I find it essential to engage with the entirety of Ceddo’s works as I do in this thesis.

I advocate for Williamson’s position: my focus, expanding her suggestion, is not on discovering the best black British film aesthetic, but rather on engaging with the numerous questions the workshops proposed and which provide an in-depth approach to the multifaceted black British experiences under Thatcherism.<sup>10</sup> The three workshops embraced theoretical and formal eclecticism, mirroring the variety of black British identities and experiences. If a term needs to be used to designate the workshops’ output, I advocate for experimental black British cinema instead of avant-garde since I take experimental as broader, less elitist, accessible, and inclusive term focusing on innovation and a departure

---

<sup>10</sup>Akomfrah’s experience at Cannes, as he recounted while showing *Testament*, reflect the misconception that race, and filmmaking are mutually exclusive categories. There, a film critic asked him why Black Audio were calling themselves black filmmakers when they had a film in Cannes. As Akomfrah argues, “for us, the black filmmaker was a specific category that meant dealing with ideas, issues and motives which emanate from black cultures or have some purchase to those cultures” (Akomfrah and Pervaiz 1992, 30).

from mainstream representation, which mirrors the filmic forms and agendas of the collectives I investigate. In my view, the different productions included here are thematically and formally experimental (they push beyond the constraints of what has traditionally been categorised as black British cinema, they implement different modes of production) and they call into question monolithic conceptions of black British identity, history, and cultural memory. They underline how it is not possible to talk about an authentic and singular black British identity or black British aesthetic, the recognition of plurality is needed.

As a matter of fact, Gilroy in “Re-Introduction to ‘Cruciality and the Frog’s Perspective’ and ‘Art of Darkness: Black Art and the Problems of Belonging to England’” (2021), re-assesses the views presented in his two previous essays: “Cruciality and the Frog’s Perspective” and “Art of Darkness: Black Art and the Problems of Belonging to England.” In the 2021 version he mentions Ceddo together with Black Audio and Sankofa as examples of workshops that represent and recognise “[t]he extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’; that is, the recognition that ‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category” (Gilroy 2021, 37), signalling how Ceddo’s dismissal in comparison to Black Audio and Sankofa needs rectification.

Their works were debated in national and international journals and magazines. As O’Pray argued, the presence of these workshops was felt internationally “[n]ot only as a model for practice but also for its development of theoretical issues” (1996, 20). International film magazines engaging with the works were *Cinéaste* (1967-), the *Independent Film and Video Monthly* (1987-), *Film Comment* (1962-), *Variety* (1905-) and *Black Film Review* (1984-1995). In Britain, the film magazines *Undercut* (1981-1990), the Co-op’s journal, and *Framework* (1974-) contributed to the expansion of their works (Curtis 2007). They were reported and reviewed in more generalist film periodicals such as *Monthly Film Bulletin* (1934-1991) and *Broadcast* (1973-); cultural magazines such as *Time Out* (1968-), offering cultural and political reportage and commentary and political magazines like *Spare-Rib* (1972-1993) an independent feminist publication, or *ArtRage* (1982-1995). Retrospectively, some art magazines have engaged with the works such as *Art Monthly* (2007-) *NKA Journal of Contemporary Africa Art* (1994-); *Art Forum* (1962-); *Art Asia Pacific* (1993-); *Aesthetica* (2002-) or *Frieze* (1991-).<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *Monthly Film Bulletin* merged with *Sight and Sound* (1932-) in 1991.

Specific black periodicals analogous to the American *Black Film Review* did not exist in the UK until June Givanni and Gaylene Goul founded *Black Film Bulletin* (1993-1997/2021-) in order to provide a platform for the advancement of black cinema. Another significant journal was *Black Filmmaker Magazine* (1998-2008/2020-) founded by Menelik Shabazz, a member of Ceddo. In 2020, Shabazz partnered with Floyd Webb to relaunch the magazine. As Webb argues, this magazine wanted to show that how a “[p]rogressive black film magazine could set the tone for a new black film movement” (2022, 3). *Black Film Bulletin* was for Shabazz an expression of his Pan-African ideals showcasing “[t]he work of friends and contemporaries across the Black Atlantic” and advocating “[f]or the visibility of the black image both in front and behind the camera” (Denton 2022, 30). The conferences, debates and journals mentioned served as “[c]entres of resistance to Thatcherism” (Dickinson 1999, 64), played a crucial role in the flourishing of black British film and reflected its diversity. The next section focuses on the different trajectories, ideological stances, internal structures, and modes of production of Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa.

### 1.3. Positioning Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa<sup>12</sup>

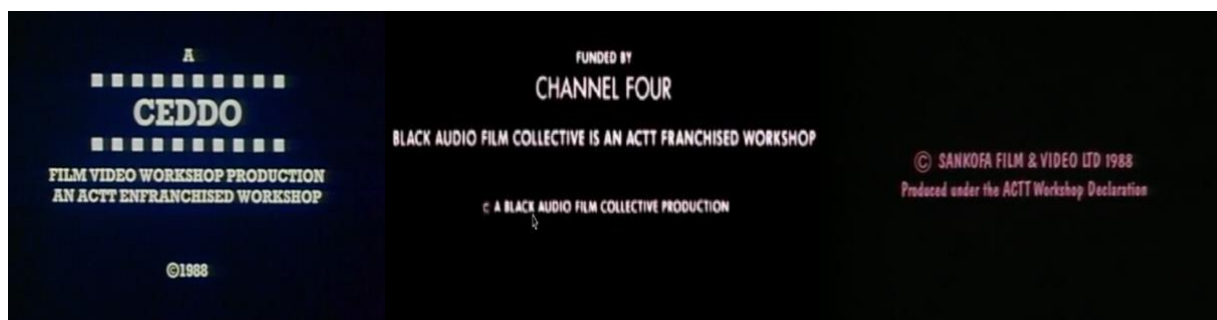
Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa inaugurated a new wave of black British filmmaking, coinciding with the institutional support they received. As franchised workshops, they operated within an integrative practice model, which meant that “[b]eside its main objective of making films and videotapes, [they were] ... also involved in distribution, training and education and taking an active part in the development of cultural theory and cultural politics” (Dickinson 1999). Therefore, throughout their franchised years, they organised courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, screenings, and other activities, which I have compiled from different archives in London and which I include in this section.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> See appendix D to find out where the films of these collectives can be seen in London.

<sup>13</sup> The archives I have accessed in London to find the scattered information of these collectives have been the British Film Institute Reuben’s library at Southbank, The Stuart Hall Library, InIVA at Pimlico, the London Metropolitan Archive at Clerkenwell, Channel 4 archival service online, George Padmore Institute at Finsbury Park, Victoria and Albert Museum at Kensington and Chelsea, Tate Britain at Pimlico, Central Saint Martins at Kings Cross, June Givanni’s Pan-African Archive at Central London, the British Library at St. Pancras, Westminster Reference Library at Westminster, LUX at Highgate and Black Cultural Archives at Brixton.





**Figure 3. Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa: Fully ACTT Franchised Workshops**

One of the prerequisites for the ACTT franchise was a proven track record, which Ceddo had, as some of its members (Bakari and Shabazz) were already known in the film and television industries through their work with Kuumba and their applications to the Ethnic Minorities Committee and Arts and Recreation at the GLC—as was the case of Black Audio and Sankofa. The production company Kuumba, a Swahili word meaning creativity, was founded by Imruh Bakari, Menelik Shabazz and Henry Martin in 1982. Kuumba’s members had experience in the independent sector. Henry Martin was not part of Ceddo even if he sometimes collaborated with the workshop. Kuumba had produced important works such as *Blood Ah Go Run* (1982), *I am not Two Islands* (1984), *Mark of the Hand. Aubrey Williams* (1987) and *Big George is Dead* (1987). As Shabazz argued, “the formation of Kuumba as a viable company came out of a new situation made possible by the formation of Channel 4. A new Channel with a mandate to cater for “[m]inority groupings and specialised programming, generally to be serviced by the Production companies formed out of the Independent sector” (1986, 59). Therefore, by the time the Workshop Declaration came into effect, Ceddo’s members were already working together through Kuumba which operated in tandem with Ceddo. However, as I explained in a previous section, the Workshop Declaration only offered financial support to workshops, forcing Kuumba’s member to create a workshop: Ceddo. Ceddo operated as a community space training and supporting the black community. This community impulse is what brought together most of the members.

Deriving its name from Ousmane Sembène’s film *Ceddo* (1977), which signifies culture of resistance, Ceddo had a membership of eleven people: Imruh Bakari, Menelik Shabazz, Glenn Ujebe Masokoane, D. Elmina Davis, Milton Bryan, Roy Cornwall, June Reid, Dada Imarogbe, Pauline Gordon, Lazell Daley, and Valerie Thomas.<sup>14</sup> The majority of

<sup>14</sup> When I do not include the place of origin of some of the collectives’ members it is because it was not available. Unlike Black Audio and Sankofa, Ceddo’s information is not as accessible since their own archive is scattered. In fact, in a conversation with Bakari, he revealed to me how in the past year he has been trying to locate Ceddo’s archive himself (2024).

Ceddo's members were not born in Britain but moved there when they were children or teenagers. Bakari was born in Trinidad and Tobago and studied at the Bradford Collage of Art and the National Film and Television School in London. Shabazz born in Barbados moved to Britain after his family secured a house in London. As a teenager, he was influenced by Black Power leading him to the Black Liberation Movement in Britain. He studied at the London Film School for a few months but had to quit since he did not have a scholarship (Katz 2021, n.p). However, he continued interested in film and television as his prolific career shows. Masokoane was an exile from South Africa. Bakari and Shabazz had known each other as filmmakers before Kumbha and were united by their interest in film and black liberation. Bakari had collaborated with Menelik on his film *Step Forward Youth* (1977), *Breaking Point: The Sus Law Controversy* (1977) and *Burning an Illusion* (1981). Having been born outside of Britain, gave them a diasporic and Afro-Caribbean perspective which can be seen in their productions. An example is how Ceddo is the only of these three workshops who devotes a production to apartheid (see *We are the Elephant*, chapter eight).

Ceddo's concerns were rooted in providing a platform and legitimacy to voices within the Afro-Caribbean communities in Britain, while also aiming to reconstruct and redefine perceptions on blackness (Ceddo's Profile 1986). "Culture of Resistance: Reflecting a True Image" (1986) written by Bakari encapsulates their ethos. In this article, which is the article they presented at Edinburgh's conference in 1986, Ceddo emphasises that its members are Afro-Caribbean individuals living in Britain while also being part of the Black Diaspora. They acknowledge exposure to European influences, for instance Bakari had studied Jean Rouch's works (Bakari 2024, n.p), and was acquainted with the French New Wave but emphasises Ceddo's grounding in their African heritage and the Black Diaspora (Bakari 1986). In fact, in some of their productions like *Time and Judgement* (1988) specific African narratological techniques are seen such as the figure of the Griot (see chapter two). As Bakari noted:

The issue of cultural nationalism, that is, whether we are speaking, dramatising, and documenting from a black British perspective or as African filmmakers living in Britain is not an issue Ceddo finds problematic. Black British cinema is not exclusively informed by our experiences here in Britain, and to advocate that it is an insult and injustice to the ancestral voices of our mothers and fathers and the struggles they have waged on our behalf. (1986, 14)

Ceddo underlines the importance of considering audiences alongside the images presented to them, highlighting the need for representations which must be meaningful since "[f]or too long the community has been excluded from the image-making process" (Bakari 1986, 14).

For Ceddo, images are weapons and areas of expression (Diawara 1993). Their productions, programme of documentation, trainings and screenings reflect their community orientations and ethos. They documented various events, including conversations with American writers such as Maya Angelou and Nzotake Shange and Rastafari pioneer Ras San Brown, the celebrations of the SS Windrush anniversary, Youth Festivals, and cultural activities of importance for the community. The substantial number of rushes at archives such as the BFI underscore their dedication to documentation and training.<sup>15</sup>

They organised several screenings. I will highlight here some of the screenings I have been able to retrieve and its importance since they introduced audiences in Britain to black cinema of different parts of the world, highlighting their transcultural and diasporic orientation. In 1985 they screened *Burning an Illusion* by Shabazz; *I am not Two Islands* by Kuumba and *Riots and Rumours of Riots* by Bakari. Introducing viewers to their work prior to Ceddo. In 1987 they organised a programme entitled “Women on the Inside Looking out” where *She’s Gotta Have it* by Spike Lee, *The Passion of Remembrance* by Sankofa or *The Ella Baker Story* by Joanne Grant were shown, which signals their commitment to giving women a space within the collective’s agenda proving wrong those voices who in the past did not take Ceddo as committed with gender and sexuality as Sankofa (Mercer 1994).

In the same year, 1985, in the event “Voices and Visions,” Ceddo screened *Grove Carnival* by Henry Martin, *The Mark of the Hand* Aubrey Williams by Imruh Bakari, *Four Women* by Julie Dash, or *Dance Black America* by D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, indicating how varied their programme was and how they gave space to works from all over the Black Diaspora, from Britain to the US and objective mirrored in 1988 when they exhibited *Langston Hughes: The Dreamkeeper*, by St. Clair Bourne, (for the first time in the UK), *From These Roots*, by William Greaves, *Grey Area*, by Monona Wali, and *Sitting in Limbo*, by John Smith. Later in 1988, they organised a screening around the idea of black women’s representation. They combined workshop titles (*Dreaming Rivers* by Sankofa), British playwright Tunde Ikoli’s *Elphida*, and African film (*Yellen* by Malian Soleymane Cissé). These different screenings indicate Ceddo’s openness to different forms and issues on black cinema and representation and how their interest went beyond Britain, which underlines their pan-African commitment.

---

<sup>15</sup> Some are *GLC Bombing* (1985), *All my Sons* (1986), *West Green Road* (1985), *Hi-Tech* (1986), *First Sight* (1986), *Equalities for all* (1990), *Facing the Challenge* (1990) and *Windrush* (1991). These were never used in their works and are unprocessed.

Ceddo was also involved in community training programmes, organising a variety of courses at Ceddo's headquarters in South Tottenham Education and Training Centre (London). Examples are a course for beginners in video (1985), technical video seminars (1986), screenwriting, directing and editing courses (1988), drama production training courses (1990-1991) and screenwriters development programmes (1993). They maintained connections with different cultural groups, such as the Black Art Gallery and people who used to visit the African Centre in London, where Ceddo learn about the needs of the community, and inspired some of their productions. An example is *The Flame of the Soul* (1990) on sickle-cell anaemia. Additionally, they organised conferences and discussions on various topics, including the future funding of black workshops (1985), seminars with renowned black filmmakers like Cuban Sergio Giral, Franco-Caribbean Euzhan Palacy or Senegalese Ousmane Sembène (1985), and a conference on television and political censorship featuring representatives from Channel 4, the IBA (Independent Broadcast Authority) and the BBC (1988).<sup>16</sup>

As these events evidence, Ceddo believed black filmmakers had a crucial role in combating the misrepresentation of black people in the media and carry "[f]resh air into the polluted atmosphere." (Shabazz 1986, 59). Beyond filmmaking, the workshop opened a space that fostered creative and political awareness of black cinema and black British communities, always from a global, transnational, and transcultural perspective.<sup>17</sup>

Black Audio Film Collective, initially known as the Black Media Research Group, consisted of John Akomfrah, Reece Auguiste, (Pasqui)Lina Gopaul, Trevor Mathison, Edward George, Avril Johnson, and Claire Joseph (replaced by David Lawson in 1985). They were all born in London except for Akomfrah who migrated as a child from Ghana, Auguiste from Grenada, and Mathison from Jamaica. They met at Portsmouth Polytechnic, where they pursued studies in sociology, fine arts, and photography. They founded the Portsmouth Film Co-op and were active members of the London film-maker's Co-op (Ethnic Art Subcommittee application 1984, n.p). Black Audio's members, as I advanced earlier, reflect the importance of access to higher education: they pursued a practice-based education in a polytechnic and were pushed, as children of middle-class families based in Britain, to get an

---

<sup>16</sup> Ceddo was financially assisted by BFI, Channel 4, GLAA (Greater London Arts Association), Haringey (Arts) Council and LBGS (London Boroughs Grants Scheme).

<sup>17</sup> See appendix A for a timeline of Ceddo's activities and productions.

education. In fact, Akomfrah's mother, a Ghanaian exile (inspiration for *Testament*, see chapter seven) was a teacher.<sup>18</sup>

Their academic interests included film studies, history, literature, women's studies, and sociology. This eclecticism is seen in their films, which explains why for Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, each member had a role: Auguiste was the poet of Black Audio and Mathison an apt composer (2007b). Black Audio was the last of the three workshops to be franchised. However, it is the only workshops whose members are still working together through the production company Smoking Dogs. As Akomfrah explains:

The institutions we went to see [...] had in their mind a timetable by which black film groups should be set up. At the top was Ceddo, because it was made up of people they'd heard of, who had made films that they had seen. Everybody would say they'd deal with us after Ceddo, but suddenly there was another group, Sankofa, who were coming at the thing from a different angle, saying, 'we're going to deal with sexuality and gender'. So, we then got moved behind them and we didn't help our case, because we kept insisting on the question of experimentation and form. I remember at the Art Council being told that you couldn't have a black experimental film group, and I think there was an idea that there was already an established way of making films. (Dickinson 1999, 311)

Black Audio challenged the "[e]stablished way of making films." Proof of this is how after the track record they created through the early eighties and the success of *Handsworth Songs* (1986); Black Audio earned a franchise. Prior to the franchise, as was the case of Sankofa and Ceddo, the collective received financial assistance for their activities from the GLC Ethnic Minorities' Committee and the Arts and Recreation Committee. The Grants from these committees enabled them to acquire equipment crucial to experiment in their productions. As they wrote in the GLC Ethnic Minorities' Committee report, "experimentation is for us a necessary facet of film work" (1986, n.p.), an impulse which is seen in their productions as Black Audio and Smoking Dogs.

In "Black Independent Film-Making: A Statement by the Black Audio Film Collective" (1983), Akomfrah elucidates the objectives of Black Audio, which revolve around the particularities of black representation and the "[f]iguration of ethnicity in cinema" (1983, 144). They aim to critically evaluate and challenge racist stereotypes which have permeated culture as "[s]elf-evident truths" and to counter them. Just like Ceddo, they seek to foster a space to discuss and assess black cinema while promoting and expanding black film culture. They are aware of the media's role in perpetuating stereotypes and endeavour to go

---

<sup>18</sup> Black Audio was financially assisted by the GLAA, London Borough of Hackney, the BFI and Channel 4.

beyond them through critical examination (1983). As they assert, “[t]he search is not for ‘the authentic image’ but for an understanding of the diverse codes and strategies of representation” (1983, 145).

They were also engaged in documentation. From their documentation, they managed to assemble a repository of knowledge with unused footage and footage that may have been recycled and used in different productions, even if devised for other unfinished projects. Some of these unfinished projects were *Pentecostal Churches*; *Race, Memory, and Documentation*, about Caribbean oral tradition; or a production on the Bhopal disaster in India 1984. They were never shown and remain unfinished but available in their personal archive. As Eshun and Sagar wrote, “the substantive body of these projects remained internal to the group where they functioned as resources of knowledge production to be reconfigured for multiple projects” (2007c, 225).

Their objectives are manifested in various courses and screenings organised following the Workshop Declaration’s commitment to not only production but also education, training, and distribution. Some of these were, for example, the course “Visions and Revisions” in Black Audio’s headquarters in Hackney (London) in 1984, intended to provide a new perspective for black independent filmmaking. The course was analytical and theoretical with Parminder Vir providing expertise on black Film policy, Lai Ngan on the use of sound in cinema, or Roy Cornwall on the use of a camera and techniques on sound recording. They also organised the video workshop “Looking Black” in their headquarters in 1985 where each of the members of Black Audio participated in the theoretical sessions. Akomfrah dealt with Black Audio’s perspective on black aesthetics, George with male presences in film and Joseph with female presence in film. Johnson explored the question of culture for black communities in Britain. Gopaul the history and differences faced by black communities and Auguste the topic of alienation and how it relates to cinema (Visions and Revisions 1984). These different interventions reflect Black Audio’s agenda.

They coordinated events like the BFI summer school in 1985, centring on imperialism and cinema. They also arranged screenings like “Black and Third World Focus” at the independent Rio Cinema in East London, where they presented films from cinemas of the third world, including films from Cuba, India, Senegal, Congo, and Mali. Another series of screenings was the “Magic Moment Series” organised in their headquarters in 1985. There, they showed the film *Growing up* by Taiwanese director Kuen How-Chren, a film which for Black Audio launched a new wave of Taiwanese cinema (BAFC magic moment series 1985). This indicated how they were up-to date with cinematic trends happening around the globe

and their interest in introducing British audiences to it. An important conference was the “Cultural Identities Conference” organised at the London Co-op in 1986, dealing with the question of cultural identity formation and how it relates to black British filmmaking and stories.

Akomfrah admitted to Eshun that Black Audio’s early productions in the eighties were primarily concerned with “[c]ontributing to a broader cultural debate about black identity or cultural politics” (2007, 137), which is reflected on the workshops, courses, and screenings they organised as well as their productions of these early years as this thesis will indicate. As they transitioned into Smoking Dogs, the production company Akomfrah, Gopaul and Lawson established after the dissolution of the workshops, their focus shifted towards “what the work itself has to say about certain questions” (Eshun 2007, 137). From 1987 to 1993, Black Audio secured a contract with Channel 4, providing them with stability for production. After that, like all the workshops, they operated on commissions akin to independent production companies, a model Smoking Dogs adopted.<sup>19</sup>

Sankofa was the first black workshop to receive a franchise, since their agenda in exploring sexuality and gender, as I will illustrate, made them popular among founding bodies. In 1984, the Arts and Recreation committee argued that “[S]ankofa is a highly proficient workshop, whose activities are thoroughly thought through and ably carried out.” This opinion was also shared by the Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee: “Sankofa film and video is a group producing films of high artistic standard” (1986, n.p). The founding members of Sankofa were Isaac Julien, Martina (Judah) Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Nadine Marsh-Edwards, and Robert Crusz. Isaac Julien was born in London and studied painting and fine art at Central St. Martins. Attille migrated from St. Lucia as a child and graduated in film from Goldsmith’s college in London with Blackwood, born in London. Edwards, from Birmingham, also graduated in film from Goldsmiths. Robert Crusz was born in Sri Lanka and studied Screen studies at Goldsmiths (Fusco 1988).

Coming from different colleges but sharing a social and cultural atmosphere, they were drawn together by their differences and their desire to find a space to showcase their ideas as cinema and fine art graduates.<sup>20</sup> As their paper “The Black Independent Sector Towards Pluralistic Approach” presented at the Third Eye Conference argued, “Sankofa

---

<sup>19</sup> See appendix B for a chronology of Black Audio.

<sup>20</sup> The information I have about Sankofa starts when they established the workshop, and it does not state how the members met each other. They used to move in similar social and cultural spaces. Their first film *Territories* was produced in Central Saint Martin’s so they may have had a connection to that school.

evolved with the desire to make more visible and diverse a black independent cinema to take account of our experiences as black peoples in a post-industrial Britain. A cinema which references the concerns and desires of the black communities that we are part of. Questions of class, gender, sexuality, representation of our histories, herstories, and images of ourselves” (Julien 1986, 60). It was their emphasis on gender and sexuality, as Akomfrah revealed (Dickinson 1999), that granted them the first franchise.

Sankofa is tribal Akan (Ghana) term which means roughly go back and fetch it. Its symbol, depicting a bird turning back to look at its tail, indicates the importance of looking at the past to retrieve knowledge for the future. They aimed to achieve this through the production of films, the organisation of screenings, talks, lectures, and skill training sessions. Among their objectives was “[t]he production of a range of images of the black subject, which is geographically, culturally, economically, racially and sexually diverse” (Power and Control 1984, n.p). As Isaac Julien signals in the documentary *Black and White in Colour Television, Memory, Race, 1936-1968*, they were concerned with “[r]aising questions that were up to that point unacceptable questions to raise within Black circles” (1992, n.p) like the possibility of intersecting issues of gender and sexuality with race. As such, they were “[d]issident voices within and without black communities” (Julien 1992, n.p.), since not all black Britons were content with what they were trying to achieve (see channel 4’s viewers reactions throughout this thesis). Julien argues how they were dissident within black communities given their emphasis and focus on sexuality and gender, which provided an innovative content focus and, even if Black Audio and Ceddo included sexual and gender perspectives, it was a main objective in Sankofa’s political agenda.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the years, they organised different events. However, as Sankofa admitted in their reports for the GLC, they concentrated more on producing. “Power and Control” in 1984 in Sankofa’s headquarters in Camden was a programme they organised with screenings and debates. In this event, there were specific talks targeted only at women or only at gay and lesbian groups, highlighting their focus on providing community access to black communities but bearing in mind the sexual and gender perspective. This underscored their dedication to creating anti-racist and anti-sexist spaces and content. Discussions at these events covered topics like appropriation, image and accountability, the question of desire, how to occupy new spaces as people with a subversive articulation of subjectivity and herstories. “Power and

---

<sup>21</sup> Sankofa was financially assisted by Channel 4, the GLAA and the Camden Borough Council.



Control” also included courses on filmmaking. A relevant course in 1986 was a 16mm workshop at the London Co-Op entitled “Black Feminine.”

From 1994 until the dissolution of the workshop in 1998, new members appeared, like Dany Thompson, Tessa Sheridan, Raymond Yeng, Hattie Naylor, or Tessa McCan. These filmmakers show the shift in concerns in Sankofa, from the angry years of the early eighties asserting their desire to produce and use their platform to advocate for black British identities to a gradually openness to more topics transcending Afro-Caribbean stories and including, for instance, British-Chinese stories. After *Looking for Langston* (1989), Isaac Julien received recognition and started producing independently, even if some films were still made in association with Sankofa, such as the fiction feature film *Young Soul Rebels* (1991). In chapter nine, I have specified the trajectories of the members after the dissolution of the workshops.<sup>22</sup>

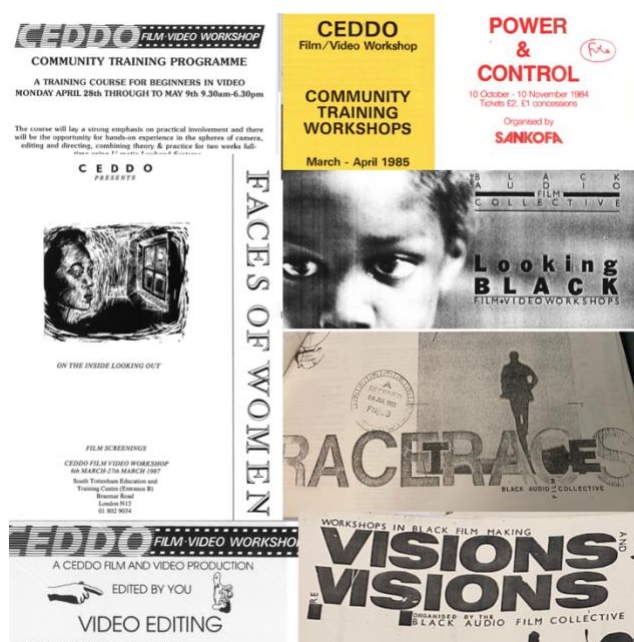


Figure 4. Collage of Some of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa’s Courses and Screenings, my Pictures

These workshops changed the representation of black British identities in the media and introduced fresh narratives and points of view through their different forms of filmmaking, with Black Audio and Sankofa mainly relying on the essay film format. However, as I indicated earlier, my objective is not finding the best black British aesthetic but indicating how different aesthetics illustrate how plural black British experiences are.

<sup>22</sup> See appendix C for more information on Sankofa’s timeline.

As Attile argued, “there is also a plurality of identities, articulated by specific interests coming from different social groupings. It is no longer adequate just to group people in terms such as black women or the working class” (2003, 154). These workshops challenged the status quo and unlocked new possibilities for black British film in the eighties. Their productions facilitated a shift in language, decolonised cinema, accentuated the significance of revisiting the past, and the use of archival practices to underscore the memory and multiple identity articulations present within black British communities. In the next section, I expand on the areas of research which I use as part of my methodology.

#### 1.4. Conceptualising Ceddo, Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa

This thesis proposes analytical frameworks deriving from different areas of studies to explore the works. I have arranged the works following thematic areas converging in their productions, which demonstrate how they are films in dialogue and not in opposition to each other. There has not been a publication investigating Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa giving them equal importance, as I have pinpointed throughout this chapter. Coco Fusco’s *Young, British and Black* (1988) engaged with Sankofa and Black Audio—not Ceddo—and did not thoroughly analyse their productions. The only publication on Black Audio’s work is *Ghosts of Songs* (2007a) by Eshun and Sagar. There is not a work that comprehensively explores all of Ceddo’s works. This thesis is the first piece analysing all of Ceddo’s productions. Sarita Malik took an interest in these collectives in her PhD interviewing members of Ceddo like Bakari and Martin (1988). However, the films were not explored. In 2001 she published *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television* but these collectives were barely mentioned and the only Ceddo film appearing was *The People’s Account* because of its controversy with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA, see chapter six). With this thesis, I demonstrate that Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa were paramount in representing and reshaping black British cinema.

My methodological eclecticism mirrors the diverse black British experiences portrayed by the collectives and their own varied methodologies, deriving from their multiple backgrounds and the diverse aesthetics they advocated for. I use theories deriving from cultural studies, memory studies, postcolonial studies, and film studies. The concepts deriving from these fields of research, enhance my analysis of the works, which are my object of study. I will now provide a general explanation of my methodology. However, each chapter is introduced with the theoretical and analytical frameworks relevant to the group of

films analysed in the chapter. Additionally, each film includes a literature review of critics and scholars which have engaged with each work.

#### 1.4.1. Black British Preposterous Counter-memory

The collectives explore the ways memory is constructed, re-constructed, de-constructed, transmitted, transformed, shaped, and represented in different social and historical contexts, how it affects the way under which black British history and memory has been conceived and how this is visually encapsulated. They take a non-linear or fragmentary conception of temporality where history is seen as preposterous (Bal 1999). By preposterous I imply how they present narratives that challenge established conceptions of events that have been wrongly included in the annals of history or which have not considered the perspectives of excluded minorities. Their productions are preposterous or “contrary to common sense, contrary to the sense of history as obstinately mono-directional” (Andersen 2001, 354). By providing new references for the past, present and future, they challenged conventional understandings of memory and offered forms of counter-memory, following Foucault (1977). This shift signifies a transition from meta-narratives to *petit-récits* within a postmodern context (Lyotard 1984). As Ian Chambers wrote, postmodernism:

Suggests the end of a world, a world of Enlightened rationalism and its metaphysical and positivist variants. A world that is white, male and Euro- centric. And one might add, what is finished is the “official,” universal, unified, racist, sexist, imperialist History; from this point on, *that* History is finished. Thus, “the end of History” means the beginning of histories: the history of women’s struggle, the history of youth culture, the history of prisons, the history of madness, the history of the working class, the history of minorities and the history of the Third World. (1986, 100)

Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa reflect the experiences of the Afro-Caribbean minority in a first world country (Britain). As filmmaker Trihn T. Minh-ha explained: “in dealing with hegemony, we are not only challenging the dominance of Western cultures, but also their identities as unified cultures. In other words, we call attention to the fact that there is a Third World in every First World and vice-versa” (1989, 148). The collectives’ films emphasise the re-evaluation of a British past and present and in the interstices of this re-assessment the different subjective positions they want to reflect appear.

Re-working is a key exercise in art. As Ernst Van Alphen indicated, art’s engagement with preceding works implies an active reworking, creating new versions of the past, which

proposes that the past is involved in a perpetual flux (2007). Through this lens, I examine Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa's interrogation of the archive and previous media to illustrate how these workshops re-worked and contested pre-established notions of what it meant to be black and British. Through this archival exploration, the workshops constructed a counter-visual archive available for upcoming generations of black Britons after an exhaustive exercise of reworking.

In my analyses, politics, memory, and art are deeply intertwined. As such, I present the collectives' works away from an "[o]fficial, universal, unified, racist, sexist, imperialist history" (Chambers 1986, 100), indicating the multiple positions which I explore and my focus on postcolonial cultural memory through cinema.

#### 1.4.2. Different Modes of Remembering the Past: Cultural Memory Studies

I do not oppose memory to history, but I challenge official ways of accessing and repressing the past, as I advanced in the previous section. For Astrid Erll, the dichotomy between memory and history is no longer relevant, and it is preferable to adopt an approach in favour of the notion of different modes of remembering in culture (2008). This is the stance I take. For black communities, memory holds paramount importance. As Ian Bourland contends, "black cultural movements always have to deal with this question of memory because it is the only raw material [...] that they can turn to [...] Black culture finds itself confronted with the question of what one does with a body of informal codes" (2019, 261). Memory, as raw material, underscores the importance of turning into the archive as a repository of knowledge, and memory, which allows black artist and researchers to interrogate and question it.

My research borrows equally from memory studies as it does from cultural studies, postcolonial studies or film studies. The insights of British cultural studies are crucial, considering the geographical point I am researching, Britain, as the numerous essays of British cultural theorist such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy indicate. This does not mean that I solely resort to scholars from British cultural studies. On the contrary, I use cultural studies practitioners from different parts of the world but always mediated to the specific British context and moment of British history I am researching, which indicates how "[d]ifferent theories have developed in relation to one another." (Walton 2012, 3) and are additive and not subtractive. Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary area of research which borrows from different field of studies.

The question which arises is how and if cultural studies relates to (cultural) memory studies and if memory studies is to be taken as part of cultural studies or as an autonomous field of study. Memory studies is a field which was consolidated in the last two decades with primary thinkers from France and Germany. Memory studies itself is an interdisciplinary field, including notions of individual, collective, official, unofficial, private, and public memories, all of which intersect and add to each other (Erll 2008) and different disciplines, including cultural studies. The ideas of earlier figures such as Pierre Nora coexist with recent trends represented by writers like Michael Rothberg or Marianne Hirsch. However, in the field of memory studies, the concept of cultural memory studies appeared creating confusion with cultural studies. Some scholars (Erll 2008; Bond, Craps and Vermeulen 2017) argue that the difference between cultural studies and cultural memory studies is that the former relies more on the political analysis of cultures and the relationships of power whereas cultural memory studies has a historiographical approach (Perth 2019).

For Erll, the cultural in cultural memory studies means “[c]ollective or social” (2008, 3) and it entails the “[i]nterplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts” (2008, 3), emphasising how memory interacts with culture and ideology (2008), which is no different to cultural studies. In cultural memory studies, there is an agreement in seeing memory as a dynamic process—as the concepts travelling memory (Erll 2011) or multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) show—while considering the impact of media in constructing cultural meanings (Brunow 2015). As such, cultural memory studies is also “[a] field to which many disciplines contribute, using their specific methodologies and perspectives,” (2008, 3) including heuristic tools as cultural studies does. However, cultural memory scholars argue that the word cultural has no association with the cultural in the sense of the British cultural studies tradition (Erll 2008; Bond, Craps and Vermeulen 2017; Perth 2019). For them, cultural memory studies is rooted on the German tradition of *Kulturwissenschaft* or the study of cultures. However, for me, in the same way that for Erll it is not relevant the distinction between memory and history, I do not intend to provide a clear-cut division between cultural memory studies and cultural studies. What is important to remember is the interdisciplinarity of both fields and how they are in conversation with each other.

Therefore, in my use of the term cultural memory studies, cultural means both collective/social and the sense the British cultural studies tradition. Through this choice, I highlight the significance of the historiographical memory processes (memory studies) on cultural objects (cultural studies) since my objective is to analyse cultural objects (films). As such, I take both fields as adding to each other. Additionally, the predominance of French and

German theorists in memory studies and cultural memory studies, as derived from memory studies, also indicates how cultural studies could be taken as earlier and Anglo-American counterpart of the European cultural memory studies since memory studies practitioners do not dismiss cultural studies and use its theories. A reason behind memory studies acknowledging the influence of cultural studies is that memory studies has been more practiced than theorised (Erll 2008). It is a field being theorised in the present and recent trends suggest how memory studies and cultural studies are closer than initially thought by cultural memory studies practitioners, indicating how the meaning I place on cultural in cultural memory studies in this thesis may not be a quixotic interpretation in the near future.

In fact, in 2023, in the International Conference of Memory Studies taking place in Newcastle, Andreas Huyssen, acknowledged the influence of British cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall in memory studies. In a workshop around memory, politics, and art, he encouraged memory studies practitioners to remember how whilst German scholars were focusing on the holocaust, in Britain writers such as Paul Gilroy were developing concepts like the Black Atlantic—which I explore in this thesis—which help understand and widen the horizons on how memory practitioners could operate. Andreas Huyssen indicated how Gilroy is an example of an academic who engaged with the art of his time to build his theories on racism and colonialism and transcend national boundaries. As someone engaged with the intersection of art, politics, and memory, Huyssen was highlighting my position as I explore Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa and advancing my own interpretation of the cultural in cultural memory studies.

Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa recorded new black British experiences, ensuring their availability for future generations, and transforming their films into timeless sites of memory. These collectives are characterised by mostly using the essay film, which is one of the modes of militant cinema proposed by Solanas and Gettino. The essay film, as Alter wrote is, “[a] genre of non-fiction filmmaking that is neither purely fiction nor documentary, nor art film but incorporates aspects of these modes” (2018, 4). For Alter, essays tend to appear in times of crisis (2018), and for Homi Bhabha, “the state of emergency is also always a state of emergence” (1994, 41). Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa produced in the “emergency” which was Thatcherism and countered the socio-political crisis it created through their essay films.

If memory is an archive, albeit discontinuous and imperfect, cinema accounts for these gaps and gives them visual representation. As Nora Alter highlights, “memory becomes sedentary, but it finds its physical shape in art” (2018, 195), which leads us again to the

interaction between art, politics, and memory. Through the study of these workshops' films, it is possible to foster a black "[p]olitical identity made out of differences" (Mercer 1994, 291) in the eighties, reflecting the ideological and political shifts of the time.<sup>23</sup> By the time these collectives were franchised, the question of how black British identities relate to hegemonic Britain was in dispute, opening a "problem space" (Hall 2006) for some and an area of (visual) intervention for others, as it was the case of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa in this thesis.

## 1.5. Conclusion

Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa reconfigured black British cinema in the short duration of their workshops. They reveal the importance of previous filming structures like the LFMC and black British filmmakers such as Horace Ové in setting a standard for what could be done if financial assistance was available. The productions and conversations around these workshops elucidated how it was not possible to talk about them in monolithic terms of a unique black British experience or a singular black British aesthetic. They produced different style of black British filmmaking widening the existing models and challenging conceptions on what a bad or good black British aesthetic might be.

The films of each of these workshops highlight the different migrant and educational background of their members and their various perspectives on what it means to be black British filmmakers, as I will explore in the following chapters. Given the subsidised space created by the Workshop Declaration, these workshops engaged in socio-cultural activities like screenings or workshops which help foster the advancement of black British filmmaking and produce a myriad of examples of different black subjective and identitary articulations. The collectives changed British cinema so much that Manthia Diawara argued that British cinema was dead, "[l]ong live black British cinema" (1993, 154). The next chapter will involve an excavation of black British history and memory, with the objective of finding fragments of past misrepresentations or forgotten narratives and use them to challenge distorted or forgotten images of black British experiences.

---

<sup>23</sup> I examine all of Ceddo's productions. However, I have limited the analysis of Black Audio and Sankofa. I have referred to the productions I have not included throughout the thesis, which are Sankofa's *Looking for Langston* (1989), the productions of the new filmmakers joining Sankofa in the late nineties, Black Audio's *Black Cabs* (1994), the *Darker Side of Black* (1994), *The Call of Mist* (1998b) and *Gangsta, Gangsta* (1998a).





## CHAPTER 2. EXCAVATING BLACK BRITAIN: ACCESSING THE PAST

"The media not only gives us information about the world we live in, but it also shapes our attitude towards it"  
(Hall 1979b)

This chapter studies how the films of the workshops challenged various stereotypes about black Britons circulating in mainstream media. The productions I include excavate past depictions of black British identities, challenging both the misrepresentations and the national amnesia that surround the past they uncover. By doing so, they reveal alternative versions of history, aligning with Stuart Hall's writings on the possibilities of representing national identity in visual culture, where one narrative is replaced by another (1997). The four works I explore here use collective memory as a powerful tool to mediate history and address the danger of biased depictions by resorting to audio-visual archives to forward their narratives.

The films signal "[t]he end of the essential black subject [...] recognising that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation with other categories and divisions" (Hall 1988, 28). They demonstrate the existence of diverse black British pasts. In films such as *Territories* (1984) by Sankofa, *Expeditions I: Signs of Empire* (1984a) and *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality* (1984b) by Black Audio and *Time and Judgement: A Diary of a 400 year Exile* (1988) by Ceddo, there is a return to the past, or to a postulated source, as a starting point for new narratives. These four productions demonstrate how Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa are equally experimental.

*Territories* undertakes an examination of stereotypes surrounding black cultures in Britain as disseminated in mainstream documentaries, using the Notting Hill Carnival as a background to build its arguments. I study it using concepts such as remediation (as adapted in Erll and Rigney 2009); *mémoire trouée* (Raczymow 1994), indicating how memories have holes which need to be filled in with missing information which may be hidden or forgotten; prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004), relating to memories not lived but recalled thanks to media representation; and postmemory (Hirsch 2008), which underlines the relationship of generations who have not experienced a traumatic event to the trauma of previous family or society members.

*Expedition I* and *Expedition II*, revisit the archive and the British Empire to highlight the overlooked perspectives of black British communities, whose presence in the present is a consequence of imperial expansion, colonialism, and slavery. I survey them through ideas

such as worlding (Spivack 1985; Cheah 2016), which indicates how colonised people resisted the reality created by the West including: the floating signifier (as adapted in Hall 1997), which is a word whose meaning fluctuates depending of its position; the empty signifier (as adapted by Barthes 1970) which does not have a specific reference; the mythomoteur (Smith 1986), dealing with the foundational myths societies create to understand their relationship to each other and their structure of feeling; and palimpsestic memory (Silverman 2017), underscoring the coexistence of several memories across space and time.

*Time and Judgement* presents a chronology of black history and memory from 1980 to 1987. A diarist, who has been in exile for four hundred years, has recorded various events impacting the diaspora. This diarist wants to show Queen Judgement, who is tired of power's erosion of love, that there is still time to save the black diaspora. I analyse this work through ideas related to collective and cultural memory (Rothberg 2009), communicative memory (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995), which refers to the memory shared by a society similar to Maurice Halbwachs' collective memory; multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009), indicating how different traumatic histories coexist; and questions related to discovering the truth through an African experimental aesthetic, which transcends Eurocentric paradigms.

## 2.1. Countering Mainstream Media: *Territories* by Sankofa

*Territories* constructs a critique on how mainstream media has depicted black British communities and challenges them using the Notting Hill Carnival as a starting point. It examines various aspects or territories such as sexual expression, repression, and cultural identity. It is divided in two parts. The first part counters misconceptions about black Britishness and how it has been traditionally represented, while the second navigates between the former attack of misrepresentations and initiates a process of deconstruction, a theme further explored in *The Passion of Remembrance* (chapter three). It is an essay film characterised by the use of archival footage, documentary footage and found footage. It includes tableaux and the mixture of voice-over narration and allegorical sound (Suárez 2022), which emphasises the visual construction.

For Steven Bode, *Territories* contributed more to the question of race and identity than previous documentaries (1987). As Sankofa argues in conversation with Silvia Paskin, the film “[w]as specifically about the way black culture is ‘contained’ by conventional media images, and it was designed as a critique of the so-called realist documentaries on TV which always show black people and their relationship to society as a ‘problem.’ We wanted to

create a range of images of black people that went beyond certain stereotypes” (1986, 362-3). *Territories*’ form marks a departure from traditional ideas of black independent filmmaking in Britain, since it presents a creative use of sound and image to deal with black representation (Pines 1985; MacCabe 1986; Demos 2019). Audiences highlighted how the film’s form prevented them from understanding the work (Paskin 1986; Rees 1999). Both its form and content has attracted the attention of different scholars (see Diawara 1996; Rees 1999; Dixon 1998; Diawara 1993; Alter 2018; Bourne [1998] 2001; Mercer 2016). For Kobena Mercer, *Territories* offers a novel approach to challenge “[t]he master-codes or the race-relations narrative” (1994, 88), it remediates previous media depictions, and it reshapes the landscape of British experimental cinema as it intersects with issues of race and ethnicity (Elliot 2019).

*Territories* is a remediation documentary addressing the visual amnesia prevalent in hegemonic Britain. It counters this amnesia through an excavation of the past and a firm assertion of black British identities. I take *Territories* as an experimental remediation documentary following Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney’s ideas, which they in turn, adapt from J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s classic formulation (1999). Remediation focuses on the “[w]ays in which the same story is recalled in new media at a later point in time and hence given a new lease on cultural life” (2009, 8). *Territories* mixes old and new media to construct a fresh meaning from black Britons’ perspective, making the work a landmark of black British experimental cinema, as I will illustrate.

A canted angle introduces a run-down area, antecedent of the now vibrant Notting Hill neighbourhood. The angle builds the impression of instability, mirroring the black British identities which will emerge, such as the first subject, a young black man. As Manthia Diawara signals, in Sankofa’s works the first character is normally a black subject, striving to position itself as a member of the Black (British) diaspora (1996). The presence of this person implies that the viewer will perceive the events through the character’s perspective. A close-up on him nodding as the off-screen voice maintains, “the territories of class, labour, race, sex relations,” highlights this and underscores the areas where identities are unstable. These territories function as sites for scrutiny, as well as the territories of “[d]esire, surveillance, sexual expression and resistance”—in the off-screen voice’s words—which co-exist.

These territories must undergo study because, as the voice-off continues, “behind each conflict there is a story.” *Territories* demands an analytical engagement from its audience, establishing a visual dialogue with the viewer through the narration led by images, which are reiterated. An example is how at the beginning and the end of *Territories*, the

image of a red door with a graffiti reading, “clean up your act” appears, giving the work a circular structure. The graffiti also serves as warning, suggesting that after the excavation, spectators must reset their minds to understand Sankofa’s agenda. The film encourages viewers to decode the message encoded (Fowler 2017). A further example is the simultaneous repetition of the territories by two different voices. One rushes to finish the sentence, as if compelled to state the territories before someone silences it, echoing black Britons’ experience. As Dori Laub wrote, “there is never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech” (1995, 63).

Black British narratives have not been fully captured due to a lack of fair portrayal free from stereotypes. This is why the rushed off-screen commentary contends that they are “[s]truggling to tell a story, a herstory, a history of cultural forms specific to black people.” The hurried female voice signifies Sankofa’s advocacy for exploring the multifaceted layers, intersections, and positions in black British identities, an idea expanded in *The Passion of Remembrance* (chapter three). Sankofa’s excavation comprises various stages or layers. *Territories* illustrates these layers by employing the technique of intellectual montage, weaving the different territories through music and voice-overs.

Between part one and two, three narratological moments emerge: the run-down neighbourhood featuring a young Black British individual referencing the territories of labour and class; the Notting Hill Carnival as (mis)represented by BBC documentaries, where the territories of surveillance and repression are introduced through the police; and the territories of sexual expression, desire, and resistance, highlighted by the montage depicting two black subjects who seem to be hugging while a policeman appears. All these moments converge in the black room where two black women are watching documentaries about the Notting Hill Carnival and crafting a counter-narrative from them. These three layers manifest the transition and correlation between memories and histories in the public and the private space.

Music plays a pivotal role in the work serving as the spirit of time linking individual and collective memory within the black diaspora. The off-screen sound of drums is a prominent feature in *Territories*. Drums hold significant power and embody spirituality for Africans (Dor 2014). *Territories* studies the political function of music for the black diaspora, through different genres, from drumming in the carnival, calypso songs, to the use of reggae songs such as Marcia Griffiths’ “Fell Like Jumping” or a ballad as Joan Baez’s “The Ballad of Sacco and Vanzetti.” Calypsos, in particular, are repositories of history for the black diaspora (Bidnall 2017). In fact, in the UK, Trinidadian Calypsos became popular since it

combined Trinidadian music with English themes showing how “[W]est Indian settler-artists laid claim to a more inclusive imperial culture” (Bidnall 2017, 19). For black Britons, music encapsulates memory, functioning as the consciousness of time uniting them to the black diaspora and materialising the movement of black cultures across space and time.

Enclosing memory through music rather than verbally elucidates why the voice-overs are “[s]truggling to tell a story.” They argue how there are memories that need to be addressed and are the “[a]-capella ghosts” that were silenced but were never silent for black British communities, as the work proves. This silenced-silent dichotomy underscores why Sankofa is trying to resist intergenerational traumatic memories stemming from misrepresentation.<sup>24</sup> They are intergenerational because successive generations of black Britons have been subjected to distorted images of themselves perpetuated by the media such as traditional BBC documentaries depicting the Notting Hill Carnival. As *Territories* elucidates, “blacks, since they were savage, could produce no philosophy that reached above the neighbour.” *Territories* uses the Notting Hill Carnival as a pretext to start their excavation, countering false visual memories, and articulating their ideas.

Sankofa crafts the soundtrack of their own experiences. As the women in the black room argue in a voice-over, “how far should we go to begin our story? A History of carnival to 1976? To 1966? Or to 1959? Or should we turn to its origins in the Caribbean, in Africa, in Ancient Babylon centuries before Christ, we are struggling to begin a story.” Black Britons face the challenge of determining where to start their narrative and confront distortion. These emerging narratives employ a new language, which shocks its viewers, who recognise how Sankofa takes previous and new media to convey their message. Sankofa utilises the image of a DJ mixing sound and the two women rewinding the media they are watching to remind the viewers of this. This indicates how both music and images are unifying elements in the narrative.

Through the narration viewers are transported to the past and prompted to critically assess conventional media, “what do these conventional documentaries adopt to? The same old story, a string of stereotypes about black culture, carnivals are neutralised and framed, contained as an aesthetic spectacle.” Viewers lack a direct connection with the images and narratives presented. Their memories are shot through with holes (Raczymow 1994 that need to be filled or repaired with positive images and narratives which have been forgotten. Henri

---

<sup>24</sup> Even if I use theories deriving from trauma studies, Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa do not fetishise black suffering.

Raczymow's concept of *mémoire trouée* or memory shot through with holes resonates with this notion. As he wrote, "it is only after something has taken place that we can measure its importance" (1994,102). This emphasises the scene of the black room with the two women watching images about what it means to be black and British. They endeavour to understand their identities.

Raczymow wrote about "a parenthesis" before and after the pre-war and post-war periods, with silence at its centre (1994). In *Territories* the silence is represented by the "a-capella ghosts," who carry the community's collective memory and the first celebration of the Notting Hill Carnival in 1966. The Notting Hill riots of 1958 and 1978 are the pre- and post-parenthesis to this silence. These are dates that one of the women in the black room refers to and that coincide with Raczymow's theory. It is in the tumultuous inter-riot period, where the "a-capella ghosts," epitomising the explosion of collective anger from black British communities, break free from collective silence.

The wound of the Notting Hill Riot persists in the cultural memory of future generations of black Britons; it is the ghost of time encouraging, metaphorically, Sankofa to heal the wound by countering misrepresentation. The symbolic order of war-silence-war was disrupted in 1981 by the long hot summer, where the initial riot of Brixton was followed by subsequent riots.<sup>25</sup> The lack of silence between the riots allowed the a-capella ghosts to finally find their voice. Another idea raised by Raczymow present in *Territories* is the question of who has the right to speak if one is not "[v]ictim, survivor or witness" (1994, 102). However, Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory suggests that speaking about a troubling non-lived situation is possible. For Marianne Hirsch, postmemory "[d]escribes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they remember employing in the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up" (2008, 106). The women in the black room manipulating media received postmemories.

By becoming aware of postmemories, black Britons can resist false narratives, which have deformed their sense of self, as black communities have not had the space to portray their own narratives. This underscores the imperative of bringing these narratives to light. Raczymow achieved this through writing, while Sankofa audio visually. As Raczymow argued, "writing was and still is the only way I could deal with the past, the whole past, the

---

<sup>25</sup> The long hot summer refers to the wave of riots happening during the summer of 1981 in Britain after Brixton in places such as Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, or Leeds.

only way I could tell myself about the past—even if it is, by definition, a recreated past. It is a question of filling in gaps, of putting scraps together” (1994, 103).

Sankofa revive their own past, questions it, and fills in the gaps with the scraps uncovered in their excavation. They acknowledge, as Raczynow did, that memory cannot be fully recovered and that there will always be a symbolic void (1994). Through creativity and imagination, Sankofa fills in this symbolic void. In doing so, Sankofa removes the veil from those viewers who have accepted mainstream media’s distorted images and who have believed in false prosthetic memories (Landsberg, 2004). For Alison Landsberg, prosthetic memories are memories which do not come from a person’s lived experience. As she noted, “people who acquire these memories are led to feel a connection to the past but, all the while, to remember their position in contemporary moment” (2004, 9). False prosthetic memories are mocked by *Territories*. An example is a scene depicting an elderly lady clutching her bag while walking in front of young black teenagers. By rewinding the moment, it appears as if she was returning from being with them. This mocks the construction of false prosthetic memories and illustrates how Sankofa generates new visual memories.

These false prosthetic memories are forged within the territories of the look and surveillance, which are, at the same time countered by the territories of resistance. The territory of the gaze encompasses all other territories, as the problems derive from the internalisation of the non-black British gaze and the excavation of one’s own look and realisation that it is different from that of hegemonic Britain. By countering misrepresentation, this internalisation is destroyed. A famous example is Frantz Fanon’s experience and how young child pointed at him claiming, “look, a negro,” highlighting his difference and allowing Fanon to realise his difference ([1952] 2008). In *Territories*, this recognition happens as the women watch other media in the dark room, comprehending their difference and how they are fixed as the other, indicating the necessity of finding a self-perception. As the voice-over argues, “colonial fantasy requires a fixed image of the black person or the other, but it is based on a complex kind of fixedness; the other signifies fear and desire and disorder due to the way in which blackness evokes fear and fantasy on behalf of white society.”

In *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 2008), Fanon wrote about desire, signalling how it belongs to the territory of the look. The hegemonic gaze puts the black subject under surveillance because of their gender, sex, race or class, and the black subject’s desire for belonging is transformed into resistance. The repetition of, “we are struggling to tell a story, a herstory a history of cultural forms specific to black people” reflects this idea and the

ruminating process of having recognised the need to excavate and establish their own paradigms. This recurrence and realisation explain the angry tone of *Territories*' second part. It unveils the quest for an identity whose journey involves a transition from darkness to light, from the unknown to the known, from what was hidden to the assembly of various parts comprising identities that had been misrepresented. As the narrator states: "it was a question of hiding behind black and white perceptions of who we were, who they thought we were [...] nobody sustained the angle for myself [...] I may in fact lose touch with who I am, I hid from my real sources, but my real sources were also hidden from me."

This idea is supported by the repetition of the pronouns "we" hauntingly through the second part, as if the "we"—the collective memory of the Black British community—was an engine that has not been used for centuries. It is within the second part that the challenge to the internalised gaze is more evident. Songs such as Quincy Jones' "Boyhood to Manhood," exemplifies this. In this part, the non-black gaze diminishes and private territories, as those of sexual expression, take the centre, indicating Sankofa's approach to the centre of the excavation. The juxtaposition of a policeman and a black Briton, who appears confronting the policeman through the manipulated image, serves to mock past media portrayals. This black Briton was hugging another black British subject, unveiling a gay subplot. These juxtaposed images engage in a visual struggle, as if only one could remain on the screen.



**Figure 5. *Territories*' Juxtaposition of a Policeman and a Black Man**

The outcome of this struggle remains unresolved. A shot of the Union Jack burning reminds the viewer that there is no black in the Union Jack, to quote Paul Gilroy (1987), until the space they are excavating is won over. This demonstrates how behind the "his-tory" that Sankofa was struggling to tell, there are also repressed stories of sexuality. The juxtaposition is edited to Joan Baez's "the ballad of Sacco and Vanzetti." The lyrics allude to hidden stories. As the song claims, the "police know how to make a man a guilty or an innocent" "against us is racial hatred" "the crime of love and brotherhood" and "only silence is shame." While these images appear, only the song is heard, symbolising how music constructs the narrative. This sequence is an example of allegorical sound usage. According to Juan A.



Suárez, allegorical sound “[c]omments on the image, expands or nuance its meaning, or offers a crucial perspective on it. It relates to the visual track conceptually” (2022, 533). Baez’s song comments on the juxtaposed images Sankofa presents and expands its meaning by targeting the police through its lyrics. The use of sound and image in *Territories* underlines how the work became an example of British experimental cinema, which demonstrated that black British filmmakers could produce highly intellectual works.

*Territories*’ form and content manages to account for the gaps in memory, aiding the voice-over that is “struggling to tell a story” and contributing to “the creation of a new context” through its exploration. It also showcases the different layers of identities, illustrating how black British narratives are more than the old story, “the stereotypes, the carnival, the mockery.” The following two works by black Audio adds to this excavation using the Empire and colonialism as their starting point.

## 2.2. Mining the Remnants of the British Empire. *Expeditions I: Signs of Empire* and *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality*

*Expeditions I* and *Expeditions II* deal with the British Empire and colonialism, highlighting how this past has silenced the voices of colonised subjects of the Commonwealth and how it has distorted perceptions on them, which continue to have an impact in the present. The official narrative of the Empire was shaped by those involved in colonial adventures, rather than those dealing with its consequences. Black Audio mines the official image archive to excavate alternative versions of the Empire. The works are two experimental slide-tapes or a two-part series of experimental ethnographic essays, combining conventional narrative techniques, archival footage, montage, and a dynamic soundtrack evoking the imperial past through its soundtrack and the inclusion of speeches by politicians about Commonwealth migrants.

*Expeditions I* is an investigation into the fictions created by Britons and its correlation to colonial fantasy whereas *Expeditions II* is an accumulation of the various signs structuring national identities (Curtis 1984). Both dispute prior depictions of diasporic subjects (Mercer 2008). For Stoffel Debuysere, *Expeditions I* and *II* exhibit a tension between formalism and lyricism, showing new relationships (2015). The similarity in their content and their interrelation indicates why this chapter establishes a dialogue between them. Both are literal expeditions to the past, drawing from source materials or archives (Hiller 1991).

The retrieved material encompasses dominant discourses, including speeches by the Labour politician Hugh Gaitskell, the Conservative politician Enoch Powell, or Thomas Carley. Black Audio challenges the language found in these texts to build their own language as *Territories* did. A compelling debate concerning the question of language was the panel discussion “questions of language” in *Undercut* (1988) where *Expeditions* is debated by Black Audio and experts as Gillian Swanson, Carole Enahoro or Frank Abbot. Swanson asserts the necessity of finding ways for inclusion, suggesting that this can be achieved by the re-working of film language (1988). During this conversation, Carole Enahoro uses *Signs of Empire* as an example of re-worked language (1988). There has not been a vast engagement with the work, perhaps because it has not been exhibited as much as other Black Audio works. However, through my analysis I want to highlight the important ideas the two works present.

Black Audio brings to light, or rather, reads against the grain, the narratives that they have inherited through their own archival intervention. In doing so, they highlight the worlding of black British experiences, producing alternative historical narratives (Spivak 1985). For Lina Gopaul, Britain was a leading force in worlding (1988). Pheng Cheah links worlding to a normative temporalisation of the capitalist world. As he noted, “processes of imperialist discursive cartography [...] are a form of epistemic violence that shapes how colonised subjects see themselves. These processes continue to play a role in the worlding of the Third World” (2016, 8). The idea of time connected to colonialism resonates with Fanon’s temporalisation in *The Wretched of The Earth* ([1961] 1963). As he wrote, “decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is obviously, a programme of complete disorder [...] decolonisation, as we know, is a historical process ([1961] 1963, 27). Black Audio unworlds previous worldings.

By un-worlding the status quo, as in the process of decolonisation, another world is opened with the opportunity of creation. This idea is supported by Cheah’s assertion, “every unworlding points to the irreducible possibility of the opening of another world. As the basis of (un)worlding the incalculable gift of time is a principle of real messianic hope immanent to the world” (2016, 9). This elucidates the creation of a new language and a new alternative history or world by Black Audio in their expeditions.

The language of race excavated by Black Audio has no fixed meaning, as race is a floating signifier (Hall 1997). For Stuart Hall floating signifiers are terms representing racial ideas without a fixed meaning. This instability is problematic since it can lead to confusion

and perpetuate inequalities and stereotypes. It also presents an opportunity for resistance against oppression and the potential for creating new identities or worlds. As Hall suggests:

Race is one of those major concepts, which organise the great classificatory systems of difference, which operate in human society. And to say that race is a discursive category recognizes that all attempts to ground this concept scientifically, to locate differences between the races, on what one might call scientific, biological, or genetic grounds, have been largely shown to be untenable. (1997, 6)

Skin colour for Hall is a signifier with changing meanings in different cultures and contexts. Hall's floating signifier is similar to Jacques Derrida's difference (1967), and Roland Barthes' empty sign (1970). For Barthes, following Ferdinand de Saussure, all signs are floating. Barthes also wrote of the empty sign or "[t]he interstice without specific edges" (1970, 25), whose meaning is not fixed and depends on its relational context with other signs. The interstice, a crucial notion in both *Expeditions*, creates gaps and pauses loaded with meaning, prompting viewers to reflect and decode within the images' interstices (Sobchack 1991; Marks 2015). Gilles Deleuze stresses the importance of the interstice, highlighting how elements like noises, voices or music contribute to constructing meaning (1989).

Black Audios' montage resembles language—in the sense outlined by Sergei Eisenstein. As Eisenstein wrote, "now why should the cinema follow the forms of theatre and painting rather than the methodology of language, which allows wholly new concepts of ideas to arise from the combination of two images? Language is much closer to film than painting is" (1949, 60). *Expeditions* mixes these ideas to uncover alternative version of history, which are new insights shaping worlds and voices unheard before.

### 2.2.1. Signalling Myths in *Expeditions I: Signs of Empire*

According to Kodwo Eshun (2007), *Expeditions I* draws its subtitle from Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs* (1970). As Barthes noted, "if I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object [...] so as to compromise no real country by my fantasy" (1982, 3). The fiction in *Expeditions I* is a "[f]issure in popular memory," with Black Britons, fixed in a specific manner in the popular imagination, digging their own history and mediating the past and the present. It starts showing an image of a statue with a sword on the left, with the subtitle "Signs of Empire," juxtaposed with a blank page on the right, divided by a black line. This composition resembles a book, with the white

page suggesting that the information excavated will be recorded on it. The dividing line is a transitional space between the two images, an interstice facilitating the creation of an alternative history and Black Audio's "investigation of colonial fantasy."



**Figure 6. Opening of *Expeditions I: Signs of Empire***

Richard Wagner's "Das Rheingold" prelude accompanies the beginning of the work. The prelude explores the creation of the world and the struggle to obtain the ring of power, an idea mirrored by *Expeditions*' process of worlding and excavation. This inquiry seeks the raw material necessary to access their identity. The first sentences "[i]n the beginning..." "the textual..." indicate how Black Audio goes back to the textual source. In "beginning" the second 'g' is separated from the rest of the word, emphasising the continuous present tense, underscoring the idea that identities are not fixed, they are in the process of "becoming rather than a being" (Hall 1996b, 4). Black Audio signals "[t]he hinterlands of narratives. The impossible fiction of tradition. The treatise on national identity."



**Figure 7. "In the Beginning," *Expeditions I***

*Expeditions I* addresses the Empire creating a counter-imaginary of British imperialism. The narratives about Empire are "[a] decentred autobiography," biased, as they originate from mainstream Britain. Black Britons' identity was marginalised and constructed as inferior. However, this excavation supposes "[a] fissure in popular memory," dealing with "[t]he anxieties of colonial rhetoric. Binaries of abjection." The word abjection was used by Jacques Rivette, following Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic term of abjection ([1980] 1984) in his critique of *Kapò* (1960), by Gillo Pontecorvo, whose representation of a suicide in

relation to the Holocaust is an avatar of abjection. Colonialism is a historical abjection, a “[d]e-centred autobiography.”

The visual archive Black Audio acquires is an example of postmemory (Hirsch 2008; 2012), as was the case in *Territories*. Black Audio’s generation has no direct relation to the British Empire, but they live its consequences. The imaginary, visual, and textual archive imposed on black British communities by hegemonic Britain needs countering to bring to light stereotypes and challenge them. Black Britons have to do this because “[i]ndirect knowledge haunt[s] many of us coming after” (Hoffman 2004, 25).

The work introduces Hugh Gaittskell’s ideas on multi-racial Britain in a voice-over “[I] believe with all my heart that the existence of this remarkable multi-racial association, of independent nations, stretching across five continents, covering every race, is something that is potentially of immense value to the world.” These words linger within black Britons, haunting them as the potential of this association did not function since their presence as part of this association—the Commonwealth—generated rejection on UK-based Britons. Conservative politician Sir Ronald Bell describes the reality black Britons faced since “[t]he ones who were born here are English but they hey don’t know who they are or what they are [...] how the hell one gives them the kind of sense of belonging young Englishmen have?,” indicating migrants’ experiences of rootlessness in Britain as *Home away from Home* (chapter five) shows.

The excavation is required to obtain their sense of belonging. As Gabriele Schwab wrote, “the recipients of transgenerational trauma live with a ‘postmemory’ that comes to them second-hand [...] it is fragmentary and shot through with holes and gaps, but in different ways. These children need to patch a history together [...] by using whatever props they can find—photographs and stories or letters” (2010, 14). Schwab’s insights underscore why every found piece is revealing. *Expeditions* resonates with a generation that felt “[a]nxious to reclaim an affective counter-memory that could intervene in the official versions of historical continuity and national identity” (Debuysere 2016, 11). The photographs, speeches, texts, and documentaries most black Britons have consumed are “the iconographies of difference...” “The delirium of becoming...” “The grace of unbecoming...” The dichotomy between becoming and unbecoming is a further example of meaning constructed in the interstices where black Britons’ identities are “[c]aught between myth and history...” “contained by the illusions of subjectivity...”

Black Audio points to misconceptions on national identity and the workings of mythomoteurs (Smith 1986). For Anthony Smith, a nation’s most crucial aspect is their

mythomoteurs which are “[t]heir myths and symbols, their historical memories and central values” (1986, 15), signalling who they are. Hugh Trevor-Roper maintains that “[m]yth has played an important part in history. For what people believe is true is a force, even if it is not true. Myth may be a driving force [...] Myth may also be the soul of history” (2008, xix). In fact, as Hiller wrote, “*Expeditions* is an engagement with the mythologies around which national identity is secured. The central concern is to investigate the fictions of national character as they are produced through the excess of colonial fantasy” (1991, 72). Black Audio underlines this through “[f]orce and meaning,” referring to past mythomoteurs affecting them as “the Enlightenment” and “colonialism.”

By discerning the “meaning” within this “force,” black Britons disrupt the consumption of myths surrounding national origin. An instance is how Black Audio mocks the Enlightenment, which is presented as a paradox: colonialism was fostered when the Enlightenment was at its high peak in Europe, it rationalised force and violence. As Hiller noted, “colonial discourse is an anxious rhetoric . . . when we thought the European was a creature of enlightenment, we discover him to be a barbarian” (1991, 79). Black Audio highlights how the Enlightenment is equally a floating signifier since there is no meaning in this force. Visually, a montage mocks the Enlightenment by juxtaposing an image of a sign “[h]ere lies a brave British soldier,” surrounded by a myriad of unidentifiable bodies. The irony resides on how these bodies’ attires reveal that they were colonial soldiers.

Continuing the rationalisation of colonialism and its impact on national identity, Fanon reminds his readers in *The Wretched of the Earth* ([1961] 1963) that the colonised lives in a world(ing) created by the coloniser and, as such, the colonised need to discover their own world, their own culture, their own identity, and their own history. They must break up with, as Trinh T. Minh-ha claims in *Ressemblance* (1982), “the habit of imposing a meaning to every single sign.” Black Audio mocks the meaning imposed on signs and [a]lphabeticallly written narratives” (Mignolo 1995, 125) by introducing an alphabet that satirises colonial impulses: “[A] is for the army that dies for the queen: it’s the best army that ever was seen...” “W is the word of an Englishman true: when give, it means what he says he will do...” “N is the Navy we keep at Spithead. It’s a sight that makes foreigners wish they were dead.”

*Expeditions I* ridicules “[w]ritten narratives,” and parodies colonial training, as it asserts, “on the education of the youth depends the fate of Empires.” Learning is important for black Britons who want to break with the inherited codes. This idea is inserted at the end, underlining Black Audio’s intention to present a different narrative, decentring, and

decolonising minds. The beginning of *Expeditions I* introduced a white page, symbolising the writing process of the extracted material. *Expeditions II* continues this task.

### 2.2.2. Staging Memory: *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality*

*Expeditions II: Images of Nationality* is a continuation of its sister *Expeditions I*. Emphasis rests on nationality rather than the meaning behind sings. It addresses “[h]interlands and peripheries” and examines the relationship between the non-hegemonic identities constructed on the margins and the society responsible for the misrepresentation of black Britons. In *Expeditions II*’s beginning, a circle emerges from darkness, evoking the centre of the Earth where an excavation has taken place and is resurfacing to make sense of the obtained material (*Expeditions I*), which needs assessment.



**Figure 8. Beginning of *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality***

The possibility of creation on the margin offers a new perspective on the world, emphasising the movement to the Earth’s surface and Black Audio’s unworlding. *Expeditions II* endeavours to portrait black Britons’ own ideas related to “[t]he imaginary origin...” “The oratorical we / they...” *Expeditions II* comes with clearer positions against mainstream Britain than *Expeditions I*, as it signals “we call ourselves...” “insular...” “but the truth is...” “we are the only race...” “capable of...” “produce men capable of...” “getting inside” “the skin of...” “remote peoples...” This highlights the need to expel colonisers from the colonised’ perspectives. As Fanon wrote, “the settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus, the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders, but the history of his own nation. ([1961] 1963, 40).

This history—now excavated by Black Audio—reveals the origins of nationality, a construct deeply rooted in contemporary Britain. As Hall stressed, the British Empire has shaped Britain’s history (2001). This elucidates the presence of Imperial’ remnants such as statues portraits, paintings, or texts, which create a sense of temporal continuity. Some of the

statues are Queen Ann at St Paul's Cathedral, the Great War Cenotaph in Central London, dedicated to the "memory of the glorious dead," still playing an important role on Remembrance Sunday, and portraits as "the Secret of England's Greatness" by Jones Barker, depicting Queen Victoria giving a bible to an African soldier. This typifies the imposition of Britain's mythomoteurs (Schudson 1993) on colonial subjects.

For Michael Schudson, before memory can manifest in our minds, it needs to be disseminated in "[d]ocuments, memorials, commemorations, rituals, slogans, or songs (1993, 52), which help configure mythomoteurs. These remnants are—in the words of the *Expeditions II*—"the nation's palimpsests," showing the presence of the past in the present and symbolising memory's transcultural and performative dimension. As Max Silverman signals, memory is palimpsestic (2013).<sup>26</sup> For Silverman, "the relationship between present and past [...] takes the form of a superimposition and interaction of different temporal traces to constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest" (2013, 3). Additionally, memory is staged figuratively and is characterised by overlapping traces that intersect (2013). Homi Bhabha also referred to colonial identity as a palimpsest (1994).

In the deciphering of the palimpsest's layers, the interstices undergo transformation. Here, the relationship between images and textual information is viewed through a diverse lens, as it is narrated by identities experiencing "[h]istories of exclusion" and living in the "[h]interlands." An example of a history of exclusion is Black Audio's reminder of the race riots taking place in Liverpool in 1919, which symbolised the realisation by mainstream Britain of black presence in the country. By mentioning "Liverpool 1919..." Black Audio makes a twofold claim. On the one hand, it deflects the myth that the Windrush generation marked the first black presence in the United Kingdom, and, on the other hand, it shows that black British identities extend beyond London. These ideas are expanded in *A Family Called Abrew* and *A Touch of the Tar Brush* (chapter five).

This exemplifies how Black Audio stages memory in the interstices between the Empire's official history and hegemonic myths. At the same time, it allows Black Audio to privilege knowledge retrieved subjectively to narrate their version of "colonial fantasy," creating a history that is no longer conceived as "practical common sense..." since, as their excavation demonstrates, it is a construction. That is why *Expeditions II* finishes with the

---

<sup>26</sup> Sigmund Freud also suggested the idea of palimpsestic memory in "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad" ([1924] 1925). He uses the metaphor of the different layers of meaning in memory and their links to time.



sentence “[b]ecoming history” and the notion that “[n]arratives never die.” These two concepts reveal how Black Audio has produced alternative versions of history.

*Expeditions I* and *Expeditions II* demonstrate that the boundary between the past and the present, and between memory and history, is blurred. As Fanon wrote, “each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it” ([1961] 1963, 187). Each generation brings to light their concerns and construct counter-narratives. This process enables the use of the past “[w]ith the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope” (Fanon 1968, 187). The *Expeditions* series initiates Black Audio’s future endeavours. In the next section, *Time and Judgement* traces a chronology of black British’ episodes showing the consequences of neglecting history and memory.

### 2.3. The Call of Time: *Time and Judgement: a Diary of Exile of 400 years*

*Time and Judgement* narrates the adventures of a diarist, Time, who had been exiled four hundred years, and has recorded the hardships of the African diaspora.<sup>27</sup> The diarist, also a time-traveller, focuses on the years from 1980 to 1987, connecting events taking place in Britain to other parts of the diaspora. The diarist follows the commands of Queen Judgement. The work is an essay film, including montages constructed with archival and documentary footage, which acts as the diarist’s found footage. It is characterised by the integration of various mediums such as theatre, music, poetry, and painting alongside the archival material. The work is structured around three primary spaces: Queen Judgment’s realm, an interlude space where contemporary social issues are discussed and the years the time-traveller visits.

Its narrative follows the parameters of African oral narratological traditions, employing techniques as storytelling or the figure of the griot, requiring viewers to move beyond a European lens. For Michael Darvell, this serves to offer insights into the present through an African lens (1989). According to Diawara, *Time and Judgement* is a diasporic narrative cantered on the African diaspora (1993) and giving Africans “[a] sense of their own history (Malcolm 1989a, 23). *Time and Judgement*’s experimentalism was possible through the workshop structure (Shabazz 1989), as explained in the previous chapter. According to Imruh Bakari Caesar, “nobody in Britain has theorised or dared to talk about *Time and Judgement*” (2024, n.p). In this analysis, I engage with *Time and Judgement* to highlight its important contribution to British cinema.

---

<sup>27</sup> I use the pronouns they/them to refer to Time because their gender is not specified.

The figure of the time-traveller or diarist is close to that of a griot. In West African cultures, the Griot is a storyteller, a historian, a living-archive, a carrier of tradition and the consciousness of time. The Griot carries the genealogy of a family or society, passing down social memory to successive generations, which allows them to revisit their own history and navigate various time frameworks.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 9. The Time-Traveller Ready to Visit the Years 1980-1987 in *Time and Judgement***

According to Ruth Finnegan, “griots specialised in shouting praises and reciting genealogies and had some kind of attachment to the various freeborn lineages” (2012,98). This freeborn lineage explains the griot in *Time and Judgement* moves freely across different historical moments, accesses Queen Judgement’s realm, and even materialises to invigilate individuals. For Ebine Simon Adewale, griots, as Kings’ confident, access the realm of Kings and Queens. This is why Time obeys Queen Judgement’s commands. In African cultures, griots are also the artists in the community who, “safeguard the oral tradition, music and poetry, because the society depends on them for the oral narration and performance, conservation and transmission of their history and other oral works from one generation to another” (Adewale 2019, 5). The late Benjamin Zephaniah, who appears in *Time and Judgement* is an instance of a modern griot. The griot, Time, incorporates in their narration “materials, ancient poetic and heroic texts, pre-colonial, contemporary social and political histories of their regions” (Adewale 2019, 6) to portray the history and memory of the African diaspora. In the film, Time is the griot who can access time since they embody it, as his face, a clock, reveals.

Considering Time as a living archive introduces the concept of cultural memory. For Michael Rothberg, there is a difference between cultural memory and collective memory since “[c]ollective memory at most attains to three generations, cultural memory reaches far back

<sup>28</sup> Ceddo’s time-traveller precedes Black Audio’s angel of history in *The Last Angel of History* and the time-traveller in *Memory Room 451* (chapter nine).

into the past” (2009, 62). This difference is seen in *Time and Judgement* through Time, who carries with them the memory of the African diaspora dating back four hundred years. Jan Assman and John Czaplicka (1995) further differentiate communicative or everyday memory as a type of cultural memory. Communicative memory are “[t]hose varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications. These varieties, which Halbwachs gathered and analysed under the concept of collective memory, constitute the field of oral history” (1995, 126).

Communicative memory and oral history are constrained by a temporal horizon, which “[d]oes not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals three or four generations” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 127). According to these authors, the means to stabilise communicative memory is through cultural formations. They argue that “[c]ultural memory is maintained through [...] rites, monuments and institutional communication” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 127). Time has carried communicative memory for four hundred years because they lack a fixed point to deposit the communicative memory they carry given the lack of representation of black Britons.

This notion links *Time and Judgement* to the productions of this chapter, as the griot excavates the past to create a space for their memory. As Werner Sollors suggests, “when one traces the history of an ethnic group through time, one is not simultaneously, in the same sense, tracing the history of a ‘culture’: the elements of the present culture of that ethnic group have [...] a continual organisational existence with boundaries (criteria membership) that despite modifications have marked off a continuing unit” (1986, 27-28). Time aims to awaken the black communities struggling between 1980-1987. For this, Time travels to these years, showing images of the African diaspora which serves as postmemories for those living between 1980 and 1987.. Time’s belief in the possibility of change is exemplified when they debate, “What shall I do for this next generation?” Time, bound by Queen Judgement’s command, is running out of time to counter the amnesia of black communities.

The narrative starts in Queen Judgement’s realm. She is accompanied by a lion depicting Haile Selassie I, the Emperor of Ethiopia, and Messiah for Rastafarianism, known as the Lion of Judah. The use of the colours red, gold, and green throughout the work functions as a further homage to Rastafarian symbolism. Queen Judgement expresses concern over how love is dying on Earth. Her scales with two weights—one with a heart, representing love—and the other with money—epitomising power—where power has more weight exemplifies this. She wants to issue a final warning to humanity. As Time claims, “you listen not in your time.”



**Figure 10. Queen Judgement with her Scales and the Lion in *Time and Judgement***

Time starts their account in April 1980 in Zimbabwe, featuring footage of Robert Gabriel, the first prime minister of the independent Zimbabwe swearing that he would be “[f]aithful and bear true allegiance” to the free nation. Time introduces related footage depicting the independence of Mozambique and apartheid in South Africa, where power is winning over love. After this, Time uses their autobiographical memory and informs the viewer that “[f]rom this land formerly the land of Ethiopia now called Africa, I was stolen and scattered by pirates. Millions didn’t make it across the Atlantic but millions more survived [...] you took my language.” The pronoun ‘I’ accentuates the idea of Time embodying the African Diaspora, while acknowledging their communicative memory. As they further add:

Let me tell you about a white practice, check the library of the Europeans of Europe, you will find all entries concerning Europeans in South Africa, in Asia [...] but look on Africa or Africans, the only entries relate to the continent itself, there are no entries on the Africans overseas, there are no entries on Africans who have been reaped from the country mysteriously disappeared.

In this same year, Time highlights the inflow of Jamaicans migrating to Ethiopia, an event linked to Rastafarianism and the believe in the return to Ethiopia as the homeland of the diaspora. The connection between Ethiopia and Jamaica was reinforced in the sixties with the visit of Haile Selassie to Jamaica. Time also shows the lack of freedom and systemic injustice faced by children in the USA. After this, the narrative transitions, guided by Time’s voice-over and the song “London Bridge” by Mighty Sparrow, to London Bridge. Sparrow’s lyrics, “England was a mighty place many years gone by, now England is a troubled place, please don’t ask me why” allude to the former might of the Empire contrasted with the present

social challenges in Britain, symbolising the imminent downfall of Babylon for the African diaspora and the processes of decolonisation and unworlding.<sup>29</sup>

According to Barry Chevannes, “repatriation [to Africa] is one of the cornerstones of Rastafari belief” (1990, 129). As *Time* shows London Bridge and the Thames, they start talking about slavery and colonialism, being water the connecting element. *Time* emphasises the traumatic memory behind these events through footage of the Empire and how it created a “[n]ation who hears me but hears me not, whose wealth and power come from my sweat and blood like your forefathers’ and foremothers’, you still turn your back.” *Time* acknowledges, as did *Expeditions I* and *II* how the present is built on the remnants of slavery and colonialism.

Rothberg’s concept of multidirectional memory finds resonance in *Time and Judgement*, where numerous histories and traumas affecting the African Diaspora coexist for centuries. *Time and Judgement* evidences, to borrow Rothberg’s words, that “[m]emory is multidirectional but each direction to the past functions differently” (2009, 8).<sup>30</sup> For him, “multidirectional memory functions as screen memories do at the individual and autobiographical levels, but at the collective and historical levels, and diverse disturbing memories are juxtaposed (Rothberg 2009), which explains the form of *Time and Judgement*. Given that memory is multidirectional, *Time*’s words resonate with an angry tone, “I am the circle of history you try to erase but cannot,” because they remember everything.

*Time* introduces 1981 through the song “13 Dead and Nothing Said,” by John Osborne, exploiting their ability to bound multidirectional memory and prosthetic memory to remember the fire of New Cross, the Black People’s Day of Action and the riots that took place that year using footage from Kuumba’s *Blood Ah Go Run* (1982). This intertextual strategy showcases both the many layers that can be encoded within a work and the palimpsestic functioning of memory within the diaspora. It also underscores the need for black British communities to expand their prosthetic visual archive, an important commitment for Ceddo as I explained in the previous chapter. In fact, prosthetic memory is

---

<sup>29</sup> Babylon refers to the different forms of oppression and injustices the black diaspora faced such as colonialism or racism. As Chevannes argued, “the Rastafari, ever since the movement’s rise in the early 1930s, have held to the belief that they and all Africans in the diaspora are but exiles in ‘Babylon’, destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to ‘Zion,’ that is, Africa, the land of our ancestors” (1990, 134).

<sup>30</sup> This view is similar to Hannah Arendt’s. For her history is not linear, “a phenomenon as the Jewish question and antisemitism could become the catalytic agent for first, the Nazi movement, then a world war, and finally the establishment of death factories” (1962, viii). Therefore, memory is multidirectional and *Time* can access it.

characterised by the ability to build links from the contemporary position of a subject (Landsberg 2004) and this is what *Time and Judgement* does.

Time indicates that “[u]prisings kept coming all over Britain, white youths too revolted.” White youths uniting in demonstrations exhibit the solidarity with black communities, denoting why Time believes that love will win. For Time this solidarity was particularly evident in Liverpool, “[a] seaport rich from the slave route.”<sup>31</sup> During the inter-riot period from Brixton to the long hot summer of 1981, Bob Marley’s death shocked black communities worldwide adding to the anger of the riots. While Time narrates this development in a voice-over, the work introduces an image of Africa being held together by two hands, symbolising Marley’s role as the prophet, musician and griot connecting the diaspora through his music. After this image, Marley’s “Redemption Song” is played and its lyric “my hand was made strong by the hand of the Almighty / we forward in this generation triumphally” provides more meaning to the visual construction. Time also shows Ronald Regan’s assassination attempt in March 1981. By presenting first events related to the Black Diaspora, Time evidences their commitment to it, by giving it a space unlike mainstream media, and how they do not follow the laws of linear time. There is a further connection since Thatcher and Reagan had a strong political and ideological affinity, and Time, by including this in their narration, warns the British Prime Minister. The production grants the viewer time to forge this idea and instead of transitioning to 1982, the first interval appears.

The space remains consistent in the upcoming intervals, featuring a wall telephone, a wall words on it, and an individual reading a newspaper, who will turn out to be Time invigilating the characters. They are artists who re-enact dramatic scenarios, recite poems or sing, always referring to the day-to-day struggles of black Britons. The artists that participate are Victor Romero Evans, Nefertiti Gayle, Anum Lyapo, Angela Wynter, Frederik Williams, and Benjamin Zephaniah. They are modern Griots, belonging to the world of the audience rather than that of Queen Judgment or Time, making the audience relate to them. The wall serves as a recorder of history, with the words summarising important events of the different years. The words are “work” “genocide” “war” “drought” “famine” “work, “Thatcher” “Regan” “earthquake” “suicide” “AIDS” “fucking world” “drug” and “exploitation.” Their inscription on the wall further exemplifies palimpsestic memory (Silvermann 2013), for future generations reflecting on these years.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Riot* (2000) by Smoking Dog Films encapsulates the history before and after the riots of 1981 in Toxteth (Liverpool).



**Figure 11. Telephone Wall with Some of the Words in *Time and Judgement***

Time narrates 1982: as they claim, “after the storm comes the calm. Life goes on in the rogueries.” 1982 was a year of processing or comprehension using Jacques Lacan temporalisation of logical time (1988). Chronologically, time advanced but psychologically black communities needed time to make sense of the events that took place. No further events concerning the Western world are narrated, but Time reminds the viewer that “life goes on” in other parts of the world, such as Africa. Here conflicts between Angola and South Africa persisted. As Christopher Pycroft wrote, “Angola was one of the hot spots of Cold War confrontation in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. The brutal Angola war [was] fuelled by intervention of South Africa” (1964, 242). The interval reappears, featuring a sketch where one of the characters is talking on the phone, requesting money. This confirms Queen Judgement’s worry.

Time transports the viewer back to the United Kingdom in 1983, focusing on the alleged suicide of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington’s police station, “or so the story goes, but the people thought differently.”<sup>32</sup> Colin Roach’s case reflects the challenge of discerning the truth. For Michel Foucault, each society has “its own regime of truth,” (1977) their norms to determine what is acceptable or not as well as methods and practices to apply to those who dispute it. Understanding a society’s regime of truth is key to grasp its *Zeitgeist*. For Foucault, truth cannot be located outside, in a transcendent position; it is constructed as discourses internal to a society. The truth behind Roach’s story requires scrutiny. As Foucault noted, “power is not only repressive; it is productive: it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (1977, 194).

---

<sup>32</sup> Colin Roach and its significance for black Britons was documented by Isaac Julien in *Who Killed Colin Roach?* (1983), his first film while he was still a student at Central St. Martins. Benjamin Zephaniah also appears in Julien’s documentary.

Time ventures to Africa, where their narration challenges established Western common sense about religion shake. Time introduces the leader of the US Black Panthers, Kwame Touré, also known as Stokely Carmichael, delivering a speech in Uganda claiming how “[a]nyone who has a personal understanding of Jesus Christ knows that he never saw Europe. Europe is not mentioned in the bible until the very end.” This foregrounds the African Diaspora—I will expand on Carmichael’s influence in Britain in chapter eight. Footage of South African’s invasion of Angola is shown, followed by the third interval where Zephaniah reminds the viewer of Mikey Smith’s death, a Jamaican poet who was “stoned to death.” For Zephaniah, “it is not that easy to make a poet dead.” This interval draws a parallel between Colin Roach and Mikey Smith, who live through the consciousness of Time Zephaniah’s words.

After the interval, Time showcases the US intervention in Lebanon and the revolutions of Cuba and Grenada. Despite Grenada gaining independence from Britain in 1974, the US intervened in 1983, even if Grenada was supposed to be “protected by its majesty song”, referring to the Commonwealth. As Time argues, “the people of Grenada stepped broadly into the future [by gaining independence], now [they] find themselves back in the past.” Time signals how the US has damaged the African diaspora but reassures the viewer by declaring, “America the time of your judgement must come.”

In the interval, Zephaniah reminds the viewer of the events of 1983 and what was happening in Britain: “Great Britain drank more tea and heard more jokes from Lenny Henry. When I look what do I see? Nothing changed and yet a dream.” Zephaniah’s allusions to a dream are linked to Jean Fisher’s claim that art addresses the past for the future and reveals truth, particularly in the context of the diaspora, where “the universally felt aporias of collective human existence, and in which memory and exile may found new narratives of hope,” (2008, 210) can be found. Through his references to people in exile, Zephaniah how there is a future where love outweighs power. This interpretation elucidates why, after this interval, Queen Judgement’s scales appear to remind Time that they are running out of time.

1984 is introduced by a video of Thatcher to the voice-over of Time, indicating that in this year, Carmichael was banned from entering Britain. Time asks the viewer, “what do you see? What I see? Now you know [sic] who who is.” This encourages the viewer to decipher the meaning behind who is the wrongdoer in this situation: Carmichael or Thatcher’s government. Another interval emerges with two women; the telephone rings, there is an emergency call. This suggests again that Time is running out of time. From this interval, Time takes us to someone delivering a speech who claims, “I have never marked the



Holocaust, but I ask you: if six million of them died, how many of us have died, nobody making our case before the world?” This speaker diverges from Eurocentric conceptions of trauma. As Rothberg wrote, “the growing obsession with the Holocaust serves as a screen memory that blocks access to the more recent and more troubling complicity with colonial violence” (2009, 196). It hinders the study of other stories of violence, as the ones Time is introducing.

This indicates a departure from the Holocaust as the most important Anglo-European trauma. As La Capra noted, “slavery like the Holocaust, nonetheless presents, for a people, problems of traumatization, severe oppression, a divided heritage, the question of a founding trauma, the forging of identities in the present” (2001, 174).<sup>33</sup> 1984 concludes with John Barnes, one of England’s greatest (black) British players, scoring for England against Brazil juxtaposed with archival footage of the Notting Hill Carnival. These two moments evidence the contribution of the African diaspora to England, illustrating the “[i]rresistible race of multi-racial Britain” (Phillips and Phillips 1998).

Time depicts the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1985, showing how they do not follow chronological time, and reminds the viewer that “Ethiopians got to defend themselves from invaders. Who would win? The dictator of dictators or the Kings of kings?” Time portrays this invasion to display how “[f]ifty years later it is the same fight against fascism in South African, where the blood of thousands of innocents was held.” These innocents are children, as *We are the Elephant* (1987) explores in chapter eight. By including images of Italy invading Ethiopia and referring to fascist South Africa, Time builds a connection between fascism and slavery. Time shifts to Malcom X’s visit to London, in the year where “[t]he fire was hot. Uprising came again in Birmingham, Brixton, and Tottenham.” The riots of 1985 will be investigated in chapter six with *Handsworth Songs* (1986) and *The People’s Account* (1986).

Given the dynamic of love and power, the riots are failed act of love, following Sara Ahmed. As she observes, the riots disturb “the national ideal as they reveal that love has failed to deliver its promise of harmony between others (2004,138). After this, images of Britain and different parts of the world burning are shown, signalling failed acts of love

---

<sup>33</sup> For authors offering a pluralistic approach to trauma see Dominik LaCapra 2001; Roger Luckhurst 2008; Richard Crownshaw 2010; Mick Broderick and Antonio Traverso 2010; Irene Visser 2011; Stef Craps 2013; Gert Buelens, Samuel Durrant and Robert Egelston 2014.

worldwide The final interval in 1985 introduces a man asking for money while Time invigilates him, highlighting the failed act of love.

In 1986, there are allusions to further wars: “America leads the world in technological darkness, riding the horse of death. Their wars increase” “in the Soviet Union, nuclear catastrophe”—referring to Chernobyl. “Everywhere, the gun reaches madness” “As they push mankind closer and closer to the edge.” Time counters this gloomy outlook by portraying the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the downfall of Mussolini, disclosing how Babylon is ready to fall down as the West is destroying itself. A video of Haile Selassie underlines this idea. After his exile in Bath, he returned to Ethiopia in 1941 claiming that “even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, David will still beat Goliath.” For Time, “Europe paid the price for its support of Mussolini in Ethiopia”, Britain, the USA, and Europe turned their backs to Nelson Mandela, and the same judgement will follow them. This year’s interval includes an original song about money: “money, money, money that is what you worry about,” while Time reads a newspaper reporting South Africa’s apartheid. The characters are worried about money while love is dying in South Africa. As the characters leave, Time picks up the ringing phone and leaves the interval immediately. The interval is shown without characters, leaving the audience pondering whether love triumphed over power.

Clinton McCrobin’s death in Wolverhampton sets 1987 in motion. As Time remarks “another police story. When will it end?” Bernie Grant entered the British political landscape, highlighting his links to Africa. Time reminds the audience of the centennial of Marcus Garvey’s birth and his teachings, “no one knows when the hour of Africa’s Redemption cometh. It is in the wind. It is coming. One day, like a storm, it will be here.” Through these events, Time indicates that love will outweigh power since “[B]abylon’s bridge is falling,” and more events are happening foregrounding the Black Diaspora.

The final interval is introduced, marking the culmination of the seven intervals. As the work approaches its end, the frequency of these intervals increases, emphasising Time’s urgency. In the last interval, a character addresses the viewer, “where will you go, my friend, when the last blues ends? When reality makes you see what being black is? Will you stand with static fear?” The character allows for a few moments for reflection before continuing, “[y]ou time, my time clock, time looking backward, never dying. People together seizing time as night descends and the last blues commence. We are the people. We must be the people.” Time’s reflection on these years helps black communities worldwide better understand their present and past. “We are the people” denotes that if the people in the diaspora look backward, they will realise they have the key for the uncertainties of the future,

as the discussions I introduce in chapter nine indicate. This is achieved by tracing their own genealogy: travelling through their own memory and sizing their position in their time.

After this interval, Time returns to Queen Judgement and proclaims, “eight years have passed, and I have seen the sign of those years. The circle of time and history closes. . . . Over the beast will come the reign of peace, love, and justice.” These words, after observing the end of 1987, reflect Time’s optimism: Babylon will fall down, as the song “Tight Rope” by Steel Pulse highlights, “and as long as Babylon is my foe, I will have hope in my soul.” Interceding for humanity, Time asserts, “with the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, we accept the blinded side of the future” Time is the key to the future. This is stressed by how as soon as Time utters these words, Queen Judgement’s scales change, showing love winning over power. *Time and Judgement* experimentally illustrates how accessing the past is a necessary step to understand present experiences of black Britons, who have a relation to their past and other black communities in the Black Diaspora. Additionally, it reflects on important events affecting the Black Diaspora with a transcultural and global perspective, introducing events have not been explored in British media and that highlight how different stories of violence co-exist.

## 2.4. Conclusion

The works in this chapter return to the past and excavate black British narratives which have been overlooked or distorted. By doing so, the films manage to place an emphasis on both the importance of the past to understand the present and the interrogation of the archive. The narratives they uncover challenge the representations of black Britons traditionally found in British media, combat visual amnesia, and retrieve a past that has been hidden to black Britons or has been forgotten.

The four works use instances of violent episodes affecting black communities internationally to indicate how there is a connection within the diverse black communities in the diaspora and how these events resonate in the present. Additionally, the productions underline how there is not just one black British position since several territories have an impact on the construction of identities, combating the idea of the monolithic black subject and advocating for a diversity of experiences.

The films have also introduced three different instances of black British experimental cinema, indicating how the works by Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa fit into the narrative of black British experimentalism. The works demonstrate how memory is multidirectional

and palimpsestic, and they utilise postmemory and prosthetic memory to counter misrepresentation. By delving into the past, they gather material to challenge stereotypes and construct their own identities from their perspective away from enforced mainstream representations. This exercise of redefinition of identities is further elaborated in the two upcoming chapters.



### CHAPTER 3. THE MULTIFACETED BLACK BRITISH EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

“There is a real need to reconstruct. Our lives have been fragmented and our relationship to mainstream cinema isn’t one where we can afford to get bored of hearing the word desires, because none of our desires have come even near to being fulfilled”  
(Fusco, interview with Sankofa 1988, 37).

This chapter is the first of two dedicated to deconstructing, constructing, and re-constructing distorted ideas on black British communities. The two chapters demonstrate how “[w]e are now entering the next phase, in which we actually begin to recognise the extraordinary complexity of ethnic and cultural differences” (Hall 1988, 33). However, in this chapter there is a focus on the different positions occupied by intersectional subjectivities like black homosexuality and black womanhood. These identities illustrate the multifaceted nature of black British experiences through a re-evaluation of stereotypes about sexual identities while inaugurating new modes of representation. This chapter and the subsequent one follow Stuart Hall’s command: “it is to the diversity, not the homogeneity, of black experience that we must now give our undivided creative attention” (Hall 1993, 111-113).

The works I include here challenged misconceptions by establishing a dialogue in past and present registers, which manages to address positive and negative images disseminated about black British communities without creating naïve or victimised representations of black Britons. In fact, the works speak from the experiences of black Britons and not for their experiences (Mercer 1994), signalling the subverted and fresh tropes the productions present. By discussing *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986), *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* (1987) *Perfect Image?* (1988) by Sankofa and *Omega Rising* (1988) by Ceddo this chapter presents an intersection between black Britishness, homosexuality, womanhood, and religion—as seen in Rastafarianism. These works challenge codified representations by British media and offer a reconfiguration of identities.

*The Passion of Remembrance* deals with the diversity of black British experiences, the uses of memory and how the past, which is a reconstruction, is interpreted differently by each generation. It emphasises ideas related to sexuality and gender. I explore this production by seeing how public and private memories interact in different spaces (family, individual or allegorical) revealing a dynamic between forgetting and remembering. I study the work through ideas relates to the oppositional gaze (hooks 1992), highlighting rebellion and

resistance towards white-informed ideas and earlier black generations, who did not acknowledge women's role in the black struggle. I also explore the work using the ideas of active forgetting—intentionally destroying memory—and active remembering—fighting for memory's preservation (Assmann 2008). I use the idea of screen memories (Freud [1889] 1955b; Roth 2011), where important memories are covered by the unconscious, to bring to light black Briton's forgotten memories.

*This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* challenges stereotypes about AIDS. Instead of following the narrative of fear and guilt disseminated by advertisements like *Monolith* (1987a) and *Iceberg* (1987b) did, it encourages love and desire avoiding the stigmatisation of homosexuality because of its link to AIDS. I explore this work by taking AIDS as an example of a moral panic (Cohen 1972), where the media portrays AIDS as a moral panic and puts the blame on a community (homosexuals). I also advocate for the importance of deep listening (Oliveros 2005), which implies listening to alternative versions of the past. I also offer readings of the male body, linking it with homoeroticism and the gaze in cinema (Mulvey 1975).

*Perfect Image?* counters the beauty standards imposed on black women signalling that there is no such thing a perfect image since each woman is unique and needs to create their own self-definition. I read this work by introducing stereotypes imposed on women's physical appearance. I also use the concepts of mimicry (Bhabha 1994), indicating how black women in Britain imitate European standards of beauty to their detriment and ideas related to representation (Hall 1997), which takes place in the mind, emphasising the mental work needed on the part of women to put an end to the myths they consume and reconstruct their self-images.

*Omega Rising* explores the role of women in the Rastafarian movement and how they have contributed to it. It challenges the idea that Rasta women are confined to a domestic space and relegated to the background. It signals how women are practical by providing children with alternative education, making sure traditions are kept, working, and emancipating themselves mentally and spiritually. I explore the work by presenting Rastafarianism for women as an opportunity for liberation where they can become counter-hegemonic forces in their family spaces and challenging stereotypes about it (Christensen 2014; Edmonds 2012). I apply Astrid Erll's idea of family memory (2011a), where she highlights the importance of memory ties in families. I discuss Rastafari symbols such as dreadlocks, which are an expression of ideology (Mercer 1994). These works contribute to a resignification of black British issues linked to gender and sexuality. Investigating these four

films together indicates how diverse aesthetics of black British filmmaking can convey a powerful and related message.

### 3.1. A Domain of Passionate Identities: *The Passion of Remembrance*

*The Passion of Remembrance* portrays different perspectives on black Britishness within the Baptiste family. Maggie, a young black British woman in the eighties, embodies contemporary attitudes on black Britishness, while her brother Tony is influenced by black British paradigms of the seventies. Their parents, as first-generation migrants, offer a diverse outlook. Throughout the narrative, conversations among the Baptistes, as well as between Maggie and her friends (Michael, Gary, and Lou) ideas concerning race, sexuality, and gender arise. These dialogues are interwoven with an allegorical landscape where a woman and a man further discuss these themes and moments where the characters recollect their experiences. The work is an essay film distinguished by the blending of distinct registers, such as dramatic narrative, documentary, and allegorical tableau. It alternates between the narrative space of the Baptistes, the allegorical landscape, and the characters' private memories. The blending of archival footage found footage—as the one Maggie exhibits in a montage she creates—and reconstructions marks the work. Its soundtrack, with superimposed diegetic and nondiegetic sounds, reveals the cultural atmosphere of the eighties, adding emphasises to the carefully constructed visual track, which gives a glimpse of what it meant to be young, black, and British in the eighties' London.

In *Territories*, Sankofa highlighted the importance of writing new black *histories* and *herstories* interacting with each other, a need fulfilled by *The Passion of Remembrance*. For Kobena Mercer, the film breaks with binary representations and the burden of representation, as shown by the fragmented narrative voices and perspectives (1990). *The Passion of Remembrance* was deliberately controversial, as Sankofa did not want to repeat discussions around black British identities that had circulated before (Fusco 1988; Curtis 2007), which make the work a departure into a new territory (Pines 1986). Originally called *Policing in London*, Sankofa realised that people “[d]on’t want to see just another documentary about black people and the police” (Lipman 1986, 21), leading them to a new direction in black British independent cinema (Paskin 1986; Mercer 1988b).

Sankofa portrayed the intimate relationships within communities (Attille 1988) through a fictional narrative centered on black stories (Jackson and Rasenberg 1988), including issues of history, sexuality, and gender (Glaessner 1986; Diawara 1993), which



reflected the diversity and internal conflicts of black communities (Mack-Nataf 1986). In fact, *The Passion of Remembrance* is the first feature film produced by a workshop depicting an Afro-Caribbean gay couple (Bourne [1998] 2001) and exploring a queer past (Rodriguez 2021). It challenged stereotypes and signalled how there is not a “[h]omogenous or monolithic black community, but rather different communities which together constitute the total black experience” (Pines et al. 1986, 94).

As for its form, it has been described as a diasporic film (Ezra 2005; Petty 2008). For Wheeler Winston Dixon, it is “[r]eminiscent of Godard’s Dziga Vertov political films” (1998, 64), which highlights its European avant-garde influences (Williamson 1988). This led to the film being condemned as too elitist, political, and distant from ordinary people (Malcolm 1986; MacCabe 1988). The work provoked diverse responses in magazines, journals, newspapers, and viewers. Some voices failed to understand Sankofa’s agenda, taking the work as too intense, hardly entertaining (Totterdell 1986; Balgun 1986), and not portraying true representations.

For Colin Walter, a caller of Channel 4, the work was not a true representation since “[t]he filmmaker for some reason concentrated on sexuality, which seemed out of context!” (1986) and for writer Maud Sulter, women do not debate crucial questions in the work (1986). My analysis disputes this idea since Maggie is the most socially engaged character. Some critics such as Louis Heaton indicate how *She’s Gotta Have It* by Spike Lee handles race and sex correctly unlike *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986). Horace Ové counters this argument by claiming that “making a film is like making a meal. You can either go for nouvelle cuisine which only a few people can enjoy, or you can make a McDonalds. *She’s Gotta Have it* is a McDonalds. Some British black film directors are trying a little harder to make entertaining films” (1988, 26).

The film was praised by progressive, underground, cultural, political magazines and newspapers. For Virginia Dignan, it explores fundamental aspects of the black experience in the past and the present (1986). Others underscore how it handles unresolved political issues of the last three decades (Mack-Nataf 1986; Mercer 1986; Issue 1986). It was praised for showing various black British experiences away from stereotypes, with an emphasis on the stories of black women and black homosexuals (Brown 1986; Bergson 1987). The work’s soundtrack was equally praised (Lipman 1986; Williamson 1986). *The Passion of Remembrance* exhibits—not without contradiction—the diverse registers, layers, and stories comprising black British experiences, making it transgress and destruct established misconceptions which I explore in my analysis to underline its significance.

The work is divided into three intertwined levels, which explains the work's tonal changes and shifting modes. The individual level comprises the personal and private memories of each character; the familial level involves interactions within the family; and the public space portrays social injustices affecting all levels. The public sphere offers montages with archival material of British social protests, such as the riots of 1981, demonstrations by the Gay Youth Movement, the South Asian Women Strike, the Miner's Strike, or marches advocating for police inquiries around Colin Roach's death. These protests are referenced in the other two levels, creating a collective repository of images and memories for the viewer (Lynne1991). The allegorical tableau is part of this third level (the public space). In this tableau, the characters are unnamed making them archetypal representations. This highlights how they cannot fully embody the variety of black British experiences.



**Figure 12.** *The Passion of Remembrance's* Allegorical Space

In the allegorical territory, the work discloses the black struggle of the sixties and seventies to indicate how it pushed black women to the margins. The woman accounts for the higher number of interventions, suggesting how the space may be a product of her imagination to express all she could not in earlier decades. This is seen in how she interrupts the man and, at times, does not allow him to speak. The woman resembles Maggie, who challenge's her brother's ideas.

*The Passion of Remembrance* begins in the public sphere with news footage of protests, recorded using a deep focus angle that forces the viewer to pay attention to both the background and the foreground. The slow-motion edit as women appear denotes the importance of herstories in the work. The nondiegetic sound of tolling bells reminds viewers that death is ever lurking, as Colin Roach's death signals. This beginning underlines the coexistence of diverse memories in the public sphere. The next sequence introduces a talking-head interview of the woman in the allegorical domain, claiming that "she believed in doing what she could on her own home front." Here, she explains her perspective, which helps the viewer navigate her argument. As she underlines, she was aware of the black struggle in the

US and “[l]ocal and national issues here which are no less important.” This challenges the myth that women were not aware of the black struggle. They were forced to have a passive role. They would support and listen to men’s needs but remained unacknowledged. Sankofa addresses their lack of visibility by placing them first and allowing them to guide the narrative in the three levels. In fact, in the allegorical domain, the woman appears first.

The man is introduced through an over-the shoulder shot from the woman’s perspective, hiding his face. This shot’s construction advances how the woman dominates the space. The next sequence shows a talking-head intervention of the man of the allegorical space, delivering a speech about the police harassment of black men and the lack of “[p]eaceful co-existence.” His constant repetition of the pronouns “me,” “mine”, “my,” signals how men believed they were the only ones taking part in the struggle. The same structure—taking-head interview—reveals both the man and the woman. The man seems to be speaking in front of an audience whereas the woman is not. This marks how Sankofa places the viewer as the witnesses of the woman’s account, acknowledging her.

In the narrative, the family is watching a television contest with two black Britons—a man and a woman—as participants. They have distinct opinions on the contestants, revealing their dissimilar experiences. The use of light indicates that the sequence is highly staged, as if they were in a television set themselves about to embody stereotypes perpetuated by previous series such as *The Fosters* (1977), *No Problem!* (1985) or *Desmond’s* (1989). Tony argues that the participants should have prepared better. Maggie’s mother suggests they did ok: “they are the first ones to get this far.” For her, at least, they are participating. The father has been highly influenced by clichés of black Britons: “the only thing he looked up on a map was the quickest route from the West Indies to England.” Tony further indicates that the woman was no better. By making a distinction between the man and the woman, he positions himself as the counterpart of the man in the allegorical space. Maggie counters all of the other opinions by emphasising how “[e]very time a black face appears, we think they have to represent the whole race. We haven’t got the space to get it wrong, that’s the problem.” This sequence signals the commonplace opinions of different generations on black Britons and the need to learn about one’s own identity to critically examine stereotypes.

This family scene is linked to public memory through Maggie’s mum, who tells her that one of her friends’ sons has been found dead. The work links this death to Colin Roach’s. As her mum delivers the news, Maggie looks directly at the camera, underlining her concern through a close-up—as in a soap opera—giving dramatism to the scene and reminding viewers that the struggle is outside and not on a television programme. The news delivered to Maggie

and the close-up indicate that she is the link of union between public and private memories. As the protagonist, she has been granted a special consciousness, and the camera focuses on her throughout the film. As the close-up is on her, two voice-overs of a man and a woman debate the piece of news: “who is to be punished...?” “Our lives are not debatable...” “We can’t be killed....” “Who will hear me now as I remember and talk of remembering...?” “But we can prepare for the last....” These voices encourage Maggie to be an active agent in the public sphere. This scene is overtaken by the allegorical framework, which suggests how the issues the women and the man will discuss need to be resolved so that they can unite force against the oppression they both endure. The woman is ready to listen since “[s]he came to terms with some of the different visions the landscape threw up,” but the man does not acknowledge her perspective, he feels lost but does not want her to help him.

Their argument illustrates the divisions within black Britons concerning gender. As she argues, “you do not remember my face, but you remember the sound of your own voice.” The woman indicates how she was present in the struggle even if he does not remember, which highlights her oppression as a black woman in terms of family, work, sexual expression, self-representation, or self-image (Hill Collins [1990] 2002). In *The Passion of Remembrance*, it becomes evident how “[m]any black men have internalised the controlling images applied to black women” (Hill Collins [1990] 2002, 148). For the man, the woman is a dangerous feminist, who is deviating the black struggle with her feminism. As he maintains, “you are in the streets with your black politics; you’ve probably not spoken to one black man.” The woman asks the man: “Forget ending the conversation because you decided I am a feminist and not worth talking to. Forget trying to shut me up.” Her angry tone resonates with Patricia Hill Collins’ assertion that “black women’s troubles with black men have generated anger, and from that anger, self-reflection” ([1990] 2002, 152).

Self-definition is necessary for collective empowerment (Hill Collins 2002). Without it, there can be no united oppositional gaze (hooks 1992), which entails rebellion and resistance against mainstream Britain, who perpetuates tokenistic ideas on black Britons. Women want to create an oppositional gaze against the unfinished conversations of the sixties and seventies within black Britons, who did not acknowledge women’s roles. They are striving for an opposition that cuts across generations, gazes, and ages. By doing so, they can demonstrate the plurality of black British identities and how cultural identity is dynamic, it “[i]s a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall 1990, 225).

The woman wants to remember their role whereas the man is amnesic about it. This remember-forget dichotomy evokes Aleida Assmann’s typology behind the dynamics of

cultural memory in remembering and forgetting (2008). According to Assmann, “the dynamics of individual memory consists in a perpetual interaction between remembering and forgetting” (2008, 97). Assmann distinguishes two forms of forgetting: active and passive. Active forgetting is linked to “[i]ntentional acts such as trashing and destroying” (2008, 97), whereas passive is related to “[n]on-intentional acts such as losing, hiding, dispersing, neglecting, abandoning or leaving something behind” (2008, 98). The passive-active dynamic also applies to remembering. Active remembering conserves the past as present, as museums do, whereas passive remembering keeps the “[p]ast as past” (Assmann 2008, 98), using it as reference as an archive would. Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa show that the archive is an instance of active remembering if the information it holds is constantly reworked, as they do in their productions. The man embodies active forgetting and diminishes the woman’s claims: “forget we engaged in this stupid conversation.” At the same time, the woman committed to active remembering, striving to keep the past and present alive, using her working memory and collective women’s experiences for all those who cannot. The extreme close-up on their faces reflect the vividness and importance of this conversation.

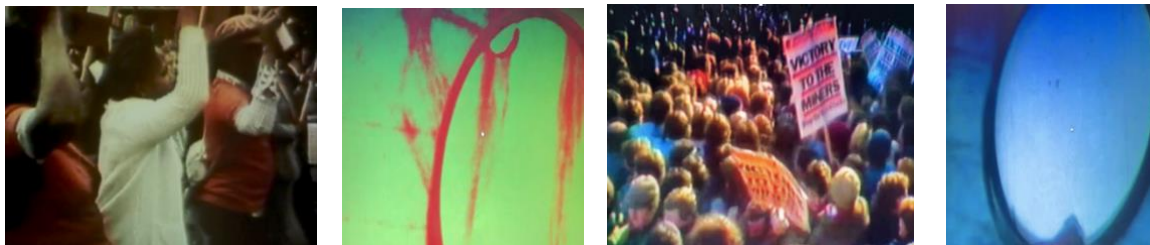
The transition to Maggie’s narrative, where she is in the swimming pool with her friends, does not alleviate the previous sequence’s tension. On the contrary, it inserts further issues, with an emphasis on Michael and Gary’s gay relationship. The footage of Michael and Gary is reused in *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*, which I analyse in this chapter. This highlights how the issues in *The Passion of Remembrance* serve as a starting point for themes further explored in upcoming Sankofa’s productions, allowing Sankofa to initiate their own visual archive.

An establishing shot introduces London’s night skyline, followed by a pan to the right with identifiable buildings such as BT Tower and Centre Point. These two buildings were finished in the sixties, which indicate how the eighties’ youth—Maggie and her friends—are inhabiting earlier urban landscape, filling them in with their stories and challenging previous ones. The continuing scene with Maggie exemplifies this. She has arrived at a building and is filmed ascending the stairs, her slow pace disrupts the duration of the sequence, suggesting that the events she is about to introduce in the upcoming scene are so painful that they cause her slow down. The off-screen voices laughing and addressing her: “are you ignorant,” highlight this idea.

Maggie enters a room, transitioning from the public sphere to the private one. Here, she will reminisce and let viewers access her consciousness, symbolised by the door she leaves open behind her. She sits down in front of a television and VHS player and plays a

montage she created in the past and exhibited in front of people who laughed at it. An extreme close-up on her face, reveals her pain as she reminisces this day. The off-screen voice inserts what she said on that day: “what you are going to be witnessing is archive footage on demonstrations and festivals. . . . I’ve edited them all together to form a montage of images of protests and celebrations on solidarity. After that maybe we can have a discussion.”

*The Passion of Remembrance* shows her montage, introduced through mirrors, which are overwhelmingly present and are Maggie’s invitation to access the visual repertoire she has encapsulated and the screen memories of those in the protests. For Sigmund Freud, a screen memory was a screen for another significant memory not accessible because the unconscious covers it (Roth 2011). Through her camera—a screen—Maggie, as the consciousness of the work, allows black Britons to access prosthetic memories. Maggie establishes a link of union between the conscious and the unconscious, the present and the past, remembering and forgetting (Freud 1955b). By linking different experiences since she produced “[a] montage of images of protests and celebrations on solidarity.” The montage is an example of Marty Roth’s postmodern memory which, as the screen memory, “[i]s produced at the site of remembering. It does not retrieve the past but recreates it” (2011, 87), uniting social and private remembering.



**Figure 13. Maggie’s Montage in *The Passion of Remembrance***

The struggles outlined in the montage are not in opposition to each other, as Maggie aims to underline their common enemy: Thatcherism. The protests of black Britons, white and black working-class people, feminists, lesbians, and gay individuals are equally depicted, which creates a space for solidarity and self-reflection. For the man in the allegorical interval, including sexually subverted identities in the struggle will displace the focus, whereas the woman and Maggie maintain that it will foster unity.

The discussion after the montage reveals diverse black British positions on its viewers based on their past experiences, which indicates how the past exists in the present. After all,

“[t]he act of remembering is always in and of the present” (Huyssen 1995, 3). The montage’s different interpretations highlight how black British experiences are not unified. As Paul Connerton reminds us, collective memory is characterised by the recollections of a shared past as recalled by members of a group (1989). The distinct memories of the past underscore how it is a reconstruction. As Connerton noted, “images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society’s past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions” (1989, 3).

Gender and sexuality are the divisive issues. In fact, the first question Maggie is asked after showing her montage is if she is a lesbian. Maggie goes silent before replying, unlike her friend Gary who is openly gay. The lesbian subplot was confirmed by Sankofa. As Martina Attille reveals to Isling Mack-Nataf:, “what we wanted was for there to be an overt black gay relationship and another hidden relationship. . . . For us the thing we were dealing with in terms of the history of black struggle, was how the movement had been led by brothers” (1986, 25). Through this decision, Sankofa criticises the lack of representation of women and homosexuals. Maggie responds, “why are you asking me that question? there were images from loads of different occasions, places where black people, gay black people, white gay people, old people and young people all marched.” Gary angrily claims, “you [...] chant Babylon down [...] but you are well content to keep slapping women down and calling me batty.” Maggie and her friends see those who do not include them in the struggle as Babylon since they are equally perpetuating oppression and do not want to reflect on their own homophobia or sexism. As Maggie asserts: “it is your perspectives that you want to inform us about, we are not really hearing anyone else, the black community, you can’t even talk about communities, it isn’t always homogenous.”

After this tense scene, the narrative offers different instances on how the various generations interpret the present based on their experiences. The first example is Maggie’s father facing the problem of unemployment. Before introducing his reflection, the sequence pans on several buildings in the City of London such as St Helens, The London Stock Exchange or Tower-forty-two. They were finished between the sixties and seventies, indicating how the City reflects the rapid changes of these decades. Maggie’s father is struggling to understand how when he first arrived in Britain, he could easily find a job and he cannot now. As he argues, “it is hard times for everybody, man, young and old.” Another scene depicts their musical tastes which are dissimilar yet equally gives them a sense of identity. In Maggie’s room, Maggie and Lou get ready to go out to the electro funk/soul song

“Get Loose,” by the Aleem Brothers and Leroy Burgees. The song exemplifies the Afro-American influence on black British music and their identity as British-born black women. Maggie’s dad thinks the song is “[t]amp tamp tamp. That could never be music. It is too much bass and not enough rhythm. Calypso is the only music you can listen to and feel sweet.” As he says this, he plays a Calypso tune and gets equally loose. The sequence juxtaposes both of them dancing.

The safety provided by music is further exemplified through a montage featuring different clubs and bars in Soho in the eighties, such as The New Twilight, Dougles Night Club, Wag Night Club, or Stallions.<sup>34</sup> These underground clubs allowed the youth to escape the tumultuous reality of the eighties. As Sarah Thornton noted, clubs “[o]ffer other-worldly environments in which to escape; they act as interior havens with such presence that the dancers forget local time and place [...] clubs achieve these effects with loud music, distracting interior design and lighting effects” (1995, 40). The work shows the neon lights of the clubs, people in the street entering the clubs, and a loudly edited soundtrack, allowing the viewer to equally escape the deep themes it has introduced.

Maggie and her friends do not feel part of mainstream Britain’s imagined community. The work underlines this with two related scenes. In the first one, Maggie sceptically picks up a pamphlet on neighbourhood watch, stating “[t]he only time when people watch things is when they are going to grass you up,” She knows she is regarded as a dangerous other, as are her friends. Her suspicions are confirmed after the night out when Gary and Michael walk back home holding hands. The nightclubs’ happy tone changes into an eerie soundtrack, which advances that something bad is bound to happen. Additionally, the change to a canted angle and the rapid camera movement, chasing them, suggest this. The neighbourhood watch is after them, confirming Maggie’s ideas. In the back of the frame, as Gary and Michael hide, the neighbourhood watch destroys a house’s façade as they scream: “Open the door...!” “Get out of my country...” It is not possible to see who is inside the house, the individuals inside may not be black at all. Ironically, the neighbourhood watchers, while trying to provide security, are causing disorder and hysteria. They are the people who need to watch Maggie’s montage.

---

<sup>34</sup> Stuart Crossgrove wrote about the importance of the Wag Club and the clubbing scene of London in the eighties in *Young Soul Rebels* (2016). The Wag Club attracted soul fans from all over the country, specially the North of England, who settled in London and created their own family living within multicultural and black communities. As Northerners, they felt they were outsiders in London (2016). This highlights the union Maggie’s montage tried to depict.



As Gary and Michael are hiding, Maggie and Lou are rewatching the montage. Tony joins them, which indicates how he may be willing to listen to his sister. An image of athlete Tommie Smith appears doing the Black Power salute. For Tony, “those clenched fists were for every black person. For George, Bobby,” and he is interrupted by Maggie—for “sister Bettina and all the other sisters.”



**Figure 14. Maggie, Tony, and Lou Watching Maggie’s Montage in *The Passion of Remembrance***

This scene is intertwined with the allegorical territory; some of the questions Maggie asks her brother are answered by the fictional man and vice-versa, transcending narrative frames. For Tony, his experience laid the foundation for Maggie and her friends, an idea Maggie, and the allegorical woman counter. This underscores the need to establish a sense of past and present where discrepancies and women’s agency are contemplated. As Erll wrote, “societies do not remember literally; but much of what is done to reconstruct a shared past bears some resemblance to the process of individual memory, such as [...] the creation of versions of the past according to present knowledge and needs” (2008, 5).

The work introduces the death of Colin Roach, which signals how important union within black British communities is. As the voice-over contends, “the good die young or so they say, but this was not just a natural passing away, departing from time, still captured in moments fossilised in air, the void of life...” “the media may choose to forget while we do not....” The last scene finishes in the allegorical domain. The woman highlights how history is a series of unfinished processes and how there is no agreement between them. As the voice-over argues, “she realised that he was in a piece of land which neither could cross easily to get to the other.” *The Passion of Remembrance* does not provide a resolution or enforces the meaning of the film on the viewer. As Attille maintained, Sankofa’s works aimed at fostering a dialogue and not imposing meaning (2003). This explains the viewer’s active role and the meta-filmic dimension of the allegorical interval.

There has been a change towards understanding, as seen in Tony talking to his sister and the fictional man, who reappears in the space where at the beginning he delivered his

speech. This time, he is not speaking but trying to protect himself from the voice-over's words: "Freeing your hands [after slavery] does not free your mind. Either we wake up or we fall off the edge of the cliff." He looks perturbed, as if he had realised he needs to decolonise his own mind. In fact, the last sequence pinpoints idea, as the man and the woman walk in opposite directions, he looks back at her before disappearing. The wide shot depicting them underscore how even if they defend different positions, these can co-exist in the same area. This is sorely needed, for both the man and the woman feel lost; hegemonic history does not keep up with the demands of their present and the multiplicity of their experiences needs to be acknowledged.

*The Passion of Remembrance* encourages self-reflectivity while showing that there is not one singular sense of history or a homogenous black British community. Destroying this myth signifies giving a space to identities that have not been represented before. The productions included in this chapter, and the following, are examples of this. The subsequent work, *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*, explores the AIDS crisis in relation to black British homosexuality.

### 3.2. "Feel no Guilt in Your Desire": *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*

*This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* highlights the importance of embracing sexual desire, male eroticism, and the plurality of gay men amidst the fear deriving from the AIDS crisis. The work is a two-part video characterised by the inclusion of archival footage, the use of montage, and a soundtrack which transitions from a mournful tone to a vibrant one in the second part, indicating the move away from guilt to desire. The first part underlines ideas of loss and death amidst AIDS and the second encourages desire and love.

The work contrasts with the images distributed by the mainstream at the height of the AIDS crisis. Its director, Isaac Julien, wanted to "make a more plural representation of gay men [...] in the current AIDS crisis it was obviously very difficult to start talking about sexual representations in a different light, with the onslaught of moralistic campaigning that was taking place in Britain" (1990, 170). For David Curtis, the work is a militant documentary (2007), which combats preconceived views about AIDS and homosexuality. Isaac Julien, its director, revealed to Pratibha Parmar how he did not want to contribute to the rhetoric of fear, shame, and guilt but rather to celebrate love and desire (1990). Winston Wheeler Dixon notes that the video celebrates these themes "in the age of New Puritanism"

(1988, 67). For me, the work is an early instance of black British media countering the stigmatisation of AIDS.

AIDS was not the first global epidemic, but it was the first “[g]lobally mediated disease whose inseparability from television led critics to call it a crisis of signification” (Close 2017, 65). It was portrayed by the media as a moral panic, following Stanley Cohen’s moral panic theory (1972). For a moral panic to exist, there needs to be a threat (AIDS), a description of the threat by the media, the creation of the threat as a public concern by the media, a response to it—the advertisements *Monolith* (1987a) and *Iceberg* (1987b), which I will mention as examples—and finally, social change.

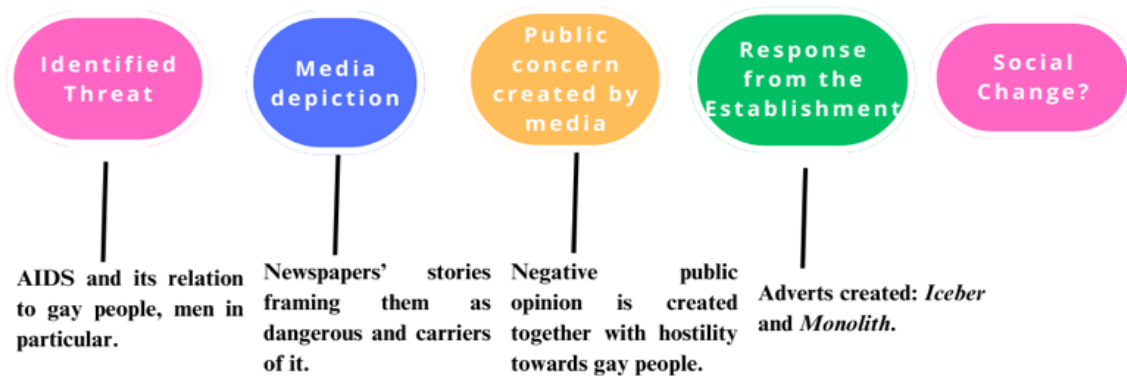
The two most (in)famous British advertisements concerning AIDS—*Monolith* and *Iceberg*—directed by Nicolas Roeg, are a response to the public concern on AIDS. They were part of Normal Fowler’s, head of the UK Health Department, campaign “don’t die of ignorance.”<sup>35</sup> I argue that the rhetoric used in both of them is countered by *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*. John Hurt’s off-screen voice in *Monolith* informs the viewer that there is a danger, a deadly disease that can affect anyone, men, or women. Phallic symbols indicate that the advertisement is indirectly targeting the “small group” it refers to at the end: men. This suggests how AIDS was represented in the media following the lie that it only “[a]ffected gay men” (Navarro 1993, 39). However, “around 1984 and 1985, when its transmission within the heterosexual population was reluctantly acknowledged, black people were then scapegoated as its cause” (Mercer 1994, 154-5). This shows how minority groups, such as gays, or later on, blacks were scapegoated by British media.

In *Iceberg*, the emphasis is on the limited knowledge about the disease and the warning that “unless we act now, it’s going to get much, much worse.” There is no voice-over, only images and intertitles. The rhetoric behind these advertisements is reminiscent of video nasties, low-budget films and videos censored in the UK in the eighties. Video nasties were blamed for social issues like kidnappings or rapes, which explains its use on *Iceberg* since it was a type of media appealing to the general public.

---

<sup>35</sup> In October 2023, Scotland launched an HIV advertisement forty years after *Iceberg* and *Monolith* named “Stigma is More Harmful than HIV.” *This is not An AIDS Advertisement* is predecessor of Scotland’s advertisement.

## Cohen's moral panic as applied to AIDS



**Figure 15. Cohen's Moral Panic as Applied to AIDS, my Mind Map**

*This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement's* first part, like *Iceberg*, lacks a voice-over, encouraging the viewer to focus on the visual montage and deep listen to its soundtrack in minor key, which invites reflection. Deep listening, as defined by musician Pauline Oliveros, involves “learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound” (2005, xxiii).<sup>36</sup> It implies opening the ear to contrasting ways of listening to the past so that it is possible to engage with past memories and open the ear to the future—the work's second part. This is because deep listening facilitates the creation of “[n]ew patterns, exceeding the limitations and boundaries of old patterns, or using old patterns in new ways” (Oliveros 2005, xxv).

The first part is highly figurative, as seen in elements like statues, water, a cemetery, flowers, phallic symbols, a veil, or statues, as I will illustrate. The first of these appearing is water. As advanced by *The Passion of Remembrance*, the shot of Gary and Michael in the swimming pool reappears. Water witnessed their relationship and that of the couples in the first and second part of the work in front of rivers. Another element is the presence of two male lovers offering the viewer flowers in a park and in a cemetery, which reminds the

---

<sup>36</sup> John Akomfrah has also applied the idea of deep listening in his latest film *Listening All Night to the Rain* (2024) presented at the Venice Biennale. I made the connection between deep listening, and *This is not an Aids Advertisement*. Akomfrah's use of the concept indicates how it is a useful notion for the analyses of the works of the collectives I explore. Akomfrah confirmed this in an interview with Tim Adams for *The Guardian* on April 7, 2024.

viewer of the deaths of gay men and pays homage to them.<sup>37</sup> Another way the work pays homage is through the close-up of blurred male faces, which evoke the unknown faces of those who AIDS has killed. These faces appear interspersed with repeated takes of water, which mirrors the act of rewinding a video, creating a tension between remembering and forgetting. The work wants to remember those faces, but the media choses to forget and demonise them.



**Figure 16. Unknown Faces in *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement***

There is an overwhelming presence of phallic symbols, as seen in a window, resembling a phallus, against a contrasting play of blue and yellow lights. Blue evokes sadness, whereas yellow inspires hope, advancing the desire and love the second part emphasises. This is also highlighted by how the window is opened, letting light come in and asking those looking at it to change guilt and pain for love and desire. As Katja Silverman maintains, “the phallus often emerges within the Lacanian text as a universal signifier of desire, rather than as the variable metaphor of an irreducible lack” (2016, 38).



**Figure 17. Phallic Symbols in *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement***

Halfway through the first part, there is an emphasis on the gaze and the male body, which links it to the part, which underscores desire. This is exemplified by a man removing a

---

<sup>37</sup> The representation of mourning in this work was acknowledged by Julien on his interview with *The Guardian* in April 24, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/apr/24/artist-isaac-julien-tate-britain-what-freedom-is-to-me>

veil from his eyes and the inclusion of male body sculptures. As the end of this part approaches, the images of water, bodies and the veil falling off are recurrent unlike those of the cemetery and flowers, which signals the transition from death and guilt to love and desire. The footage's colour gradation contributes to this idea since, as the man takes off the veil, the colours become stable, preparing the audience for part two.

Part two dwells on desire and eroticism, a change mirrored in the transition to a musical composition in a major key now in its soundtrack. The symbols used in part one reappear, but real male bodies substitute the statues, which highlights desire. This second part makes the viewer aware of media manipulation by exhibiting how *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* stages its own construction. It places two men in a television studio, which demonstrates how the work is an equally valid advertisement for AIDS but following the rhetoric of love and desire.

The intense back lighting on one of the male actors produces a chiaroscuro effect, moving from darkness, secrecy, guilt, and privacy—as shown in part one's phallic window—to light, love, and desire. A further example of Sankofa making the viewer aware of how easily media can be manipulated is illustrated through a production room where someone is creating a montage with the pictures we have seen in the work. As this room emerges, the footage of Gary and Michael in *The Passion of Remembrance* appears, indicating how Sankofa will provide new meaning for images on black Britons and create their own visual repository.

This second part offers a voice-over narration:

Parting glances, buddy's friend, tell us no 'other' other's tales, in-between the gaps, between mirrors and turned away eyes, the civilising-pleasure-seeking-mission-tourist, black boys bought for a packet of cigarettes, that exotic other might just translate how a small disease in a third world domain became a first world problem with a little name.

It refers to pleasure before AIDS, which emphasises the significance of desire. The off-screen voice indicates how sexuality has been constructed “[i]n-between the gaps,” away from the public sphere or mainstream Britain and highlights the importance of representing it. In fact, this last part offers different ways of looking at the male body on screen. For Silvermann, deviant masculinities disrupt the visual logic imposed on men since they do not follow the patriarchal order, which makes women objects of pleasure, but become both the object of desire and the subject desiring (2016).

In cinema, traditionally, the look as present through the spectator, the camera, and the characters, is aligned with men. As Laura Mulvey wrote, man is “the bearer of the look” (1975, 9), he is actively commanding the stage, he is an ideal for identification. Women, on the contrary are “spectacle” (1975, 9). For Mulvey cinema offers several pleasures such as scopophilia: “looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at” (1975, 9). In the second part of *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*, this is seen through the male bodies. Mulvey continues adding that “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (1975, 11). In *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* there is not a female figure. The object of desire is the male body, and consequently, the male body is both object (passive) and subject (active) in this video.

For Patrick Shuckmann, the male gaze follows “[a] double structure of desire that establishes a model for the relationship between the male spectator and the image: on the one hand, he desires to possess the image [...] and, on the other hand, he desires to be or to become the image” (1998, 673). The voice-over encourages viewers to identify with the pictures and get pleasure from them: “this is not an AIDS advertisement. Feel no guilt in your desire.” The second part is loaded with homoeroticism, which dismantles the fear and guilt behind desiring same-sex partners and delinks homosexuality from the moral panic of the AIDS crisis. As the voice-over argues, “it’s the heart afraid of breaking that never learns to dance. It’s the dream afraid of waking, that never learns to chance.”

In the second part, flowers are not associated with death but with homoeroticism. As Gilad Padva wrote, there is a poetic floral erotica “[a]ssociated by film viewers in the late eighties with other modern artists who used flowers as (homo)erotic metaphors” (2014, 206). The flowers the two males offer the viewer in the first part resemble Robert Mapplethorpe’s *Orchids* (1980) and *Flower* (1986). To highlight this view, Julien himself gives the viewer flowers as the off-screen voice claims, “say love it is a flower and you is only seed. Feel no guilt in your desire.” A command that contrasts with the “don’t die out of ignorance,” campaign.

*This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* challenges the ideas behind the AIDS epidemic and its link to homosexuality (Dyer 1993). The work creates a new space, which brings to light and to the public sphere identities that had not expressed their viewpoints before. The following work, *Perfect Image?*, opposes misconceptions about black womanhood, showing that there is not a single or perfect way of being a black woman.

### 3.3. Is This Our *Perfect Image?*: Black Women and Self-definition

*Perfect Image?* portrays distorted images of black women to deconstruct them by mocking them. By doing this, it allows for an examination of black women's own views about their identities and beauty standards. The work puts forward the thought that the perfect image for women does not exist and that believing in a perfect image is part of the problem of self-representation women face. Through these ideas, the production builds an example of protest and resistance by black women. *Perfect Image?* includes different women who embody diverse stereotypes. The three main characters are a CEO, a receptionist and a woman who whitens her face. However, their names are unknown, indicating how they are archetypes. The narrative unfolds in separate spaces including a beauty business, a private house, a gallery, and a scenario where the women perform songs. Its form is that of a documentary mixing talking-head interviews, archival footage, tableaux, and collages. It also incorporates diegetic sounds, like original songs created by the characters about the situations happening to them. The work is characterised by its ironic and humorous tone, mocking anyone who thinks there is a perfect image. The question mark at the end of the title evidences this.

For June Givanni, *Perfect Image?* moves away from the broad concerns of *The Passion of Remembrance*, focusing on how self-images are “[c]onstructed and perceived by black women” (1989a, 316). Dixon agrees with Givanni since the documentary “[a]sks questions relating to how black women see themselves/each other” (1988, 66). *Perfect Image?* can also be read through Mulvey's theories on the gendered division of the look in the cinematic image, invoked in *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement*. As I explained, women are the object of desire of the male gaze in film. In *Perfect Image?* women deconstruct this relation looking at themselves with their own eyes, destroying distorted preconceptions about womanhood. As Hazel V. Carby wrote, “the black women's critique of history has not only involved us in coming to terms with ‘absences’; we have also been outraged by the ways under which it has made us visible when it has chosen to see us” (1996, 61). *Perfect Image?* counters these absences and makes women visible. Following Michele Pierson, “there have always been multiple ways of being a feminist and, for feminist filmmakers, multiple ways in which their feminism has entered into their filmmaking” (2022, 840). Pierson further adds how there are several themes in feminist filmmaking, “films about women and women's experiences; films examining the cultural systems in which ideas about gender and sexuality are produced; films that value cultural and aesthetic pursuits, which have historically been perceived to be feminist [...] films that examine the wider social and economic implications



of ordinary, everyday activities.” (2022, 480). For me, *Perfect Image?* is an important contribution to all these categories from black women filmmakers about black womanhood within British cinema.

*Perfect Image?* initiates with a photographic gallery, which is a visual reservoir of women’s images across history. In fact, the performer Lottie Abrew, who I will introduce in *A Family Called Abrew* (chapter five) appears. These images “[s]educe us by creating a meaning or a narrative for it” (Mercer 2016, 132), referring to the photographs. For the women in the work, these photographs embody the prosthetic memories of past and present women, which highlight the diverse perspectives on womanhood. The voice-over underscores this: “Why do you turn from me...” “When did your black side become too much...” “When did you turn away from within yourself...” “When did you fall from grace in your eyes and in mine...” These questions serve as an unconscious voice, evoking women’s challenges of self-acceptance and self-definition.

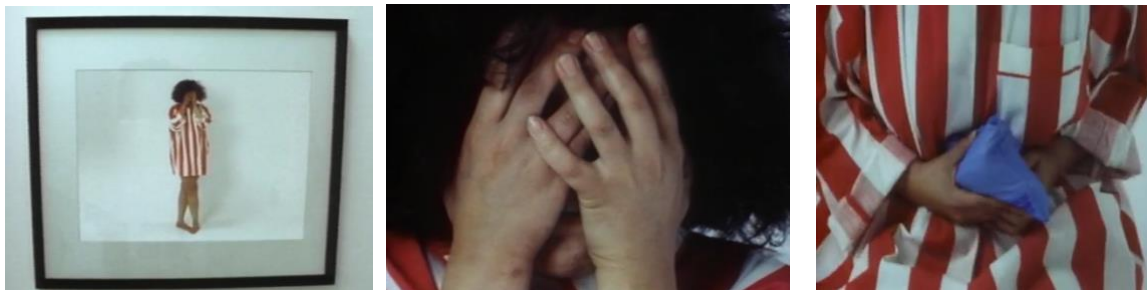


**Figure 18. Photographic Gallery in *Perfect Image?***

For Walter Benjamin, “a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye, if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man” ([1939]1968a, 236). This is Benjamin’s notion of the optical unconscious, which mirrors the voice-over’s views, as the gallery transforms prosthetic memories into conscious ones (Landsberg 2004). The characters in the work will investigate this territory by deconstructing their preconceived ideas about themselves. The gallery reappears, working as an interval between sequences and encouraging reflection. This gallery can also be interpreted as women’s unconscious archive. As Gloria J. Gibson-Hudson points out, “the world’s earliest archive were the memories of women” (1998, 43).

A woman’s photograph coming to life emphasises the relationship between photography and cinema and their link to memory and women’s identity. The woman, crying, falls to her knees as the off-screen voice says, “my lovely.” She screams: “please,” as a loop repeating “my lovely” plays in the background, and she is handed a make-up kit, which the

voice-over encourages her to use. The camera helps the voice-over in creating an effect of agitation through conscious fast forwarding. This woman is wearing a dress in orange and white stripes. Orange is a colour associated with prisoners and could confirm that she may feel trapped, unable to speak for herself and a construct.



**Figure 19. A Photograph in *Perfect Image? Coming to Life***

Throughout the work, the actors constantly look at the camera and break the fourth wall, puncturing illusion. As soon as the woman in orange puts on make-up, the voices stop the discourse that tells her how she must perform her identity as woman, an idea she has internalised and needs to deconstruct. After this, the title appears over the blue eye of the woman. The work moves on to include the two main characters, two women who work at a beauty company. One of them is the CEO, and the other the receptionist. They embody two very different views on black womanhood. The viewer is constantly invited to take positions and to pay attention, given that the protagonists ask the viewer questions and pretend they are having a conversation with the audience, which makes the spectator an acknowledged peeping tom witnessing how these women typify their identities and deal with internal contradictions.<sup>38</sup> This adds to Stuart Hall's argument, following Freud, on how representation takes place in the head (1997).

Through crosscutting, the work juxtaposes the two women's dissimilar arguments on beauty by enacting a fictional conversation with the viewer. The receptionist asks, "perfect what? Well, there is no such thing, and you have to be realistic about yourself? I take pride in the way I look." The receptionist has darker skin and wears bright make-up. The CEO mocks the receptionist's make up, "dark people are stupid wearing bright lipstick..." "Them

---

<sup>38</sup> Traditionally, black people on television have been represented through stereotypes. This explains why the work constructs this part of the narrative as answers to the questions of a fictional viewer, who also needs to deconstruct their misconceptions. As Donald Bogle wrote, "whenever dealing with black characters, they simply adapted the old familiar clichés, often further distorting them" (1997, 14). In fact, the element of performance and theatricality in the work further confirms this, by trying to make the viewer aware.

brave...?” “[the receptionist is a] black spot on a white table.” The receptionist adds, “I got tired of hearing what I should do to play down my features, camouflage. I got fed up and I went the other way.” The CEO has internalised stereotypes as her question to the audience “[i]s it not too dark here, is it? I do not want to look too black, you know all eyes and teeth,” confirms, whereas the receptionist argues that the season’s fashion accessory is a black skin. Their dissimilar opinions also highlight how women with different shades of black deal with beauty standards. For Ingrid Banks, light skin colour is associated with mainstream standards of beauty (2000). The CEO’s skin is lighter and explains why she has internalised Western standards.



**Figure 20. The Receptionist and the CEO in *Perfect Image*?**

The next sequence introduces another woman, who is rushing around her house moving objects, among them a book with the subtitle “self-reflection.” As the camera reveals her body and zooms in on her phantasmic face, she startles herself since the viewer is seeing her white face, which she has altered with whitening creams. The soundtrack, where a surprised voice gasp—“oh!”—further dramatises the moment and underlines the work’s theatricality and its similarity to a live television show. She has a phantasmic face because she wanted to be liked by her husband. The off-screen voices that accompany her story appear shocked by her husband’s comments. This woman’s testimony is an example of how the advertisement industry, cinema and TV played an important role in setting beauty standards, which make her wish she was “an English rose.”

Both in the colonies and Britain skin shade was a debated topic, from lighter meaning beautiful to black is beautiful. For Homi Bhabha, defending light skin exemplifies a mimicry, where the colonial subjects imitate the coloniser (1994), and “the effect of mimicry is camouflage” (Bhabha 1994, 85). By applying whitening creams, she tries to be an English rose. However, her mimicry is imperfect, and makes her “almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha 1994, 86).



**Figure 21. An Imperfect Mimicry in *Perfect Image*?**

The following sequence introduces the receptionist and the CEO arguing over fashion and beauty through a rap battle where ideas on skin shades arise: “the shades are making a comeback, I’m classic black not caramel, you are just jealous...”—sings the receptionist. “You drew me like I’m such a myth...”—replies the CEO. The discussion is aggressive, and the last verse of the rap coincides with the women challenging each other to a physical fight. The work, instead of fostering their division, changes the narrative since they have been involved in an endless circle reproducing stereotypes. This new direction is marked through a woman opening her eyes, as if she was being born again.

The eye of the start appears but it is not blue, which is a metonym of white Britishness as a perfect beauty ideal, as Pecola equates in *The Bluest Eye* ([1970] 2000) by Toni Morrison. The eye appears in different colours, which advances how the women now acknowledge diversity and see reality through their own eyes. This is emphasised by the off-screen voice repeating, “inside you is the woman you always knew you could be,” as the eye’s colour changes until it is red, which signals the tiredness of trying to find herself in a myopic society loaded with stereotypes on how she has to be.

The CEO, who embodied Western stereotypes, constructs her new identity by taking pictures of herself in the photography gallery. The work represents her identity construction by digitally inserting over her face and body diverse styles of make-up, wigs, hairstyles, and clothes, which shows how her authentic self is inside of her, away from beauty standards disseminated by the media. As Hall wrote “the media are not only a powerful source of ideas about race. They are also one place where these views are articulated, worked on, transformed, and elaborated” (1995, 90).

In the following sequence, the receptionist and the CEO sings a blues which indicates their inner struggles regarding their self-image. Their interventions add to each other’s arguments instead of opposing them: “I am too black and that is a historical fact, I’m just too black and I know that is holding me back,” signs the receptionist. “I am too light, or is it fair?”

I never know what colour you are going to call me. Though I may see myself assured in the public eye, behind closed door, sometimes I held my hand and cry,” signs the CEO.



**Figure 22. Changing Eye Colour in *Perfect Image?***

The work moves to the gallery and the off-screen voice wonders if they, meaning women, “will ever get to sing a different tune?” This question is over-lapped with the questions that have been asked throughout the work in a loop, “When did it all become too dark...” “My lovely...” Overwhelmed, the CEO and the receptionist scream “enough,” look at the camera trembling and repeat, “enough.” They are tired of being told how to perform their identities. The screen goes black, indicating the end of the documentary. However, the work does not end. As the off-screen argues, “I know you are waiting for that perfect ending, a happy ending full of joy, optimism, hope, celebration of self, here it is,” it constructs a sugar-coded alternative end and reinforces the work’s theatricality.

The alternative happy ending is quite ironic. As he CEO and the receptionist reveal: “When I wake up in the morning I think to myself what reason is there for going on and then I remember I love myself...” The way they move their hands around their bodies is inviting the viewer to participate in voyeurism since they are complying with the cinematic gaze placed on women. The work offers a fade out transition. It does not finish here. The last sequence shows a behind the scenes. The women are removing the make-up and wigs they used for the happy ending. The prompts utilised throughout the documentary make the viewer aware of how *Perfect Image?* is a carefully constructed work. The gallery is displayed once more, and a photograph of the CEO and the receptionist are now hanging, illustrating how their representation is added to the visual repository of women’s images.

*Perfect Image?* deconstructs the idea of the unique perfect image for women. It underlines how one needs to become aware of the stereotypes surrounding them before embarking on the task of deconstructing their distorted views and constructing their self-image, away from internalised myths. As Martina Attille maintained, “as black women, we must be the ones who define the areas of importance in our lives; we need to work towards

the breakdown of ‘mainstream’ conventions, and popular assumptions perpetuated by existing forms of cinema and television” (1985, 60). The following work, *Omega Rising*, continues the assignment of women’s self-definition by highlighting women’s role in Rastafarianism.

### 3.4. *Omega Rising: Women of Rastafari* Shaping Rastafarianism

*Omega Rising* gathers diverse perspectives from Rastafarian women in Jamaica and in the United Kingdom, who express how they have contributed to Rastafarianism and the impact it has had on their lives. It is a documentary, characterised by its didactic impulse and the inclusion of archival material, talking-head interviews, and a soundtrack with songs by Rastafarian women. It was directed by D. Elmina Davis, a Ceddo’s trainee, who regarded “[v]ideo as an instrument of self-expression” (Bakari 1995, n.p). She was aware of young people’s needs in London and the importance of transmitting audio-visual skills (Bakari 1995, n.p). *Omega Rising* reflects her concern with younger generations.

This is the first documentary done in the UK on Rastafari women. Ceddo wanted to render the Omega of Rastafarianism: women. As Ceddo wrote, “for a long time, in spite of the fact that Empress Manan was crowned at the same time as our Emperor Haile Selassie, writers have excluded woman altogether or portrayed the woman of Rastafari in narrow stereotyped roles when writing about Rastafari” (1988a, 5). *Omega Rising* redefines women’s roles in Rastafarianism. For Diawara, the work is an example of a diasporic narrative, which celebrates women from a movement that is traditionally taken as patriarchal and sexist (1993). The interventions of the women debunk that misconception. The narration is led by women, who offer their perspectives and self-represent themselves. It follows the task initiated by *Perfect Image?* In fact, *Omega Rising* and *Perfect Image?* were exhibited together in Brixton Village Film Club in London (1989b) under the curation of June Givanni. For me, *Omega Rising* is a work with a feminist impulse as was *Perfect Image?* which explains why I am analysing it in the same chapter. The ideas included in *Perfect Image?* can be applied in *Omega Rising*.

From the beginning, the work places women at the centre. It shows a goddess, Queen Omega, in space with a baby. The off-screen voice reminds the viewer that Queen Omega, engendered “[a] man child who was to rule all nation.” Without her, Rastafarians would not have had a King. In Rastafarianism both the queen and the king are crowned together. As one of the interviewed women argues, “in typical monarchies, you’ll have a king and then his



wife...” “We have a coronation where we have our king and our queen...” “You cannot conceive of yourself as one without the other...” *Omega Rising* highlights the variety of roles of Rasta women and how they are “[Q]ueens in their own right” (Christensen 2014, 129). The Rasta Woman “[h]as its roots in the vital role African women have played in shaping new roles and cultural meanings” (Christensen 2014, 20).



Figure 23. Queen Omega in Space in *Omega Rising*

Despite the foundational view of women as divine queens, there are contradictions within the movement. Rastafarianism fosters independence for all its members, but there is “[a]n explicit or implicit subordinating of the female to the male” (Christensen 2014, 135). *Omega Rising* presents women’s perspectives to highlight their independence. By doing so, it shows how Rastafarianism and feminism are two liberation movements seeking transformation (Christensen 2014). For Ennis Edmonds, the patriarchy that is associated with Rastafarianism dates back to the Rastas of the forties and fifties (2012). This explains why one of the interviewees maintains that as a child she did not know there were Rasta women and if there were, “young women used to think [they were] mad.”

According to Jeanne Christensen, if women tried to destroy these views, men would accuse them of being influenced by Western discourses (2014). As such, “society would give a woman a harder fight than a man” since they have to fight on more fronts as Rasta, women, and blacks (Christensen 2014). This work showcases women in various areas of life such as running newspapers, singing, or raising children, challenging the idea that women do not participate in Rastafarianism. As one of the interviewees argues, “there is a number of names that people forget of women that fought and on behalf of the workers” “it affects them as well...” “Rasta women are no different in this situation.” *Omega Rising* mirrors Maggie’s’ complains in *The Passion of Remembrance*.

*Omega Rising* reminds viewers of this by constructing women as the leaders of the narrative whilst men are in the background. As the singer Judy Mowatt claims, “it was difficult for a Rasta woman to be employed within the society, we were like cast aways of the

society, so we had to provide self-help projects to support ourselves and the children.” Rasta women became counter-hegemonic forces against stereotypes imposed of them by both Western lenses and Rasta men. This led to their active role in constructing their identities both in Jamaica and in the UK. As *Omega Rising* indicates:

With the migration of Caribbean people to Britain and the emergence of black communities, Rastafarian ideas soon became part of the culture that began to develop, young black people adopted the symbols and ideas of Rastafari, a part of the process of self-expression and pride in the midst of an alien society. By the seventies young black women had visibly become part of the movement wearing locks and chanting Rastafari militantly.

Rastafari symbols, such as dreadlocks, provide Rastas with a sense of identity. *Omega Rising* explores how locks are ideologically loaded with, particularly for women. As one interviewee notes, “when a woman puts on a dread, it is with deep thought.” Dreadlocks serve as a statement to the non-Rasta community and contribute to Rastas’ self-definition. I expand on the importance of hair for the Black Diaspora in *Memory Room 451* (chapter nine). As Mercer maintains, “the question of style can be seen as a medium for expressing the aspirations of black people, historically excluded from access to official social institutions of representation and legitimation in urban, industrialised societies of the capitalist first world” (1994, 101).

One woman shares her experience of being one of the few Rasta women living in areas like Ladbroke and Brixton and how her dreadlocks expressed her philosophy and lifestyle. Dreadlocks are “politicised statements of pride” (Mercer 1994, 106). Even if Rasta women are varied, belonging to “lower and middle classes, urban and rural, more and less educated” (Christensen 2014, 134), they all share the attitude of defiance to oppression. As one interviewee contends, “whether they are middle class or upper class [if they] put a dread it means it is in defiance of what has been already ordered that is beautiful, clean, upright and it means she has gone into this Rasta thing seriously.”<sup>39</sup>

*Omega Rising* showcases numerous instances of women from diverse social backgrounds who defied their communities’ expectations both in Jamaica and London by embracing Rastafarianism. An example is singer Judy Mowat, who defied norms through her music. As she argues, “I realised that this work was for men and women and because I was

---

<sup>39</sup> In *Burning an Illusion* (dir. Menelik Shabazz 1981), the protagonist de-colonises her mind symbolically by changing her hair to dreadlocks, which helps her embrace and assert her identity (Pines 1984).



given the gift of communicating through music, I couldn't keep silent." She is a female griot, who emphasises how "[j]ust because we are women, we are not weak. We are strong. We have been held back for much too long from portraying our womanity."



**Figure 24. Some of *Omega Rising*'s Women between London and Jamaica**

Another example is a woman who broke family ties to become a Rasta. She was the daughter of a Christian preacher, drawn to Rastafarianism as she was at university. As she claims, "I gravitated towards Rastafarian, I spent quite a bit of more time around them just sitting, listening and reasoning with them." While some sectors of society might see her as a "[v]ictim of an oppressive ideology, passively complicit in [her] own victimisation" (Christensen 2014, 132), for others she is a radical feminist, who is fighting for change in a post-colonial Jamaica (Christensen 2014). By embracing a new tradition away from the community, she defied the stereotype that Rasta women were confined to domestic spaces since she also started working. Her conversion to Rastafarianism ended with generational and familiar ties, creating by herself a counter-familiar memory. However, leaving the family framework is not easy. As one of the women argues, "my cousin showed me Rastafari when I was twelve. I couldn't [embrace it] because I was home. I didn't want to disrespect my mum. When I was sixteen, I left home and, you know..."

As Astrid Erll explains, "family members are the people who usually constitute the first, and often most important, social frameworks for a child" (2011a, 305). This woman left behind her family frameworks and started to construct fresh ones for her, and upcoming generations given that "family memory is a typical intergenerational memory" (Erll 2011, 306). New-borns within her Rasta family will remember within this novel social framework, which perpetuates the movement at the same time. In fact, within Rastafarianism, women are the ones who advocate for the creation of a stable family (Christensen 2014).

*Omega Rising* emphasises the view that women supply future generations with a "[s]ense of their own history and culture." It destroys the idea that men lead the movement. The women in *Omega Rising* indicate how Rastafarianism being a man-led movement is a

European fiction. To counter it, the documentary provides examples of women's active roles since, as one of them claims, "[I] believe so much in progression for the Rastafari people. We need a lot, and we have a long way to go, and the men cannot do it on their own." An instance is how a group of women started a grassroots magazine to preserve Bob Marley's speeches and opinions and distribute them internationally because they "[w]ant to keep the literate as well as the oral tradition."



**Figure 25. Complementary Rasta Education**

Another group is devoted to children's education. One of them asserts men have realised the importance of having children and a family to progress towards the future, which challenges the view that Rastafarianism sees family and marriage as a "legacy of slavery" (Christensen 2014, 144). These women offer complementary State education to teach children their black history and culture. *Omega Rising* depicts how women are involved in practical tasks and men spirituals. As one of them maintains, while "the Rasta man has been more concerned with the spiritual making sure that we understand the scriptures, the prophecy," women have been concerned with "making it work." In London, Rasta women also fight for their education and deconstruct stereotypes about Rasta women. As one woman, who is a fashion student, argues, "I used to draw my models with locks..." "My old teacher used to say, 'you might as well draw your models back if you are black'..." "But it does not always work that way. It is not the locks; it is what is inside your heart..."

*Omega Rising* plays havoc with misconceptions and depicts how women play a key role in Rastafarianism. It reveals how Rastafarianism cuts across social classes, generations, and geographical locations. This helps them defy stereotypes about gender subordination, which derive from European fictions, and opens a space where Rastafari women can express their own opinion and experience as crucial pillars of the movement.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This chapter indicates how there is not an unequivocal or authentic black British experience. The works show how, after an excavation of past stories, identities and narratives, black Britons exhibit the various articulations of subjectivities which constitute the plurality of black Britishness. The films I have included challenge stereotypes and media misinformation by introducing subjects who, for hegemonic Britain, embody subversive identities. Additionally, the works reveal different subject position unseen before and challenge the thematic and formal representation of black Britishness on the media, which inaguarates diverse possibilities of articulation.

The productions intersect black Britishness and sexuality by introducing gay, lesbian, and feminist narratives both in Britain and outside of it as Rasta women highlight, pluralising in this way depictions of black British identity. The following chapter continues this diversifying, pluralising task by deconstructing the stereotype of black Britons as being lazy, criminals who do not have a right to be in the country. It will also explore the intersection between black Britishness and disability through sickle-cell sufferers and the figure of black British artists Donald Rodney.



## CHAPTER 4. LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF MISREPRESENTATION: RESHAPING BLACK BRITISHNESS

“The majority of black endeavour and success is achieved by managing to ignore, or sometimes even motivated by the desire to disapprove, negative stereotyping [...] That is how we live. We are caught up in a maelstrom of white contradictions, half-truths and lies”  
(Rodney 1994,60)

This chapter continues to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes about black British identities but places its focus on social memory and the countering of misrepresentation from a political standpoint. The films I have chosen: *The Flame of the Soul* (1990) by Ceddo, *Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light* (1995) by Black Audio, *Street Warriors* (1986) by Ceddo and *Racism: A Response* (1990) by Ceddo, challenge British national amnesia and uncover different ways of habiting social spaces. By doing so, they reveal alternative versions of history, aligning the analysis with Stuart Hall’s writings on the possibilities of representing national identity in visual culture, where one narrative is replaced by another (1997). The four works I explore here use collective memory as a powerful tool to mediate history and address the danger of biased depictions by resorting to the archive to relaunch their narratives.

*The Flame of the Soul* examines sickle-cell disease and its impact on different individuals, including the artist Donald Rodney. I study it through the lens of ego-history (Nora 1987; Popkin 1996), which demonstrates how personal narratives are shaped by the social context under which they are formed. I highlight the connection between art and disability, and the neglect of sickle-cell sufferers by the British government and Britain’s National Health Service (NHS), allowing for a critique on State racism. *Three Songs on Pain, Time, and Light* focuses on Donald Rodney and his use of art as a form of activism to challenge mainstream Britain’s configuration of stereotypes. I investigate it by analysing how Rodney’s committed art confronts myths surrounding AIDS, slavery, disability, and men’s sensitivity. I argue that Rodney shows how psychological pain can be depicted, drawing upon Michael Rothberg’s concept of traumatic realism (2000), which he relates to the representation of trauma in literature, and I apply to visual art.

*Street Warriors* portrays a street hockey team in London, supported by the Greater London Council (GLC), the team found inspiration and empowerment through the sport. By illustrating their dedication to the team, which motivated them to find a job in jobs traditionally not targeted at black Britons, such as the fire brigade, the work defies the stereotype of young black Britons as lazy and disinterested in adjusting to British life. I

analyse it through notions related to hegemonic formations (Denning 1990) given that I see the GLC as a hegemonic formation trying to empower black Britons but also as a way of assimilating them (Dunning 1999). I also read the importance of street hockey following C. L. R James' ideas on sport, as stated in *Beyond a Boundary* ([1986] 2013).

*Racism: A Response* constructs an attack against the misconceptions surrounding the presence of black Britons since mainstream Britain is amnesiac about how their presence is a consequence of Britain's past endeavours. The work underlines how minority communities unite through demonstrations, protests, and festivals to counter racism. I study it through Louis Althusser's ideas on the Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (1984), which describe how power and control on minorities operates in postmodern societies. I also take Britishness, as a mythscape (Bell 2003) which excludes black Britons and perpetuates a myth around nationalism, which the film contests. These works challenge the distorted images of black Britons and underscore their plurality in areas not portrayed before.

#### 4.1. Black Britishness and Disability: *The Flame of the Soul*

*The Flame of the Soul* depicts the experiences of individuals living with sickle cell disease (SCD) and examines institutional and social responses to the condition. It also highlights how it is not a black disease, even if it affects black communities mainly. It denounces the lack of research and strategies to counter it and support SCD sufferers. The production uses testimonies by SCD sufferers among which Donald Rodney appears. Rodney illustrates how he uses his art to give meaning to his pain and denounce the social reality surrounding black Britons. In doing so, *The Flame of the Soul* links black Britishness with sickness and art. The work is characterised by its didactic impulse, using graphics, images, and talking-head interviews with SCD sufferers to provide knowledge on the disease. It also uses archival images and Rodney's paintings to forward its content.

For Lorna Bennett, a SCD expert, the work is a teaching device for the general public (Spare Rib 1990).<sup>40</sup> In fact, it was distributed to health workers, sickle cell organisations and community groups (Ceddo 1991, n.p.). For me, the work, is an instance of Ceddo's activism and community orientation which should not be overlooked. *The Flame of the Soul* features the most famous sickle cell sufferer and his art: Donald Rodney. Rodney was a leading figure

---

<sup>40</sup> This work has not been discussed in scholarly or mainstream publications.

in Britain's BLK Art group.<sup>41</sup> For Eddie Chambers, a fellow BLK member, Rodney's figure is an enigma, but his art transcends his disease to the point that "[R]odney the artist and Rodney the sickle cell sufferer has become one and the same in the minds of many people" (1996, 65). Chambers adds that at the time Rodney was producing, SCD was a synonym of blackness and Black people, which indicates the government's passivity to fight the disease. SCD sufferers became "[l]iving barometers of [...] racial injustice" (1996, 65).

*The Flame of the Soul* eschews a morose tone or the fetishisation of suffering. The interviewees convey optimism and highlight the significance of solidarity to deal with SCD. By not focusing on suffering, loss, and pain, Ceddo avoids collapsing memory into trauma (Huyssen 2003). The work starts in a church where people are praying, including Rodney's parents. This scene serves to introduce Rodney's art, which is inspired by his community, his SCD and his parents' religiosity, as he suggests while presenting *Britannia Hospital 2*.



**Figure 26. *Britannia Hospital 2* by Donald Rodney**

For Rodney, the flame "[i]s almost like the soul actually burning, actually wanting to testify something..." "In religion water or flames are often used as a sense of purification and I suppose that is the way I use the flame..." *Britannia Hospital 2* uses Rodney's X-Rays. By using his own X-Ray, Rodney displays the productive side of his SCD and illustrates how in his autobiography his SCD and his community orientation are intertwined.

Using a tangible fragment of his disease, such as the X-Rays, signifies how his trauma or suffering can be represented and inspire black individuals who may be fighting SCD. To

---

<sup>41</sup> Artists in this group include Eddie Chambers, Domic Dawes, Lubaina Himid, Claudette Johnson, Wenda Leslie, Ian Palmer, Keith Piper, who appeared in *Time and Judgement* (1988, see chapter two) and Marlene Smith. These artists were "the second 'wave' of post-war black British diaspora artists, often second-generation men and women who were the first black generation to be born in the diaspora" (Redhead 2020, 226).

portray this, Ceddo includes more interviewees suffering from SCD. Rodney is presented as one of the many black Britons struggling with SCD, reminding viewers that Rodney is stating his experience, which may be cathartic for others, and not speaking for anyone. By doing so, Rodney turns the personal into political in his artwork. Another interviewee, model Rhoda Lagunju, reveals she could not tell her agency she had an illness and had to make excuses, which indicates the stigma behind SCD.

The interviewees' interventions are ego-histories (Nora 1987), meaning personal narratives which gain meaning in relationship with others as they interact in the public and social sphere. Ego-histories differ from autobiographies. As explained by Jeremy Popkin, in ego-histories "[d]ifferent life histories are printed and are meant to be read side by side. . . . Whereas autobiography highlights the unique and the personal. The essays in Nora's collection invite comparisons and a stress on common experiences (1996, 1141). An idea mirroring the co-existing narratives of the interviewees. For Anna Cole, ego-histories establish connections between the author's intellectual output and their life stories since in ego-histories the personal is linked to the political and intellectual (2019). *The Flame of the Soul* shows this through Rodney's art practice.

The work's didactic impulse is seen in how informative and direct interventions are. As one woman argues, "[SCD]affects people of Afro-Caribbean decent, but it is not confined to black people or people who are black in complexion. It also affects people from the Mediterranean and from the Asian subcontinents..." "In people from Nigeria or Africa the gene is more prevalent..." Another example is a young black Briton in hospital, who articulates how his pain is disabling. For doctors, SCD is worse than labour pains. Unlike labour, where the pain finishes with a baby, after a SCD's crisis, you wait for another crisis to come.

The work presents a critique on the NHS. As Lagunju comments, doctors "[w]ould look at me and say this is a patient that feels she hadn't got much to do so she is always in hospital [...] that is a way of saying that most of your crisis are because you are bored." Doctors perpetuated the stereotype of black Britons as lazy, a misconception challenged by *Street Warriors*. By considering SCD solely a black disease, the NHS separated it from "[m]ainstream health provision." *The Flame of the Soul* emphasises how "[i]t is not a black problem; it is a health's problem." However, by linking the disease to black people, SCD patients became the "[s]ubject of racialised indifference, had their grievances largely ignored by the health service, and were subjected to racially inflected practices of policing" (Hall 1999, 188). Even if there were black nurses working at the NHS, there was a lack of training,



misinformation, and brainwashing. There was a belief that black nurses were the ones transmitting the disease at hospital, rendering those nurses aware of SCD powerless (Redhead 2022).

*The Flame of the Soul* underscores how even if the NHS failed black Britons, black British communities did not. They created organisations to help those with SCD. One of such organisations was OSCAR (Organisation for Sickle Cell Relief & Thalassaemia Support).<sup>42</sup> This organisation tries to urge the government to allocate funds to research and assist SCD patients, who are at risk since SCD prevents them from working. As Olivia Grace Redhead wrote, “people living with SCD, their families, and organisations such as OSCAR [...] contested whitewashed notions of British citizenship through their demand for treatment and their work to implement programmes for diagnoses and care [...] within the State” (271, 2020).

In OSCAR, babies are tested at birth to determine if they are carriers of SCD. In contrast, within the NHS, patients would be asked about their place of birth, and if the answer is Britain, there would not be a blood test. The NHS believed SCD was linked to place of origin and not genes. In OSCAR, individuals undergo testing regardless of colour, which shows how their system is fairer and more inclusive. OSCAR is an example of community activism, and its practice reveals “[a] keen awareness of the locations of power in the British State bureaucracy at the levels of local and central government, and a dense documentation of, and resistance to, state indifference and racism” (Redhead 2020, 213).

Rodney’s art is also an instance of activism, challenging myths about black Britons. As he argues in the film:

I use metaphors in a more direct and politicise way. When politicians talk of black people in this country, they always talk in the sense of diseases within the body culture of Britain. When they talk of places like, let’s say, Toxteth or Birmingham [...] and they talk about the inner cities maybe to be cleaned of this disease which is growing within them. In the same way that they use this illness metaphor constantly in a derogatory way with a lot of people, let’s say with blacks, with gays, disable people whatever [...] [sic] we’ve always been pushed to that side in which we always needed to be treated, we needed to be looked. By using X-Rays, I try to use that metaphor of I’m looking beneath the surface to find out exactly how systems operate.

---

<sup>42</sup> OSCAR still exists. It is the only national charity in the UK helping and supporting people with SCD and their families. Hospitals like the North Middlesex hospital in London, where the George Mash Centre for Wellbeing is, which Ceddo acknowledges, continues its combat SCD.

The diseases within the body culture referenced by Rodney are the identities both the previous chapter and this one discuss. They do not conform to the ideal family Thatcherism envisioned and are often “pushed to that side,” the margin.

Rodney presents some of his works containing the names of black Britons who died in police custody. They were individuals mainstream Britain chose to forget but his art did not. An example is *Crisis* (1989), a piece that emphasises the story of Stephen Bogle, a young black British man with SCD in London. Bogle had a crisis in the street and was taken to a police station instead of hospital. By the time the police finished checking his non-existent criminal record, he was already dead. Bogle’s story illustrates the media’s influence in constructing distorted images of black Britons as dangerous others, an idea I explore in this chapter through *Racism: A Response*. As Rodney states, Bogle’s experience “[i]s a good indication of how black people are seen and how we [sic] never actually are believed either when we say we are innocent or even if we say that we are ill, we are always perceived as being the other.”

The work offers how interviewees dealt with SCD to help upcoming generations who may endure it, making the work an important space where collective memory is codified and available for the sake of the future. Rodney shares how he struggled emotionally to register as disabled because “[i]f you’ve registered as disabled, it feels like you have given up in some way [...] and sort of said sickle cell is here for good, and you actually can be constantly stigmatised by having a disease.” Lagunju admits she had problems to date other people “[t]hey are from a different world,” and failed to understand her stigmatised condition. *The Flame of the Soul* reflects how those in the work tried to lead a normal life. Rodney and Lagunju followed their artistic careers. The young boy in hospital explains how he pursued his dream of becoming a solicitor. As he confesses, “coping with sickle cell is very difficult and it is only by looking at the positive side of things [...] that one would be able to achieve what one wants to do [...] do whatever you enjoy doing [...] that is the only way you can make it.”

*The Flame of The Soul* challenges stereotypes about SCD and denounces the neglect of the NHS. It informs and educates viewers and black Britons who may suffer from SCD in the future and may not know how to handle SCD. The presence of children at the end of the work signals the importance of SCD awareness for future generations. As Michael de Certeau wrote, “children are the repository of a culture that perpetuates itself on the fringes of adult culture” (1986, 132). Ceddo timelessly encapsulates instances of SCD for these children. The subsequent work, *Three Songs on Time, Pain and Light*, continues the topic of SCD.

However, it focuses solely on Rodney and the cathartic space inaugurated by his artistic practice.

#### 4.2. *Three Songs on Time, Pain, and Light*: Donald Rodney's Art and Activism

*Three Songs on Time, Pain, and Light* investigates Donald Rodney's autobiography and artistic practice, illustrating how they reflect the social context he lived and the relationship to his disease. Rodney uses his SCD as frames for black Britons to denounce injustices and dispel misconceptions. It is an essay film, or filmic portrait, mixing talking-head interviews (with fellow artists such as Sonia Boyce, Brenda Agar, Marlene Smith, and Rodney himself—who conducts some of the interviews) with Rodney's archival material. Black Audio constructs several tableaux to illustrate Rodney's account. In fact, the work resembles a compilation film given the high number of assembled vibrant media from Rodney's archive, as footage he took as he was in hospital. The work also comprises an energetic soundtrack, which enhances the work's narrative

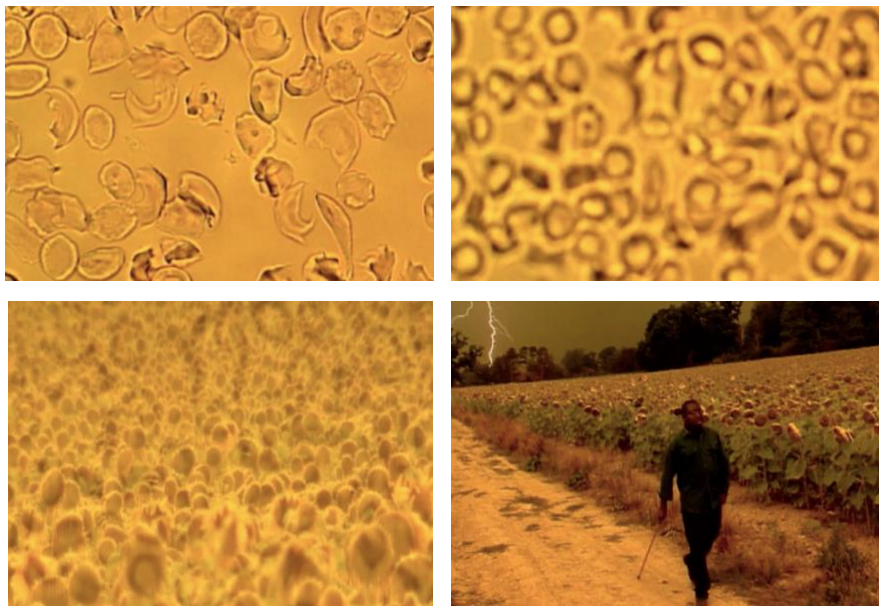
For Kodwo Eshun, the work is a neo-expressionist video essay that demonstrates the potential of manipulating pre-existing images (2004). Eddie Chambers signals how the production is a comprehensive account of Rodney's art and how little we have seen and know of him (1996).<sup>43</sup> For me, the work encapsulates how Rodney's disease was put at the service of black Britons and reveals the healing properties that art offers. The attention is not so much on his disease as was the case of *The Flame of the Soul* but on his art's importance for black Britain. As Jareh Das wrote, "works produced by black British artists centred on responses to social narratives commenting on invisibility, personal histories (as related to the British slave trade and its abolition), societal injustices, and identity politics. Prominent artists of this era included members of the BLK Art Group" (2019, 89). There was a focus on the social experience of suffering and not so much the individual. Rodney uses in his self-portraits the idea of selfhood to show the intersection in his identity as a disabled black artist in the Black Diaspora (Redhead 2020).

The correlation between pain, time and light in Rodney's life and work is established from the beginning. The work begins with a zoom-out shot of a field of sunflowers, followed by a long take of Rodney walking with a clutch in this field. The long-focal length lens

---

<sup>43</sup> The major retrospective on Donald Rodney, "Donald Rodney: Visceral Canker" will take place in Nottingham Contemporary from September 28, 2024, to January 5, 2025.

utilised places the emphasis on him. The sunflowers symbolise time for Rodney because they bloom during the summer, a time when he finds himself in hospital owing to his crises, unable to enjoy them. The sequence of Rodney with his clutch (pain), the lightning at the background (light), the sunflowers and the duration of the shot (time) advances how the three elements converge. The sequence uses a yellow filter. SCD patients suffer from jaundice or xanthopsia which is “[a] rare condition that causes yellow vision which can also occur due to medications” (Demir 2018, 165). The filter mirrors how Rodney may perceive reality and makes the viewer embody Rodney’s yellow reality.



**Figure 27. Beginning of *Three Songs on Pain, Time, and Light***

Thinking of sunflowers brings Vincent Van Gogh to mind, and there is a connection between the two artists. Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* (1989) in London’s National Gallery appear in the work. Throughout the production, parallels can be drawn between the life of both artists since illness and art coexist in their lives, positioning Rodney as the British Van Gogh. Both artists use art to withstand their illness and were captivated by sunflowers. As Nienke Bakker and Christopher Riopelle, for Van Gogh’s sunflowers symbolise his quest for “[s]unshine and light” (2019, 39), as did Rodney. Black Audio strategically includes tableaux of Rodney leaving hospital surrounded by people holding sunflowers or Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers*, showing how this essay film can compensate the absence of sunflowers in Rodney’s life and timelessly encapsulate his love for it. Both artists created their art in the interstices of their recurrent crises. As Sven Lövgren argues, “during the seizure the artist

[Van Gogh] was incapable of any form of activity, but between them his feelings and intellect functioned normally” (1971, 173). Rodney took footage for his art as he was in hospital.



**Figure 28. Tableau of Donald Rodney Leaving Hospital Surrounded by Sunflowers in *Three Songs on Pain, Time, and Light***

The work’s initial seconds shift from illness to art, showing the intertwined role they play in the artists’ life.<sup>44</sup> Rodney accomplishes this transition by referencing others who have inspired him, such as Frida Kahlo and her piece *The Broken Column* (1994), which Boyce mentioned to him and appears in his work *Britannia Hospital III* (1988). Kahlo was “[c]rippled but that didn’t stop her from being a highly political artist..” “She did very powerful work about her place within society as a woman and she used her disability and images of her disability as metaphors.” Both artists were committed to identity politics, and their art reflects how their disease intersects with race, gender, or class, revealing their transformative political vision. As Rodney expresses, the BLK movement and the avant-garde is his community and source of inspiration because within the avant-garde there is a community, “[y]ou can fit into, and you are not so much an outsider. There is a place for you, we naturally discuss ideas and look at the bits of nature, of sexuality, masculinity, and race.”

Rodney’s engagement with identity politics debunks myths about black Britons as can be seen in the works *Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light* includes like *Black Man Public enemy* (1992), *The house that Jack built* (1988), *Middle Passage* (1984), *Self-portrait as Clinton McCurbin* (1988), *Untitled* (1987) *Untitled* (1988), *The Voyage of my Father* (1987). Sonia Boyce highlights Rodney’s practice and how he deals with intimate, personal, and domestic aspects of life unlike most male artists. As she explains:

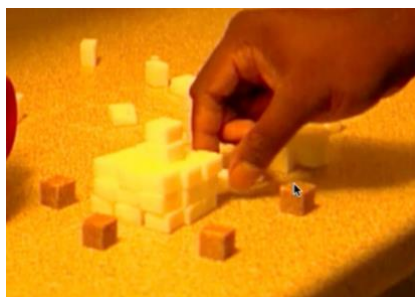
---

<sup>44</sup> Sunflowers seem to be important for black Britons. They appear in some other works I explore in this thesis, such as Sankofa’s *Home away from Home* (1992, chapter five). Jamaica Kincaid in *My Garden Book* wrote about how flowers encapsulate memory for migrants. As she indicated, “the garden is for me an exercise of memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me” (1999, 8). Sunflowers—since they were brought to Europe by colonisers—may symbolise resilience for Rodney and be a reminder of his roots.

There is a debate about the way in which men take on universal things, in the way in which women take a much more individual, personal, domestic [approach to] things in their work and I would challenge that because [...] men and women had quite an influence on each other's practices and I know that, for instance, there has always been a kind of personal element in your work [...] you talked about your father and it was very personal and intimate and quite challenging. (*The Flame of the Soul* 1990)

Rodney portrays psychological pain. He believes it is easier for him to deal with it than physical pain. As he claims, "I tried to turn psychological pain into art which is a bit easier." He did so in *Britannia Hospital* (1988) and *Self-portrait* (1991). For Michael Rothberg, trauma can be represented, as his notion of traumatic realism argues. He applies his ideas to writing, whereas I link them to visual art. As Rothberg maintains, traumatic realism derives from "[H]olocaust testimonial writing, but that also has implications for post-war cultural theory [...] it provides an aesthetic and cognitive solution to the conflicting demands inherent in representing and understanding genocide" (2000,9). Rodney uses his art as a way to channel his psychological pain as a SCD sufferer but also as a black Briton in a society that does not accept him. Mick Broderick and Antonio Traverso also wrote about the potential of creative arts and visual media to depict trauma and pain. For them, "the visual and narrative rendition of the pain of individual characters is interpreted as a synecdoche for the suffering of a people, culture or nation" (2010, 4). Rodney's art is a trope for black British communities.

An example of this is his commitment to securing more spaces for the representation of black Britons, slavery, or AIDS. He finds the Tate Gallery in London ironic, noting the absence of black artists' works on display despite the presence of numerous black security guards. He wants to visually render this by building a scale model of sugar cubes with security guards around it. As he describes this, the viewer sees a tableau in small scale of his idea. For Rodney, this is his "tribute to Tate and its history."



**Figure 29.** Donald Rodney's Tribute to the Tate Gallery in *Three Songs on Pain, Time, and Light*

Rodney links his SCD to other diseases such as AIDS since both diseases were characterised by misinformation and stigmatisation. In his piece, *Visceral Canker* (1990), he wanted to employ his own blood to portray the connection between Sir John Hawkins, the first person who went to Africa and started the slave trade in the UK, and Queen Elizabeth I. When the council discovered that he had a disease, he was not allowed to use his own blood “[t]he hysteria about blood diseases, they thought anybody with a blood disease had to be AIDS.” This is a further instance of how the AIDS epidemic was a moral panic as seen in Isaac Julien’s video *This is not an AIDS Advertisement* (chapter three). A further stereotype Rodney destroys is the idea that black people are only good at sports. He argues that he is a living example of how it is not true since he is an artist. However, he acknowledges that his disease saved him from being pigeonholed into sports, as he indicates, “I wouldn’t have been pushed to do art at school, I would have been encouraged to do sports.” *Double Think* (1992) describes this. In this piece Rodney highlights the contradictions surrounding black people after George Orwell’s concept of “double think,” meaning the “power holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously and accepting both of them” (Rodney 1994, 60). An instance of this contradiction is how Afro-Caribbeans were invited to work in Britain while being demonised afterwards.

Through his art, Rodney pictures black Britons’ collective memory and suffering while also managing to find peace by representing his psychological pain linked to his SCD. The use of the words pain, time and light become clearer towards the end of the work. He managed to turn his only constant (pain) into timeless hope (light) for those who may be suffering and may resort to his art to find understanding of SCD in the future (time).<sup>45</sup> The next work, *Street Warriors*, showcases community union through sports, featuring a team of street hockey players who dispute the stereotype claiming that young black Britons are lazy and disinterested in British life. By analysing sports after a production dealing with art, I seek to highlight how sports is an equally valuable cultural practice to understand society.

#### 4.3. Black Britons are not Lazy Criminals: Here Comes the *Street Warriors*

*Street Warriors* depicts a team of young creative black men in London who established The Street Warriors hockey team. Through their dedication to the sport, the work illustrates their

---

<sup>45</sup> The Genome Chronicles (2008) by Smoking Dogs Film further engages with Donald Rodney’s figure and artistic production.

involvement in both sports and London since they were sponsored by the Greater London Council (GLC). The sport served as a source of motivation and inspiration for The Street Warriors, fostering a positive attitude in their daily lives and motivating them to seek employment despite the challenges of Thatcherism.<sup>46</sup> This demonstrated that they were not lazy criminals, as they participated in the youth street cultures of London, organised one of the UK's most important street hockey teams, won national and international championships, and managed to earn a living from the sport. The work is a traditional documentary including talking-head interviews, archival footage of The Street Warriors as they are training and instances of their day-to-day lives.

Alain Fountain, Senior Commissioning Editor at the Independent Film and Video Department of Channel 4, congratulated Ceddo's "[a]ssertive portrayal of young black people" (1986 n.p.).<sup>47</sup> Imruh Bakari, the work's director, argued how he was impressed when he witnessed the team training in Southbank's Undercroft.<sup>48</sup> This inspired the documentary, as it demonstrated how these young people were not criminalising London (2022, n.p). Their coach also discovered them in this place. Nowadays, the undercroft is used by different youth subcultures such as skaters. This creates a 'palimpsestic' atmosphere in the undercroft, where distinct youth subcultures coexist across space and time. As Doreen Massey wrote, "the past is present in places in a variety of ways. It is present materially" (1991, 186). This undercroft is a reminder of past cultures and a "collage of current uses" (Harvey 1989, 66).

*Street Warriors* exemplifies how the GLC promoted art and sports in London, reflecting its cultural diversity (Curtis 2007). Following Michael Denning's understanding of hegemony (adapted from Gramsci), the GLC can be understood as a hegemonic formation trying to involve The Street Warriors in society as a long-term project of hegemony (1990). By encouraging them to participate in society, they can also gain power and visibility, which counters the idea that black Britons do not have a space in Britain. The GLC's founding questioned The Street Warriors' preconceptions about London's institutions since "[t]hanks to the funding from the GLC [The Street Warriors] has also meant a salary." Some of its members even decided to pursue careers in the fire brigade. For example, Winston, the team's captain, trained as a firefighter after the fire brigade organised a street hockey tournament. As

---

<sup>46</sup> When I do not use italics, I am referring to the team and not the documentary.

<sup>47</sup> The work has not been analysed before.

<sup>48</sup> Horace Ové was also captivated by sports. An example is his documentary on Skateboarding: *Skateboard Kings* (1978).



he maintains, “it is surprising because usually people at the fire brigade do not seem to have much interest for what you do at the black community.” His friends thought he was crazy because “they are like the police.” He started working at Clapham fire station and it has changed his outlook: “[s]omeone’s life may be in danger and If I am late to work someone may die....They need me in my unit...”



### 30. Southbank's Undercroft (London)

The GLC, through The Street Warriors, and the fire brigade provided Winston with a job and a sense of purpose. Fellow Street Warriors, who were unemployed despite having relevant qualifications, found happiness and ambition in the team in spite of the challenges of Thatcherism. As some of them argue, “I came to London when I was around nine years old, when I left school I went to college [...] and I found out there wasn’t any job for me to do so I did what I could: temporary jobs, part-time jobs. Every time I had more education and no job.” Another Street Warrior claims he left law school because he got paid forty-five pounds a week working in the city, and he would spend ten pounds each day travelling to the city. Another member trained to be a technical engineer but did not get a job. These testaments underscore how The Street Warriors are not lazy. On the contrary, they were combating the uncertainties of Thatcherism as any young (black) Briton.

The sport helped them deal with the distressing situation of being young, qualified, and unemployed. As one member admits, “it makes me happy. The rest of the week is just another day. It has done a lot for me.” C. L. R James wrote in *Beyond a Boundary* that when one enters the sporting arena one leaves behind the “compromises of everyday existence” ([1963] 2013, 66). Street hockey is source of self-esteem, “[I] was unemployed, and I was getting a bit frustrated. I am doing more for the sport, and it has become a good fight. It made me feel good.” The effects of participation in sport for racial minorities increases self-esteem and group identity (Washington and Karen 2001, 192). An idea also acknowledged by Eric Dunning, who contends that some of the gains of sports are gains in “identity, self-concept, self-assurance and habitus” (1999, 231). Dunning’s view aligns with The Street Warriors’

opinions. As Vicki Gilkey Hamilton, a representative of one The Street Warriors' sponsors maintains, "the street hockey league is a competitive sport, it is something that keeps them employed and help them move in the right direction," even encouraging them to pursue employment opportunities in sectors they would have not thought possible, such as the fire brigade.

Hamilton's claim illustrates how The Street Warriors served as a hegemonic strategy (Dunning 1999), functioning as a mechanism of social control and a civilising process by the British Establishment (Dunning 1999). By supporting young black Britons through sports, they would believe the State cares about them. However, the GLC proved to be a "short-term pleasure for people" (Dunning 1999, 29), as the GLC's funding and commitment started disappearing. As Winston contends, he loves the sport but was disappointed with the institutional aspects of the sport because when something is written about the Street Warriors' achievements, their names are overlooked. He realised they "boost certain people," which highlights the plan of civilising them and not really fostering social change for young black Britons. As Winston affirms, "you really need sponsorship to keep going, otherwise you go to the street again."

The Street Warriors are aware of their surrounding conditions and recognise how the sport is not an escape to forget about reality but a means to cope with and potentially improve it. This is evident in their attitude after losing matches. As one of them claims, "we have been playing hard and we did not get the results that we wanted. . . but it has been a good day. I mean, I've just came off from work after fifteen hours and it has paid off." Another one points out their dedication by mentioning that before becoming an established team, they spent a year training at the Undercroft, waking up at two a.m. The Street Warriors were involved with other young groups and their participation in championships encouraged the formation of other teams including women's groups such as The Assassins, one of London's few women's teams.

It can be argued that The Street Warriors, comply with the stereotype of young black people being drawn to sports. However, street hockey is not a mainstream sport or one associated with black people, unlike basketball. As one of The Street Warriors maintains, "I'd like to see it become a real sport, it is not part of the curriculum. It is not like football or hockey. Not everyone can go to the sports centre and have a match." Moreover, The Street Warriors was an inter-racial team.

*Street Warriors* subverts stereotypes about young black Britons by showcasing how they were not lazy, uneducated criminals. They popularised a marginal sport, obtained

support from institutions, and reshaped its significance through their “revolutionary activity,” to use Harvey’s term (2005, 148). *Street Warriors* diversifies black Britons’ representations and confronts stereotypes, placing the sport as a source of self-esteem, union, and inspiration to deal with the uncertainties created by Thatcherism. The following work, *Racism: A Response*, continues the theme of union and solidarity by portraying how black Britons unite against racism.

#### 4.4. Uniting against “The White Blanket of Forgetfulness.” *Racism: A Response*<sup>49</sup>

*Racism: A response* constructs a rebuttal against the racism faced by black British communities. It challenges the notion that black Britishness is not a possibility, reminding mainstream Britain that the majority of black Britons were invited to Britain as settlers to reconstruct the country after the second world war. The production indicates how black Britons unite and display solidarity through activism. It is a documentary mixing found material, such as archival footage of demonstrations, protests and cultural events, and talking-head interviews with black Britons and experts on racism and black British culture, such as Stuart Hall.<sup>50</sup>

The work initiates with the word racism against a black background, which dissolves to archival footage of people with various skin colours walking in London. This shot is followed by another one introducing a map of Great Britain. By not showing a map of the United Kingdom and, therefore, excluding Northern Ireland, the documentary emphasises how in Ireland there are also stories of violence and racism similar to the ones they are portraying for black Britons. The map and the words, “a response,” over it, advance how the idea of Britishness will be challenged. A voice-over establishes the narrative: “one of the most important issues facing the world today is racism. Equally important is the response by individuals and organism who are committed to eradicating racism world-wide.” These words are heard as footage of a concert at the Haringey anti-racist festival is displayed. This festival was organised in London to promote the diverse cultures living in London. Ceddo’s inclusion of this event highlights their community orientation, as I stated in chapter one.

---

<sup>49</sup> “The White Blanket of Forgetfulness” is an idea Gilane Towardos wrote about to deal with the oblivion of Britain’s past in relation to slavery (1994).

<sup>50</sup> There is no previous engagement with the work.

Before focusing on how black Britons unite in solidarity, the work exhibits a sequence of The Big Ben and The Houses of Parliament, a metonym for British power and democracy. However, the off-screen voice underlines the dark side of the British establishment through a critique on colonialism and how British institutions perpetuate racism. As it argues, “if you have a country which has been in the slave trade and has been the leader in the whole pyramid of colonialism, in order to justify both slavery and colonialism, you’ve got to have a culture, an ideology, a system of values which would allow the slave trade and colonial expansion.” The voice-over refers to the British Establishment’s ideological manipulation on the population and how it perpetuated discourses that became so internalised that Britons are amnesiac about the country’s past endeavours, as seen in colonialism. The work constantly juxtaposes the view of how the present is a consequence of the past. Therefore, “racism became a rationalisation...” “They had to create a culture of imperialism...” which mainstream Britain fails to acknowledge in the present. As Gilane Towardos wrote, “we would rather succumb to the lure of sweet oblivion than linger over bitter remembrance of things past and now forgotten” (1994, 17), which asks for accountability.

The past mainstream Britain tries to forget is visually enacted through archival footage of black British episodes, such as the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush, which also underscores how black Britons came “[h]ere as settlers not as immigrants.” The voice-over combats oblivion by reminding the viewer how the family, politics, the arts, and schools perpetuate these beliefs. The film mirrors Louis Althusser’s ideas on Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (1984). The family, education, politics, culture (literature, sports, etc.) or the media are for Althusser Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which function through ideology and are a material representation of a culture’s rituals, behaviours, or ways of thinking (Walton 2012, 77). Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) represented by the army, the police or the prison system appear in times of crises and work through coercion (Storey 1994). Instances of Ideological State Apparatuses are mass media which cram “every ‘citizen’ with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc., by means of the press, the radio and television” (Althusser 1984, 23). *Racism: A Response* attacks these Ideological Apparatuses.

The work illustrates internalised racism in the arts. As he argues, there is racism in “[t]he nursery rhymes, in the books that children read, in their dance forms, in the way they wrote, in their phraseology, in the language, style of speech, in their personal relationships.” An idea also highlighted by Sankofa’s member Martina Attile in conversation with Coco Fusco. For Attile racism is an example of the “[i]deas that are structured and sustained by the

practices of the society in which we live [...] this history has structured contemporary British life and can be seen in the stereotyped perceptions that white British people have of black people” (1988, 13). One interviewee maintains that in the past, racism was not displayed in unemployment but in housing, education, and the welfare system. However, second and third generations, as Maggie in *The Passion of Remembrance* (chapter three), also deal with unemployment. Their struggle is an accumulation of past issues and present ones since they have to manage being perceived as “the dangerous other,” as the media refers to them, and unbearable living conditions. The interviewee does not feel victimised by his situation, on the contrary, he reminds the viewer that they are settlers and that they are “here to stay, and here to fight.”

This interviewee signals how Britishness does not acknowledge the different identities comprising it, for it is an exclusive white club. For Kobina Mercer, “the sense of mutual exclusivity or logical incompatibility between the two terms, black and British, is one essential condition for the hegemony of racism over the English collective consciousness” (1994, 66). *Racism: A Response* challenges established views on nationhood and belonging concerning Britishness, which is as mythscape (Bell 2003). For Duncan Bell a mythscape is “[t]he temporally and spatially extended discursive realm wherein the struggle for control of peoples’ memories and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, contested and subverted” (2003, 66). This concept indicates how mainstream Britain is an imagined community (Anderson 1983) and marks how Britishness is a myth, which black Britons and *Racism: A Response* defies through their activism.

Black Britons endured the myths propagated in discourses such as the conservative slogan, “if you want a nigger as your neighbour, vote labour” (1964) or speeches like Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” (1968), which argued that immigrants would dominate native Britons because they did not wish to integrate, and Margaret Thatcher’s “swamp speech” (1978), perpetuating the notion that the country was swamped by people from different nationalities, suggesting that Britons would resist against it. As Rod Ramdin contends, racism comes from “[a]ll parts of ‘Ideological Apparatuses’ like politicians or mass media.” These myths together with ideological manipulation sustain the “them vs us” discourse. For Montserrat Guibernau, “the strength of nationalism derives above all from its ability to create a sense of identity” (1996d, 142). The imagined community of mainstream Britain did not acknowledge black Britons who were, as I indicated, the “enemy-within.” As such, “[b]lack have been constructed as problem categories” (Lawrence 1982, 71) and amnesiac British

people support the idea that “the problems have been imported by blacks themselves” (Lawrence 1982, 74).

Black Britons created their own mythoscape, which granted them a sense of identity granted by their shared history of displacement and marginalisation. This mythoscape acts as a “[c]ohesive force, binding the disparate members of the nation together: it demarcates the boundary between them and us, delineating the national self from the foreign, alien other” (Bell 2003, 70). However, the experiences of racism vary among various generations. For Hall racism is historically specific (1996d), and Paul Gilroy wrote about racism in the plural given that the differences between “[v]arious racism(s) have to be very clearly specified, for they are not only different between societies but also within them [...] the contemporary variety of racism is so different from its precursors that some of us began [...] to call it the new racism” (1993a, 55).

*Racism: A Response* portrays how young black Britons focus on building solidarity among minorities, since it is “[o]ne of the first steps in confronting one’s racism and understanding one’s another culture.” For Michael Rothberg, “traumas associated with racism create a physically and socially relational intimacy across groups” (2009, 233). The work includes instances of the Harringay anti-racist festival, where distinct cultural organisations showcased their cultural backgrounds because “[i]ndividuals and organisations have to challenge racist policies and attitudes.” The festival is a “[s]trategy to educate and remind us of the conditions which affect non-white people. It also presents an opportunity for interracial socialising. It comprised stands, music, workshops, and speeches by different racial groups who wanted to represent the “multicultural society Britain is today.”

The production acknowledges how multicultural festivals are just one of the many things that could be done; they may help destroy stereotypes and raise awareness of “[w]hat these cultures have to offer.” *Racism: A Response* is an example of activism. It reminds viewers of the several laws that the government has passed, such as the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1976, prohibiting racial discrimination and how they have failed. In the festival, workshops and flyers raise awareness of this. Furthermore, *Racism: A Response* targets the media as dangerous Ideological Apparatus which perpetuates distorted images. As the off-screen voice argues, “critical media reporting constantly undermines the masses’ perception of black people [...] what the media does [is creating] the climate, the opinions about black people, it popularises the stereotypes about black people.” An interviewee signals its psychological impact on future generations of young black Britons:

If a black person or somebody of African descent has done something wrong, [...] the first description is a colour man, a black youth. But when it happens with somebody of Caucasian extraction, [they write] a man of twenty-four is arrested in court. It is that fine division that we have to begin to question as black people because, all of us as potential parents or members of a family have a duty. If we have youngsters, and new generations coming up, and all they are fed from the press and the media are negative images about themselves, what will they begin to do? They begin to self-hate themselves as being black, as having a role in this society and, the self-fulfilling prophecy, if you are continuously told that you are a criminal, you are stupid, you are incapable, you know, there will reach a point when that psychological background takes effect.

The events organised to raise awareness intend to stop the transmission of intergenerational trauma and secure a future for upcoming generations. Black Britons realised they could not count on mainstream Britain and tried to mentally emancipate themselves. As one speaker asserts, “we need to start buying our own newspapers that actually reflect our views, our feelings, our thinking.”

Stuart Hall, who intervenes in the work, highlights, the role of a Repressive State Apparatus: the police. As he maintains, “the police are increasingly used in the society as a disciplinary force, they control a wide range of situations which are remotely connected with crime...” “Then you have to add something about the position of the black community which is the object of racism in society. It is a sector of the population which has been systematically denied equality and justice as a society as a whole...” For Hall, the problem is the lack of regulations within the police. He is optimistic and believes “[i]t is perfectly possible to change the regime if there is a commitment from the top,” preventing racism from flourishing. *Racism: A Response* signals how “[p]olitics is the backbone of racism,” and why campaigns, festival, and demonstrations are crucial to fight oppression. The work underlines black Briton’s historical presence and how they unite to combat racism and stereotypes that affect their narratives and portray a myopic vision of reality.

#### 4.5. Conclusion

All in all, this chapter has expanded upon the ideas introduced in the previous chapter regarding the diversity of black British stories but placing the focus on social memory and the importance of collective frameworks. It presents new narratives, such as the connection between black Britishness and disability through sickle-cell disease, exemplified by Rodney and how he uses his art to combat social injustices for black Britons. Additionally, it

highlights how the stereotype of black people as being lazy, uneducated criminals is challenged and how black British communities unite to face racism and misconceptions behind their presence in Britain.

The identities in these two chapters underscore the importance of self-representation as a prerequisite to debunk myths and articulate new subjectivities which arise after the process of deconstructing distorted narratives. I have also investigated how the past can be accessed, interpreted, built, and reconstructed in diverse ways.

The forthcoming chapters examine how black Britons navigate their hybrid identity as both British and black, entailing how they have a cultural heritage which needs to be in conversation with the British reality to ensure the combination of both cultural backgrounds. In the following chapter, there is an analysis of familial roots, notions of belonging and non-belonging, which shed light on how postcolonial identities adapt to the British context, or not. It also investigates how individual and familial memories and frameworks are tightly intertwined and are built against social and collective structures.





## CHAPTER 5. THE TWILIGHT ZONE OF (NON)-BELONGING: THE CONFIGURATION OF BLACK BRITISHNESS

“We should think of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation”

(Hall 1996a, 210)

Migration is a recurring topic in black British culture and in this chapter I explore the implications of migration in families and how it impacts on the construction and reshaping of individuals’ identities. The four works I include, *Home away from Home* (1993) by Sankofa, *Dreaming Rivers* (1988) by Sankofa, *A Family Called Abrew* (1992) by Sankofa, and *A Touch of the Tar Brush* (1991a) by Black Audio, use family memory as a leitmotif and contribute to the “[a]ssertion of another non-white British presence.” (Hebdige 1996, 139). Through the family, personal narratives emerge, referencing the family’s collective framework and its wider social, cultural, and political implications. The productions challenge the idea that black cultures cannot be part of Britishness, continuing the views I introduced in preceding chapters and revealing that there is black in the Union Jack (Gilroy 1987).

*Home away from Home* depicts the fear of families with a cultural heritage of losing their roots. It recounts the story of displacement of Miriam, who fears her British-born children will never embrace their Nigerian roots. I study the works through notions such as Svetlana Boym’s reflective nostalgia, which entails a longing for a past that cannot return to inhabit different time-spaces and which cannot return, and restorative nostalgia, which attempts to restore the past (2001). I also employ the concept of Anglicisation (Bhabha 1994) to stress how postcolonial identities, which do not embrace their roots and have a displaced sense of identity, may try to perform as British to adapt to their reality.

*Dreaming Rivers* discloses the life story of Miss T. and her children, who endeavour to reconstruct their mothers’ fragmented biography to understand her migrating past and, in turn, their own cultural background. I will examine it through concepts related to melancholia and reflective nostalgia; the importance of religion for Afro-Caribbean cultures; Juliette Harrison’s cultural imagination, which illustrates how imagination can help to craft narratives that connect individuals who may have shared experiences (2013) and Deleuzian ideas on time like the concept of *Aion*, which represents eternity (1990).

The following two works, *A Family Called Abrew* and *A Touch of the Tar Brush*, shift the London-centric focus of this thesis to black British stories unfolding in Scotland and Liverpool, respectively. They challenge the myth that the Windrush generation represents the first black presence in Britain. *A Family Called Abrew* researches the role of the Abrews, a Scottish family engaged in the British entertainment business. I analyse it by emphasising the significant role of oral history and testimonies in uncovering the unfulfilled gaps of the past; the nostalgia for an experience and recognition in the annals of black British history; the role of historiophony (Birdsall 2008), which emerges from using oral accounts to explore history, and what I term phonoptic history, which denotes the amalgamation of audio and visual history, or rather, historiophony in cinema.

*A Touch of the Tar Brush* presents the stories of two families whose members were born in mixed marriages. Their narratives and experiences underline how they reflect multicultural Britain, even if their existence is not acknowledged by mainstream Britain, which marginalises them. It also tackles Liverpool's colonial past, given that it has the oldest continuous black community in the United Kingdom. I investigate it through ideas related to how these families contest monolithic conceptions of (white) Britishness; how the younger generations are aware of their cultural background and build their identity around that, as well as the (trans)Atlantic influence of other cultures in Liverpool (Benjamin and Fleming 2010). These works produce new black subjects (Hall 2006) who question previous accepted views of (black) Britishness and highlights the impact of family frameworks in individual and collective identity formation.

### 5.1. Fearing the Loss of Roots while Being *Home away from Home*

*Home away from Home* reflects on displacement and rootlessness. It portrays the story of Miriam, a Nigerian woman working at Heathrow Airport, who migrated to London as a child, and has four London-born children—Fumi, Betty, Abe, and Sunny. Miriam realises her children, especially Fumi—the eldest one—have no connection to their Nigerian roots. Afraid they might grow up in a country that does not accept their difference and may feel lost with no place to call home, she builds a hut in her garden to bring their roots closer. Their neighbours do not welcome this initiative and destroy the hut overnight. Fumi becomes aware of her mum's suffering and her own subjectivity and manages to embrace her roots. The production is a ten-minute piece characterised by non-verbal language such as body

language. As speech is suppressed, the visual, acoustic, and non-verbal elements carry the narrative. Its diegetic sounds, such as the noise objects make as they are moved, are layered with nondiegetic sounds like a soundtrack, which articulates Miriam's narrative.

For Wheeler Winston Dixon, the work's power emanates from its visual elements (1998) which the feelings it encapsulates (Gallone 1994), and its soundtrack (Yeran 2022). Maureen Blackwood, the director, disclosed that its premise stems from a newspaper's headline detailing how a woman built a hut in her garden and got demolished (1993). *Home away from Home* depicts the hardships experienced by an African woman seeking a sense of belonging (Reber 1996; Parker 2021). Gwendolyn Foster describes it as "a mediation on exile and spiritual communion" (1997, 138). When it aired on television, some viewers, like FC, expressed to Channel 4 how the film was "discriminatory and patronising towards Nigerians" (1993).<sup>51</sup> However, as I demonstrate, the film achieves the contrary effect since it brings to Western audiences ignored postcolonial British narratives.

The initial establishing shot introduces Miriam at Heathrow Airport, looking at the runway. A close-up on her face reveals she is weeping as she watches airplanes. The cut from the airplane to her face transmits the idea of displacement since the camera and the airplane are moving but she is not. The airplane's wheels move but it is ambiguous whether it is departing or arriving, which suggests the internal dilemma Miriam faces: should she leave London or should she allow herself to settle and reconcile her identity against the British landscape? The song accompanying this sequence, "Trains and Boats and Planes" by Burt Bacharach (1984), which narrates the departure of people, except for the singer. The song imbues the sequence with a nostalgic tone, intensifying Miriam's distress.



**Figure 31. Miriam Weeping at the Airport in *Home away from Home***

The following sequence shows Miriam at the airport's cafeteria flicking through a fashion magazine featuring Nigerian fashion. This puts her in a daydreaming state. The

---

<sup>51</sup> FC is the caller's initial as stated in Channel 4's archive material shared with me. There is no page number.

editing conveys Miriam's shock by alternating between the fashion feature and a close-up of her reaction. She brings the magazine closer to her eyes, which allows the viewer to see the hut on it. As she does this, she sees a Nigerian family (a mother and two daughters) in the adjacent table. They are dressed in traditional Nigerian attire—Yorubas—as the ones in the magazine. Miriam's wishful look indicates she longs for that experience with her own children.

Her wishful look transforms into fear and preoccupation, introducing a flashback. In it, she gives her daughter Fumi a Yoruba for her birthday, which she dislikes. This flashback reveals Miriam's worries about the potential estrangement of her British-born children, who are unaware of their Nigerian roots. The magazine has triggered Miriam's worries and prompts her nostalgic mode. Nostalgia is a spatio-temporal reaction to the experience of displacement and loss (Arnold-de Simine 2013). Miriam longs for a home and the possibility of combining her Nigerian roots with her British reality. As Dennis Walder wrote, "nostalgia is usually thought of in terms of longing and desire—for a lost home, and/or time. But it is more than that: it is a longing for an experience" (2010, 4). Miriam also embodies a nostalgia for a future she wishes to create. As Jill Bradbury notes, nostalgia "[i]s not only a longing for the way things were, but also a longing for futures that never came, or for horizons of possibilities that seem to have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events" (2012, 342). Considering her children's estrangement, she doubts her wish will come true.

*Home away from Home* uncovers the effect of nostalgia on postcolonial subjects. Miriam's nostalgia transitions from reflective to restorative (Boym 2001). Reflective relates to individual and cultural memory and includes elements of mourning and melancholia, which accentuates the loss of "[c]ollective frameworks of memory" (Boym 2001, 55). At the cafeteria, Miriam mourns the framework linking her to her roots. In fact, reflective nostalgia is exhibited between immigrants "[w]ho recognise their dual belonging. . . .What the reflective nostalgic fears is to leave his newly inhabited imagined homeland for the one and only true motherland that might turn out to be false or deadly" (2001, 337). Miriam has realised Britain is deadly for her family since their cultural background is not accepted. Restorative nostalgia, which I will explain later through Miriam's hut, refers to the wish to recreate and rebuild a lost home so that it is not lost (Boym 2001). Miriam's reflective nostalgia helps her "[p]erform a labour of grief [...] that points to the future" (Boym 2010, 55) and change to restorative nostalgia.

Miriam's British-Nigerian children embody C. L. R James predicament:

In ten or fifteen years, there will be a whole generation of black people who were born in Britain, who were educated in Britain and, who grew up in Britain. They will be intimately related to the British people, but they cannot be fully part of the English environment because they are black. Everyone including their parents is aware that they are different. (1984, 55)

Miriam is aware of C. L. R James' words and her children's Anglicisation, which is the effect of "[f]lawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English" (Bhabha 1994, 125). For Homi Bhabha, there is a distinction between being British and being Anglicised since the latter is "the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different" (Bhabha 1994, 128). Miriam is equally Anglicised, given that she follows British standards of beauty in dressing and make-up, as I explained in *Perfect Image?* (chapter three). As the work advances, she is shown wearing Nigerian attires. By not embracing her own roots in time, she might have prevented her children from embracing their roots.

Miriam's house is a pastiche of Nigerian and British objects, which expresses her family's identity. Several close-ups exhibit photographs of Miriam with her children. In these pictures, there is no father figure, which adds a layer to Miriam's identity: she is experiencing the loneliness of migration and the hardships behind being a single mother. Miriam, as the only Nigerian figure in her children's lives, feels an urgency to pass on her Nigerian roots. *Home away from Home* does not focus on her experience as a single mother, highlighting how the narrative resorts around migration. Another interpretation is how, considering women's subordination in Nigeria (Makama 2013), the film reflects Nigerian women's empowerment in Europe away from male-dominated accounts.

Panning around Miriam's house décor, the camera stops on a weary Miriam, who closes her eyes as if she needs to escape her reality. Up to this point, Miriam is an almost melancholic subject. As Dominic LaCapra wrote, "when absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia. . . . When loss is converted into absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy" (2001, 45). Miriam embodies a misplaced nostalgia rather than melancholia, for she is aware of the need to change her reality but does not know how.

In her living room, she re-reads the Nigerian fashion magazine. Her hand gets stained as she touches the hut on its pages; similarly, she gets a taint from touching the soil in her garden. This allows Miriam to reach an epiphany: she is going to solve her family's estrangement by building a hut. This is her symbolic way of bringing her Nigerian home to their British home while being away from home. Through her hut, Miriam transforms her

reflective nostalgia into restorative since she provides “[a]lternatives to the present social order” (Wayne 2001, 69). There is no monument in the United Kingdom her children can contemplate to reflect about their roots, so she had to bring them home through the hut. For Boym, “restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future” (2001, 49). According to Walder, restorative nostalgia tries to turn history into tradition and monument (2010), and this is what Miriam does at the micro level of her family. Walder points out that in nostalgia there is a “sense that the present is deficient” and “objects, buildings, and images from the past should be available” (2010, 9). The objects in the house and the hut exemplify this. For Miriam, the present is deficient, and she wants to make her children’s present mean more.



**Figure 32. Miriam’s Epiphany in *Home away from Home***

As Miriam constructs her hut, her neighbours and her Anglicised daughter, Fumi, keep her under surveillance. Once the hut is finished, a scene shows one of her neighbours dialling the number “8471253.” She has not dialled the police, but the neighbourhood patrol who, destroys Miriam’s hut overnight. For Miriam, the hut was a magical place, which allowed her to forget her loneliness (Gallone 1994), whereas for her neighbours, it is an instance of “colonisation in reverse”—as Jamaican poet Louis Bennett wrote (1996). For Bennet, families like Miriam’s installed their traditions in Britain and put British traditions in jeopardy, signalling how Britain’s national-popular culture was changing because of them (Mercer 1994).

Miriam’s family demonstrates how Britishness, and the concept of home was evolving. For Bhabha, “an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept [...] of otherness” (1994,18). Miriam’s neighbours consider Miriam’s family savage. The children’s hybrid identity is a visual reminder of how they are British, challenging essentialist definitions of Britishness. Through the hut’s destruction and the painting of their house’s façade, which refers to them as savages, the children realise they need to embrace their Nigerian roots. After these events, Fumi is closer to her mum, equally suffering with the hut’s destruction and helping her clean the word savages. This proves how racism “[a]ttempts

to fix and naturalise the difference between belongingness and otherness” (Hall 1988, 28). Miriam’s neighbours believe they represent belongingness and Miriam and her family dangerous others.

To conclude, the work builds a visual representation of Miriam’s hybrid family through sunflowers. Miriam and her children plant sunflower seeds in the area preciously occupied by the hut. The children have learned about their roots thanks to their mother. As Marty Roth notes, “we acquire group memories by hearing people talk about them, by participating in commemorations and rituals or by reading about them or viewing” (2011, 60). Sunflowers hold significance for the family, as evidenced by a painting of sunflowers in their living room. These sunflowers have moved from the privacy of the house to the family’s garden. This mirrors the family’s narrative, as they have stopped hiding their roots and are now aware of the cultural background which shapes them. Their past (the soil on which Miriam built the hut) serves as the foundation of their present (the sunflowers).



**Figure 33. The Hut and Sunflowers in *Home away from Home***

The sunflowers function as the film’s symbolic solution. As Jens Ruchatz wrote, “the formation of any memory does rely fundamentally on means of exchanging and sharing knowledge. It cannot do without symbols that portray or embody knowledge of the past and can circulate in a social group” (2008, 368). Sunflowers grow as a sign of the family’s place and memory. Miriam is at ease with this solution as the ending of the production illustrates. She is at the airport watching airplanes. This time, she is not crying and, as she touches the soil in one pot, she smiles. She has gotten rid of her misplaced nostalgia and has managed to reconcile her family’s roots by securing a cultural heritage for her children.

*Home away from Home* exhibits a postcolonial narrative of displacement and rootlessness, which reveals identities not contemplated by mainstream definitions of Britishness. The following work, *Dreaming Rivers*, introduces another story of postcolonial migration through Miss T. and her family. Miss T. stayed in Britain out of love, and now, as her final days approach, she expresses the emotional toll accompanying migration.



## 5.2. Sometimes our Dreams Depend on What is not Available: *Dreaming Rivers*

*Dreaming Rivers* depicts Miss T.'s final moments of life. As her three children gather to say goodbye to her, they attempt to piece together her fragmented narrative as a Caribbean migrant. Miss T.'s eldest daughter, born in the Caribbean, embraces her cultural heritage, as indicated by the Kufi she wears. The other two children, born in Britain, adopt a more Anglicised style of dressing. This reveals their dissimilar relationship towards Britain and how differently they interpret their mother's life story. Through flashbacks, Miss T. relives her memories, crafting an account of displacement and loss that helps her children understand their origins. It is an essay film characterised by its use of flashbacks, allegorical tableaux—where objects are important—and found footage, as seen in a montage of Miss T.'s memories. The film alternates between the space Miss T.'s watching their mother and Miss T.'s dreamscape, indicating how time in the film is non-linear.

*Dreaming Rivers* shows black British stories and the experience of migration in Britain (Mercer 1994; Fraser 1988; Sankofa 1988b). Gwendolyn Audrey Foster highlights the work's allegorical and fragmentary nature (1997), which is for Patricia Carrington also a lyrical spectacle (1989). For *Film Comment* writer Armond White, the production is an exercise of politicised nostalgia (1988) that portrays the hardships between a colonial past and a postcolonial present (Paskin 1989). As filmmaker Martina Attille confessed to Coco Fusco, "I wanted to deal with the postcolonial situation and the experience of migration [as well as] the complex process by which we constantly interact with and change our environment with our histories" (1988, 37).

The majority of scholars and sources have emphasised the importance of including the narrative of a black woman (Bourne [1998] 2001). An idea Attille admitted to Fusco, *Dreaming Rivers* was conceived as a project "about representations of black women .... I wanted to talk about images of black women in film and what audiences were meant to see or read from images of black women" (1988, 37). For Ifeona Fulani, "*Dreaming Rivers* [...] focused on the representational strategies of black women and [is] a continuation of [Attille's] exploration of images of black women and black femininity" (2018, 7). The work is a collaboration between women, as seen with the participation of British Afro-Caribbean artist Sonia Boyce (Diawara and Boyce 1996, 312). Authors such as Manthia Diawara (1991) and Chandra Frank (2019) have read the production through the lens of psychoanalysis. My focus is on Miss T.'s fragmented narrative of migration and how it affects the sense of identity of her children.

An intertitle introduces *Dreaming Rivers*: “the boat in the harbour took my sweetheart away, my sweetheart you left me here, alas what am I to do?” This intertitle is matched to a creole song in the soundtrack. The imagery related to water and the (im)possibility of movement is evident through the words harbour, water, here and left. These elements will appear in Miss T.’s fragmented narrative. The viewer hears the offscreen sound of waves splashing. It does not reveal the sea but Miss T.’s laying down in her house. The sea is part of her fragmented memory and, as was the case of Miriam with airplanes, it symbolises displacement and the impossibility of return to her home in the Caribbean. Miss T., in her deathbed, can only dream of rivers.

The camera is on Miss T. as her children pose several questions. The younger daughter wonders, “[w]ho put her hair like that, she never wore it like that?” Her son demands, “why did you come here for mum?” indicating how he is unaware of his roots. The older sister argues, “he should have been here to show her some respect.” She refers to their dad, the lover who “left her here” even if “she loved him and wanted to be with him” The children’s three queries: “why did you come here?” “What have they done with your hair?” “Where is him?” reveal Miss T.’s identity crisis of displacement, depersonalisation, and loss. The fragmented conversation continues, “why did dad leave”—asks her son—“she sent for me. Seven years old. It’s alright for you two, you belong to all this. Part of the new world”—replies the eldest daughter. The anglicised siblings do not reply, which evokes a hidden, complex family history.



**Figure 34. Miss T.’s Children in *Dreaming Rivers***

The following sequence introduces Miss T. waking up. The children are not in the sequence, which denotes how this space is a product of her imagination, a dreamscape which will explain her family history and give coherence to her fragmented narrative. Her biography is an example of how any account coming from memory is characterised by fragments of truth and fantasy, and how dreaming is a trope that transcends boundaries. In her dreamscape, Miss T. is a melancholic subject, grieving the loss of a loved one, an identity, and the possibility of belonging. Melancholia or reflective nostalgia (Boym 2001) is seen in

*Dreaming Rivers*. For Boym, reflective nostalgia includes elements of “[m]ourning and melancholia. While [in melancholia the] loss is never completely recalled, it has some connection to the loss of collective frameworks of memory. . . . Reflective nostalgia is a form of deep mourning that performs a labour of grief [...] through pondering pain” (2001, 50). Miss T.’s sorrowful eyes and paralysed body reflect this “pondering pain” deriving from her partially remembered past.

As the fragmented narrative demonstrates, the family has lost their familial/collective structure. As her son indicates, “too many secrets in our West Indian heritage. . . . Too much pain.” Miss T.’s children elaborate on their grief by reconstructing their mother’s autobiography and overcoming their collective melancholia, the loss of their familial and collective framework, which they want to restore. The eldest sister signals how, “by the time she had you two, England had begun to lose its magical appeal” “streets paved with gold, small island people would believe anything back then. Anything is possible” which denotes how Miss T. also gave up on her dream of belongingness. As one of her daughters recalls, Miss T. used to say, “sometimes your dreams depend on what’s available.” Her biography proves how individual narratives are built against collective ones, on which I focus in the following chapter.

It is too late for Miss T. to work on her grief, which explains why she is shown as a pathologically melancholic subject. In her dreamscape, the camera pans through her objects revealing antidepressants. She cannot articulate her memories coherently since she partially remembers, but her objects can. Miss T.’s son admits he was ashamed of the junk in her house. His sister corrects him, “it was alright for her. She cherished these things, she felt proud. . . . She was proud of all these things. Of us, you know, what’s left are like her memoirs, history, her autobiography.” Her objects and her children are the tangible remnants of her life. By looking at photographs of her children, Miss T. reminisces their childhood—which the film introduces through a montage. As Miss T. looks at herself in the mirror, trying to recognise herself, the camera pans on the of objects in front of her—among them a myriad wax candles, flowers, the image of St. Michael, and a Madonna. St. Michael symbolises Miss T.’s forthcoming death. According to Christianity, St. Michael offers protection for the dying, helping them in their final journey (North 2012). Miss T. lights up candles and prays.

These objects uncover the importance of religiosity in Caribbean families. For Miss T., religion is an important familial and personal framework or “[c]hannel for meaning and memory (Hamner 2011, 25). The dreamscape’s religiosity, combined with Miss T.’s children standing at her deathbed, suggest how this dreamscape is the prelude to her death. This

prelude is a nostalgic time-space for Miss T., given that it is “[a]n act of creative construction that triangulates the past and the future through the intense gaze at the present” (Hamner 2011, 28), and she tries to build her biography in this space. Sankofa described Miss T. as a Caribbean woman (1988), an ambiguous description that forces the audience to be attentive and experience the incompleteness of Miss T.’s narrative. The work reveals she was from St. Lucia.

Another object among her trinkets is a photograph of the Steine front of Brighton’s Pavilion rebuilt by John Nash, which is a subtle piece of criticism on colonialism and Britain’s post-war migration. The Royal Pavilion exemplifies British Orientalism and Britain’s colonial past. For Edward Said, Orientalism is “[a] way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience” (1979,1). The Orient “[w]as almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place or romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape” (Said 1979, 1). The Pavilion’s architecture is a blend of different cultures and traditions–“half Indian, half Chinese” (Gilbert 1949, 37) which is “[d]ivorced from its context” (Morley 1984, 71). Similarly, Miss T. feels out of place considering her history of migration, and so do her children.

The Pavilion is a remnant of the Empire and the appeal of the exotic. For Miss T., it illustrates her failed ideas about the West, which was for her as exotic and romanticised as the Orient was for Westerners. For Said, “orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths” (1979, 6), as was the notion of the promised land for her. I take the Pavilion as a metonym for the place where she resided in Britain: Brighton. The sound of water splashing throughout the work is a reminder of the barrier separating and connecting the two countries she has inhabited: Britain and St. Lucia, and which have shaped her biography. This is highlighted by how the camera pans to the right and zooms in on a photograph of Miss T. as a young woman, juxtaposing the woman who migrated to Britain with a dream and the melancholic woman who remained and loss her identity.



**Figure 35. Some of Miss T.’s Trinkets in *Dreaming Rivers***

In the dreamscape, an off-voice claims, “let us find way to ease sadness.” This ‘us’ could be ancestral voices talking to Miss T. and announcing that her death is approaching. In fact, dreaming and dying are examples of transcending unconscious boundaries. As her death approaches, the palette used becomes more colourful since, so far, it has been highly melancholic, dominated by grey, navy blue and black. The change in colour also indicates how her fragmented narrative, combined with her children’s reconstruction, which illuminates the grey area of their mother’s past, paints the side of herself she cannot remember. Her husband appears, highlighting how he played a major role in her biography. Two off-screen voices argue, “maybe we shouldn’t have married, this country can take so much” “she never wanted to come here.” The first off-screen voice is Miss T.’s internal monologue, whereas the second one offers a third-person perspective by ancestors or her children.

She washes and oils her feet, reminiscent of anointing of the sick and those about to die–The Last Rites. For Tony Sargent in the Bible, “anointing and appointing are linked” (2007, 18). She anoints herself suggesting how she also appoints herself–as the member of the family who sacrificed herself for a better future for her family in a new country. The following sequences alternate her children’s space with her dreamscape, where she embodies her ship journey, her Odyssey, before arriving in Britain and her voyage to depart for good. The soundtrack repeats the sound of wind and an approaching thunderstorm as she claims, “England. It is so cold.” Her body moves as if she was on a boat. Her eldest daughter holds her hand outside her dreamscape while voices demand, “Pray for her spirit.” In her dreamscape, the candles lighted up in honour of St. Michael are blown away–St. Michael is coming for her, she is dying. The camera’s rapid movement and quick passage of time show she is losing control. In the dreamscape, she reaches for her Bible and suitcase, pointing out that her last wish is to run away. In the space with her children, she opens her eyes and affirms, “I’m going home. This place makes me so tired. I want to go home. England makes me so tired. Sometimes dreams depend on what’s not available.” This statement contradicts the sentence she used to say to her children about dreams depending on what was available. She has realised she was wrong and regrets her past life choices

*Dreaming Rivers* reveals the significant role of cultural imagination, an extension of cultural memory but applied to inventiveness. As Juliette Harrison wrote, “just as certain memories of events or people survive in the cultural memory and form part of a tradition, certain stories [...] become increasingly important within the cultural imagination” (2013, 13). The production recreates in Miss T.’s dreamscape the shared experience of migration. As

the off-screen voice argues, “so many of our people have died” “you will never finish counting.” In fact, in her dreamscape, Miss T.’s body moves as if she was drowning, paying homage to the anonymous deaths of the Middle Passage. As Christina Sharpe notes, “to be in the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery’s as yet unresolved unfolding,” (2016, 16), and the wake is the positions Miss T. occupies. The weather conditions are a further symbol of the Middle Passage. This suggests how her personal biography is built against a collective structure.



**Figure 36. Miss T. Anointing and Appointing Herself in *Dreaming Rivers***

The work eschews a linear chronology as indicated earlier. The film’s temporality, in which Miss T. is both dying, reminiscing her past life, and her children are also reconstructing her life pinpoints that, in Deleuze’s terms, “no one ever dies, but has always just died or is always going to die, in the empty present of the Aion, that is, in eternity” (Deleuze 1990, 61). Gilles Deleuze distinguishes between chronos—linear time—and Aion—perpetual, unbounded, eternal time. As Deleuze wrote, “the unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present” (1989, 5) “the essentially unlimited past and future” (Deleuze 1990, 61). *Dreaming Rivers* invites Aion. By doing so, the protagonist can dream of escaping to eternity through her death. The idea resonates with Pierre Nora’s words, “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded” (1989, 12). In her dreamscape, her dress lies on the floor: she has followed Aion into eternity.

*Dreaming Rivers* exemplifies how personal memories have a correlation to familial frameworks. It also indicates how this relationship is even tighter and more significant for families with a background of migration, showing how the past resonates in the present. In the next work, *A Family Called Abrew*, a family of Scottish performers who have been forgotten, reveal their contribution to British entertaining.

### 5.3 Black Scottishness: *A Family Called Abrew* and British Entertainment

*A Family Called Abrew* offers the contribution of the Abrew family to British entertainment and their influence on other British artists. It focuses on boxers Manuel and Charlie Abrew and performer Lottie Abrew. It features interviews from family members and friends, including Charlie Abrew, Clementia Abrew–Manuel’s wife–, Jackie Stevenson–Lottie’s daughter–and Lottie’s friends Cyril Lagey, Iris Toummahvoh and Lee Kane. Through their individual remembrance, the work creates a multi-generational archive celebrating this family and black Scottishness. In doing so, the film expands the London-centric focus of this thesis and deals with British stories in other parts of the United Kingdom–as *A Touch of the Tar Brush* further bears out. *A Family Called Abrew* blends dramatic recreations and oral testimonies through talking-head interviews. It incorporates archival footage belonging to the family and stock footage from some of the introduced events from sources like the British Pathé or newspapers articles. The combination of footage and oral testimonies reconstructs the Abrews’ memories and preserve their legacy.<sup>52</sup>

According to Dixon, the production is traditional in content and structure compared to other Sankofa works (1988). However, it is an example of the rebirth of black British cinema (Foster 1997). Naomi Gessesse highlights how it provides an instance of black Scottish oral history and its link to the British entertainment history (2022). Paul Thompson indicates the importance of oral history on families’ histories since, without its evidence, “the historian can discover very little about either the ordinary family’s contacts with neighbours and kin, or its internal relationships” (1998, 25). Maureen Blackwood, the work’s director, is the historian who listens to the Abrews’ narratives and encodes them. For me, the interest in this work is in its use of oral history to construct the fragmented narrative of the family as well as providing an account of black Scottish stories.

A dramatic recreation of someone opening a drawer with photos and objects of the family opens the narration. The drawer is a memoryscape, containing the family’s memory (Butler 2009). For Hugo Slim et al., “physical objects, such as old tools, photographs, and traditional costumes or artefacts, can provide the focus for a more detailed testimony or group” (1998, 119). Through these objects and testimonies, the Abrews’ memory is reconstructed, illustrating the dynamics of memory and the audience’s active listening to access memory.

---

<sup>52</sup> The British Pathé is an online newsreel archive with films from 1896 to 1984.

Jackie's initial intervention reveals her distant relationship with her mother, who was absent, and was raised by her grandparents.<sup>53</sup> Her bitterness towards Lottie contrasts with her admiration towards her grandfather who, "every coloured man in the area in Scotland wanted to visit." For her, Lottie's involvement in Britain's entertainment meant not having a mother. The work will present various opinions on Lottie, which will help Jackie reconnect with her mother's memory. Jackie's testimony contrasts with that of Lee Kane, who describes Lottie as a mother figure, "she was somebody I could identify with as a black woman because she was very independent, very strong [...] but also, she was very aware of her experiences as a black person and the fight that she had to fight being all black in Scotland." An experience Lottie did not live. The importance of mothers providing a familial structure was revealed in *Dreaming Rivers* and *Home away from Home*. Jackie's familial framework was created by her grandparents and not her mother.

Charlie intervenes from his living room. As Slim et al. wrote, "life story interviews are normally private, one-to-one encounters between the interviewer and narrator [...] [they are held] somewhere which offers seclusion, comfort, and familiarity. There is often no better place than the narrator's home" (1998, 116). The hanging photographs of the family indicate how Charlie will rework the memory of his siblings by sharing their private stories.

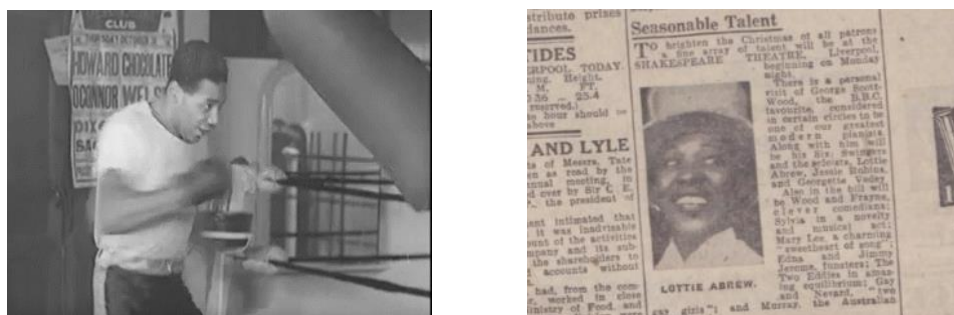


Figure 37. Manuel and Lottie Abrew

Iris, a Liverpoolian dancer and friend of Lottie, explains how she was the only black person in her dancing class: "in those days it was just difficult. I used to make-up [...] to make me white like the rest of the girls." Her teacher encouraged her to audition for Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1936*, which was a yearly black review popularised in the twenties and thirties in Harlem and which toured across the world to places such as London, where Iris

<sup>53</sup> I use the interviewees' names rather than their surnames to avoid confusion with the various members of the Abrew family.



met Lottie. Iris's intervention makes Lottie's biography reconstruction less biased since it goes beyond family frameworks.

Cyril, *Love Thy Neighbour* actor, remembers Lottie positively, as she inspired him to become an actor. He met her in the house his mother founded in London "[f]or coloured people because it was very hard for coloured people to live anywhere in London when they were coming in for a show." Cyril's brothers', as Lottie's, were boxers, suggesting how the Abrews narrative can help other families trace their past and understand its importance. Charlie explains how Manuel influenced him. Charlie trained to be a ship engineer but could not find a job. Seeing Manuel was successful as a boxer, he followed his footsteps.

Clementia, who was also in the show business, adds a footnote to Charlie's account. She highlights how Manuel's boxing career "[w]as not a chosen profession. It was something he got into because of being black in that time. . . . he found out he could earn good money doing this. Then he chose it as his profession and went into boxing." Entertainment and sport have traditionally been targeted as careers for black people. Manuel took advantage of the stereotype of black people being good at sport and entertainment and turned it into his own benefit. Clementia states that they were very lucky because "coloured people had to go to factories. . . . do anything rather than have a profession" but they could build a career.

Entertainment is connected to the nightclubs in Soho (London), which helped the interviewees develop their artistic identities and earn a living. As Clementia asserts, "the nightclubs were great because there was not much that people could do in those days [...] They were quick jobs." Through their memories of the Soho nightlife, the viewer can mentally construct a vivid picture of the cultural and social atmosphere the Abrews lived. For Danielle Drozdewski, Emma Waterton, and Shanti Sumartojo, "memory resides in such spaces and places, often without us realising the extent of our vernacular expertise" (2019, 266). The mental reconstruction through the oral accounts underscores the role oral history plays in accessing the past. The combination of oral history with audio-visual material, such as the newsreels the work introduces, signals the role of cinema in materialising the past. As Dan Sipe wrote, "moving images can more fully express oral history's reflexive dimension, which makes more explicit the human role in the creation of history" (1998, 379). In the same way that writing, and history have always accompanied each other, as the word historiography reflects (Sipe 1998), *A Family Called Abrew* shows that there is a union between speaking and history. Historian Hayden White (1988) refers to this link, following the word historiography as historiophony.

Historiophony entails the “[h]istorical encounters and narratives produced by visual images. For Carolyn Birdsall, “experimental films [...] challenge fixed interpretations of history, as they expose both our demands for accuracy of detail and thinking about historical significance” (2008, 259). In the production, the sounds and images are as vital as oral testimonies. It practices what I would call phonoptic history since cinema manages to engage both visual and auditive senses to register history, bearing out Sipe’s claim that “oral history and moving images have considerable potential synergy” (1988, 381). As he explains:

Filmed or videotaped oral history demonstrates the possibilities of moving images as substantive evidence, linked to an interview’s explicit articulation but carrying information and documentation. . . . Visual oral history can help lead historians away from the limited conception of moving images as merely an alternative form for evoking, communicating, or translating written history. Oral history can demonstrate the power of film and video as evidence, while moving images provide a new level of evidence for oral history. Secondly, moving images combined with oral history have a special power to encourage and support a comparative, reflexive approach to history itself. (1988, 381)

*A Family Called Abrew* is a significant milestone in phonoptic history.

Returning to Manuel’s contribution, Clementia expands on his achievements as the work shows pamphlets announcing his fights through a montage. She contends how Manuel beat the champion of Scotland three times but “[h]e could not be awarded the championship because, at that time, no black man was allowed to hold the championship of Britain mainly because of the colour.”<sup>54</sup> Manuel was typecast racially. The *British Pathé* provides an example of Manuel’s racial typecasting. In a fight in 1939 in the Theatre Royal Dublin against Tommy Farr, Manuel is introduced as “the blackskin Manuel Abrew” (1939, n.p). Clementia indicates how Alex Bell, who was not only Manuel’s great boxing rival but also his friend, “argued that Manuel should have held the title.” The film makes justice for Manuel’s life and achievements, which are forgotten.

The production recalls further injustices against the family and black Britons during World War II. Charlie joined the merchant navy but returned blind. He was not entitled to a pension because the authorities claimed boxing made him blind. As a newspaper included in the work commented, “Charlie fought hundreds for a few quid until one day Charlie couldn’t fight anymore. He went blind in one eye. . . . He joined the merchant navy and gradually went

---

<sup>54</sup> The webpage BoxRec, where records of boxers are kept, comprises all of Manuel’s fights. He won most of his fights but was never awarded a championship.

blind in the other eye.” For the article’s writer, “it is a mystery that Charlie doesn’t get any penny piece in the way of a pension.” This article’s writer notes that Charlie is the brother of “the unofficial heavyweight champion of Scotland.” Even if official history denied Manuel a place, popular Scottish memory remembers him.”<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 38. Charlie Abrew by Maggi Hambling**

After the war, the Abrews benefited from the film industry since post-war migration had not been invited yet. As Clementia claims, “they used to make quite a few films with black people in them in the forties [...] there were not many black people here” “we always got the roles.” The Abrews participated in *Saunders of the River* (1935), where African-American actor and singer Paul Robeson appeared, *Elephant boy* (1937), *Men of two Worlds* (1946) and *Proud Valley* (1940), where Manuel was Paul Roberson’s stuntman. This demonstrate how the Abrews are an example of the presence of black Britons before post-war migration.

There is an aura of nostalgia in the work. The Abrews long for a sense of history and the acknowledgment of their role in British history. For Walder, nostalgia “connects people across historical as well as national and personal boundaries” (2010, 1), this is the impulse which has united the different interviewees, who wished to account the Abrews’ past. In the production there is a dialogue between the present and the past. The past shapes the present through pain and pleasure (Walder 2010). An instance is Jackie’s bitter remembrance of her mother at the beginning and her later positive outlook as a black independent woman in the showbusiness. Her bitterness is her nostalgia for “an experience” (Walder 2010, 4) with her mother as Cyril, Iris and Lee had.

*A Family Called Abrew* assembles its multiple and fragmented testimonies into a coherent account exploring who the Abrews were thanks to familial and friendship

---

<sup>55</sup> The Hempworth Wakefield Gallery in West Yorkshire holds a portrait of Charlie by Maggi Hambling. As the description of this picture signals, “in the 1930s he and his brother Manuel were Scotland’s only boxers of African origin” (1974 , n.p). The visual arts–painting and cinema–remember the Abrews.

frameworks. As John Tosh notes, “historians encounter gaps in record which they can fill only by being so thoroughly exposed to the surviving sources that they have a ‘feel’ or instinct for what might have happened” (1995, 142). It accounts for narratives eliminated from official history and highlights the importance of oral history, a useful tool to capture stories not encapsulated by mainstream history, which gives stability to the family’s biography. The subsequent work, *A Touch of the Tar Brush*, continues the task of *A Family Called Abrew*, by showing how there were black British stories preceding post-war migration in Liverpool missing from the official annals of history. It draws a link to colonialism, slavery, and the importance of making Britishness mean more, adding blackness to it.

#### 5.4. “I’m Black and I’m British”: *A Touch of the Tar Brush* in Liverpool

*A Touch of the Tar Brush* is an anthropological work interrogating the integration of black Britons in Britain.<sup>56</sup> Akomfrah, its director, and on-screen interviewer throughout the film, examines various mixed-race families and their descendants to discover how multiculturalism is successful, or not, in Liverpool as a reflection of Britain. Liverpool is, for Akomfrah, an instance of what the future could look like in the United Kingdom if the experiences and opinions of the mixed-race families he interviews are considered. It indicates the importance of commemorating the past for young members of these families who may feel displaced. To do so, the families share their private memories and archive through pictures and objects. Akomfrah interviewees members of the Birch Family (Patsy, John, Colin, and Alice), and the Quarless Family (Ann, George, and Ray). Boxer John Conteth and Gary Christian. It is a direct documentary, almost a visual report of these families and Liverpool, including walking interviews with the families and Akomfrah, talking-head interviews, the family’s archival footage, found footage, snaps from BBC documentaries and a soundtrack, which evokes Liverpool’s musical history.

The production has been described by critics such as Michael O’Pray as a positive outlook of race relations in Britain, mirroring the cultural demands of the time (1992), and as an example of Akomfrah’s “thoughtfulness and formal design [unpacking] different aspects of black culture” (Curtis 2007, 272). It highlights the complexities of cultural backgrounds for black Britons (Mercer 2008) and the present-tense questions Liverpool, as a slave port,

---

<sup>56</sup>Akomfrah uses the term Englishness and Britishness interchangeably. I use Britishness except for direct quotes taken from the work.

risers through its mixed-race families (Fisher 2007). Writer John Boynton Priestley, traditionally regarded as a standard white British intellectual, took an interest in the alternative reality Liverpool's mixed-race community offered. He addressed it in *English Journey* ([1934] 2009).<sup>57</sup>

Seeing Liverpool's mixed-race children, Priestley concluded that "[a] first-rate film-producer could make a film of exceptional interest, probably of real beauty, out of these children" (2009, 216). Akomfrah carries out Priestley's wish. Priestley's reportage and Akomfrah's anthropological work complement each other. Akomfrah's method accesses the past with the help of the families' oral testimonies and the historical records he gathers. He traces Priestley's steps even lodging himself in the same hotel: the Adelphi, which did not accept black customers at the time Priestley wrote *English Journey*.

Following Priestley's interest in the mixed-race class of 1933 in a school, which showed him the possibility of a multicultural Britain, Akomfrah, as an anthropologist, tries to locate the class of 1933 signalled and its decedents. For Priestley this class demonstrated how "[a]ll the races of mankind were [...] wonderfully mixed" ([1934] 2009, 215). His claim resembles the one made by Akomfrah: "if you talk about mixed-race culture, I don't think you can do it without coming to Liverpool because, in a sense, this is where it all starts." By interviewing mixed-race families of the time of Priestley's book, Akomfrah wants to uncover "what is like to be part of a community, a multicultural community."

The work starts with Christine Quarless and her mother, who unveil how difficult it is to describe themselves. Christine does not like the use of the word half-caste, whereas her mother thinks it is a bad thing to use the word black: "just say coloured or half-caste."<sup>58</sup> As Christine replies, "things have changed over the years mum, and people are more aware of the black side of them rather than the white side of them [...] even if you are white, I don't see myself as that. I don't see myself as white because I have never been classified in my life as white." John Conteh continues this argument. As he maintains, "I'm black and I'm English and, the whole of it has been changed three times since I've been here. When I was in

---

<sup>57</sup> Priestley wanted to draw a picture of the whole of England. In Lancashire, he stopped in Liverpool even if his aim was Manchester, where his play was performing. He was not sure about the Liverpool he wanted to include. He telephoned "[t]he vicar of the queerest parish in England" (1934] 2009, 213), who took him to the local school half-caste children attended. For Priestley, there could not be "[a] queerer class anywhere in the world." ([1934] 2009, 215).

<sup>58</sup> According to the Gov.uk guidance, mixed-race and half-caste are derogatory terms and should not be used.

Liverpool, I was coloured and then I was half-caste.”<sup>59</sup> For the Merseyside police, Liverpool’s major social problem in 1978 was the half-caste problem (Moody 2020). Being classified as half-caste creates a non-category, hindering individuals from identifying with Englishness or black communities. It pushes people to a twilight zone of non-belonging.



**Figure 39. John Akomfrah’s walking interviews in *A Touch of the Tar Brush***

National identity, as I indicated in the previous chapter with *Racism: A Response* by Ceddo, includes as well as excludes. For the families in this work, “Englishness is a shorthand for race, it derives much of its power from who it excludes.” Most of the families describe themselves as black Liverpudlians or black Scousers and not as black Britons or British/English, suggesting a further level of identity complexity in Liverpool. As Matthew Thompson wrote, “[Liverpool] is a city with a very distinct identity—of Scouse and Scousers—paradoxically dissociated from other places and turned inwards towards its own unique culture” (2020, 28). Liverpool’s past is unique and in conflict with monolithic definition of Britishness since, as Akomfrah signals, “much of what passes for Englishness now is a mixture of prejudices, stereotypes, blindness and clichés that large parts of the population simply feel uncomfortable with,” as the families Akomfrah interviews.

While black Liverpudlians were trying to assert their identity against essentialist definitions of Britishness, the British community in Liverpool was equally reinforcing their ‘Scouseness’. As Diane Frost maintained, Liverpool’s black community forged their identity as a group through the microculture of ‘Scouseness’ (2000). Scousers, for its part, as an imagined community also struggled for self-definition. For people with an essentialist view of Britishness, children of mixed-marriages are in an in-between space between white Scousers and the Liverpool-born black community. Some of them voiced their disagreement,

---

<sup>59</sup> In 1974 John Conteh won the World Light Heavyweight boxing champion. As he confesses to Ray Costello, “I wanted to be somebody and to get out of the situation I was in [...] so I decided boxing would be a way to do that” (2007, 56). This links Conteh to Manuel and Charlie Abrew.

as seen in *Mixed-Marriages* (BBC 1968) and *Does Britain Have a Colour Bar?* (BBC 1995). In the work, the interviewees argue they are black Scousers or Liverpool-born blacks, which indicates how they embrace their mixed background given that their existence plays havoc with “narrow definitions [...] they stand for a different English identity.” As Christine Quarless claims, “I’m a black woman because visually I’m seen like one, inside I am one and at the same time I’m aware of my mother’s culture that being a Liverpool white woman. George Quarless signals how “they say to me, ‘I am born in England, and I am white’, and I say to them ‘I am born in England, and I am black.’”

Liverpool, popular for the world’s most famous pop group, which is important for the argument Akomfrah builds later, holds the eldest continuous black settlement in Britain (Christian 1998), which deflects the myth of the Windrush Generation as the first black British settlement. For Ray Costello, “the Liverpool black community has been described as the oldest in Europe. Many people in Britain are unaware of the presence of a continuous black British community dating back more than two and a half centuries to the beginning of the slave trade” (2007, 6). As Akomfrah suggests, “[they are] a community older than many of the things that represent Englishness for so many of us now. In fact, as I explained in *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality* (chapter two), the first race riots in the United Kingdom took place in Liverpool in 1919 (Frost 2000). There is no direct reference to the riots of 1919 or 1981. By not making them the focus, the question of identity is placed at the centre.

The Liverpool-born black community’s history is linked to Liverpool’s port and its transatlantic and slavery past, which are the city’s shame and glory (Muir [1907] 2009). In the eighteenth century, as Dicky Sam notes, Liverpool was “[t]he emporium of the world” (1884, viii), debunking London and Bristol as slave trading capitals. Jessica Moody argues that there was “immigration from Wales, Ireland and Scotland” (2020, 34) and these individuals identified with the black Liverpoolian community, which—as signalled by Akomfrah, “has been created by various cultural groups with close ties to the docks and the sea.” In the work some of the interviewees recall how growing up, “there was a mix of races. Black people of African descent, of Caribbean decent [...] Irish people, Scot people, Norwegian, Swedish, Asian,” which accounts for many mixed-race families in the area.

George and Ann Quarless were born in mixed marriages and are proud of their mixed-race children and grandchildren. Their grandchildren look white but have African blood, which ridicules any belief in Britishness as an exclusively white affair. None of the interviewees regrets their upbringing or heritage. Despite the positive and proud tone of most of them, there is an aura of nostalgia in the experiences they tell, which are related to missing

out on the possibility of displaying a fully accepted identity. What the production portrays is not a spatio-temporal nostalgia but rather an experiential nostalgia. As Nicola Sayers wrote, “rather than signifying a longing for a missed geographical place, as it had originally, nostalgia came instead to connote a longing towards a missed time” (2020, 23). They missed the possibility of belonging to a time.

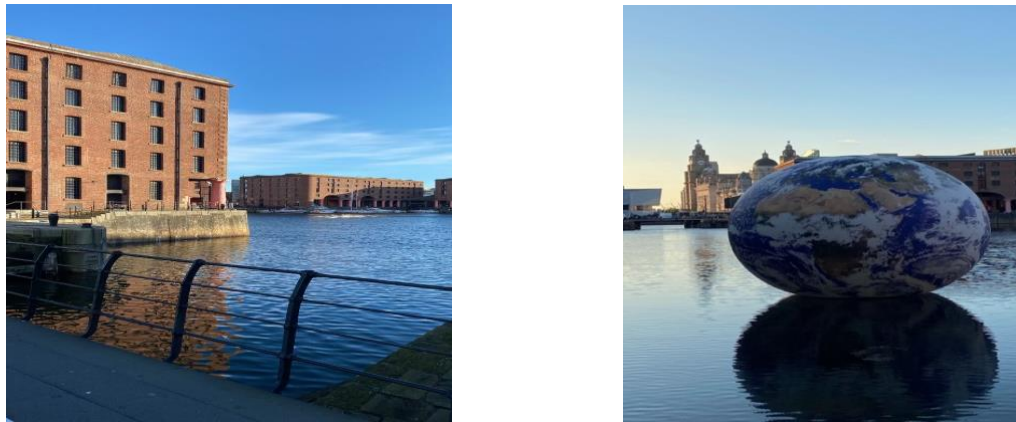
An instance is Gary Christian, for whom rootlessness is very present and who seems to be missing something in his personal make-up: “I speak with a broad Liverpool accent, but I don’t feel part of it, there’s a part of me that has nothing to do with Liverpool or England and I’d like to find that part [...] but here is where I live [and I have] my friends, my family.” Similarly, Christine Quarless asserts, “I was born here but I don’t think my roots are here. My roots are in in the West Indies, in the Philippines [...] but at the same time I am a Liverpool woman, I am a black Liverpool woman and that gives me some sort of concrete ground where I can say, yes, I am from here.” These interviewees know they have roots somewhere else and are hopeful they will find it. For Sayers, nostalgia and hope are linked and show the possibilities the future may offer (2020). Christian and Christine do not long for a return to another country but acknowledge there is a part of them in another place besides Liverpool.

If Britain does not recognise their identities, what will they do in the future? As Akomfrah formulates: “would they hate England, pack their bags to settle in Africa and Asia or would they stay?” The difficulty of the twilight zone of being black and British, of belonging or non-belonging, that these families exemplify was expressed through W. E. B. Dubois ([1903] 2007) and C. L. R (1984) James’s idea of double consciousness. As James noted, people who were brought up in the West feel outside of it even if they have a special perspective of their society (1984) This unique insight is the perspective Liverpool-born blacks have, who, for Akomfrah hold the key for the future of Britain, “when I think of Englishness, I think of this multicultural community rooted and located in Liverpool one.” Their identity is not a desire to be white (Fanon 1967), but to exist fluidly in the interstices of these two categories.

At the time the rhetoric of the “enemies within” (Mercer 1994) was used against black Britons who “[p]ose a threat to Englishness” (Gilroy 1987, 46), “the Liverpool community had been around for two hundred years. . . . If Powell knew about this community, he certainly didn’t mention it.” The black Liverpool community is as old as definitions of Englishness and, “if their advice had been sought, we would talk about England in a very different way.” As Akomfrah walks along Albert Dock, regenerated in the eighties against Thatcher’s managed decline, he wonders about the future, “the question now is whether we



give Englishness the shakeup it is long due or whether we stick to the old language of racial purity. . . . We have to get rid of the tired rhetoric of a green and pure England.” These families underline how the idea of a pure Britain does not operate.



**Figure 40. Liverpool's Albert Dock, my pictures**

To further demonstrate the British culture is an amalgamation of different cultures, the work acknowledges the influence of the music of the Black Diaspora. Ray Quarless indicates that as he was growing up, black people would not listen to British music but Black-American music: The Serenaders, Frankie Lymon or the Moonglows, which provided a black (trans)Atlantic connection. Early in their career, The Beatles covered songs by Afro-American singers, such as ‘Mr. Postman,’ by the Marvelettes’ and their early hit ‘Twist and Shout’ (written by Bert Russell and Phil Medley in 1961) had been recorded by Top Notes and made famous by The Isley Brothers in 1962—both were black bands. The Beatles, a great symbol of Britishness, cannot be understood without their connection to the Black Diaspora. This suggests—as Akomfrah argues—that black Liverpudlian families “[h]old a mirror to our society and showed it something it claimed not to know, that racial and cultural boundaries can be reshaped, reinvented.”

For Richard Benjamin and David Fleming, “The Beatles’ rhythm and blues ‘sound’ grew out of Memphis and Mississippi as much as it did from Liverpool—regions on both sides of the Atlantic sharing great kingship in their musical traditions” (2010, 6). The Atlantic is a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989) wherein “[d]iasporan Africans create cultural modes that transcend national boundaries and intersect dynamically with such representation of Anglo-European culture” (Rice 2003, 24). It is a space where histories have been denied, as Akomfrah maintains, “whole chapters missing from the books of England,” as the Liverpool-born black community which had been “locked away, shut out and denied a history.”

The work closes with Akomfrah's reflections as he visits the exhibition "Staying in Power-Black Presence in Liverpool" in the Merseyside Museum of Labour History in 1991. It displayed several generations of the same family, the slave trade, the race riots of 1919 and 1981, and famous black Liverpoolians. This display was temporary and the only representation of the Black Diaspora and slavery in Liverpool until the International Slavery Museum opened in 2007. The show makes Akomfrah signal how the families on it are examples of the part of Britain that is neglected, "denied, vilified and told they can't feel comfortable here and that they must stay in a twilight zone."

*A Touch of the Tar Brush* presents an alternative vision of British identities, showcasing how black communities embody multiculturalism, as the black Liverpool community indicates. By doing so, it introduces the oldest continuous black British community in the United Kingdom, and its link to Britain's colonial past. The individuals highlight how black Britishness is overlooked by mainstream discourses, while serving as a mirror reflecting the potential for a multicultural Britain in the future.<sup>60</sup>

## 5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the relationship between migration and familial structures, which functions as a memory space allowing for the interaction of personal, collective, individual, and social memories. These interactions carry political and social implications that contribute to shaping and reshaping of identities, while exploring black British narratives that were previously hidden or unrepresented. The films I introduced highlight the importance of oral testimonies and family archives to reconstruct fragmented narratives. *Home away from Home*, even if with a suppressed speech, equally uses non-verbal language and sounds to elicit the cultural background of Miriam's family.

The four productions have demonstrated how nostalgia is one of the ways in which the past can be accessed and explored. They have introduced nostalgic and almost melancholic subjects or people who feel nostalgic towards a missed experience or time. Additionally, these films show the interaction of individuals with mixed cultural backgrounds who

---

<sup>60</sup> For an analysis of *A Touch on the Tar Brush* centred on themes of national identity, rootlessness, and displacement refer to Piqueras-Pérez, María "Mixed-Identity in the Liverpool Black Community." In *Narratives of Displacement*, edited by Miriam Sette, 25-49. Milan: Biliblion Edizioni Srl Milano, 2021.

challenge the misconception of post-war migrants entailing the first example of black peoples in Britain.

The following chapter focuses on the younger generation of black British-born individuals, who assert their right to claim Britain as their home. They confront their own and their families' experiences of rootlessness and discrimination through rioting and demonstrations, challenging British Repressive State Apparatuses such as the police. The chapter underscores the union and solidarity of black British communities, emphasising their significance as social and collective memory frameworks.



## CHAPTER 6. THE PHANTOM OF THE PAST: OPRESSION, COLLECTIVE ESTRANGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

“This is not a crisis of race, but race punctuates and periodises the crisis. Race is the lens through which people come to perceive that a crisis is developing”  
(Hall 1978, 31)

The previous chapter was dedicated to the tensions around displacement and non-belonging in individual and family spaces. This chapter focuses on similar notions but at a national, social, and collective level. It discusses the relationship between the younger black British-born generation and Britain’s political and social structures. Such structures are the police, the judicial system, the penal system, and the media. In other words, it focuses on the collective and social frameworks indirectly introduced in the previous chapter. The readings I offer of the works extend and reinforce the previous discussion while emphasising the collective aspect of migration. As Kent Fedorowich wrote, migration “[r]einforced the physical and psychological bonds of empire; people were the cultural adhesive that bound these neo-Britons and the mother country more closely together” (2008, 93).

*Handsworth Songs* (1986) by Black Audio, *The People’s Account* (1986) by Ceddo, *Culture for Freedom* (1990) by Ceddo and *Mysteries of July* (1991) by Black Audio are the works I investigate. They reflect how the younger black-British generation realised “[t]heir depth of displacement from what might be called their home country” (Hall and Bailey 2021, 67) and how, even if they had been born in Britain, they were living, as C. L. R. James claimed, “inside and outside” (Hall and Bailey [2006] 2021, 67). The four works, whilst aesthetically different, are in conversation with each other, showing how the neo-Britons raised their consciousness and struggled for both visibility and the construction of their own sense of history and memory. They did this against mainstream discourses constructing them as dangerous others.

*Handsworth Songs* addresses the background of the 1985 riots in Birmingham as a pretext to connect the reality of the riots with post-war migration to Britain. I will read the work through ideas related to media manipulation, the failed dream of belonging to Britain, historical forgetfulness (Hall 1978), which I use to refer to the intentional neglect of black Britons by mainstream Britain, notions of utopia (Ricoeur 1986; Pavsek 2013), Frantz Fanon’s collective catharsis to explore how black Britons were united by a similar history of struggle and displacement ([1952] 2008) and the role of the archive as a political act. *The People’s Account* portrays the riots of 1985 in Tottenham and Brixton. I will analyse it

through ideas connected to media-hysteria, the inability to find the truth, and the creation of counter-narratives as expressions of black Britain's solidarity. With this film, I underline how censorship affected black British filmmaking.

*Culture for Freedom* is a follow up to *The People's Account*. The censorship faced by *The People's Account* led to the creation of this work about the defence campaign of The Tottenham Three, following the events in *The People's Account*. The work reflects the failures of the legal and penal British systems and positions itself as a counter-documentary which combats hegemonic amnesia. It includes a recording of the event called Culture for Freedom, where the community gathered to raise money and awareness of the situation.<sup>61</sup> It is a visual talking cure (Freud [1893] 1955a) since in it the viewer needs to associate their thoughts with the images given and black Britons can gain psychological relief from it. It is also an example of a vicarious memory (Pillemer 2015; Pond 2020) since the film's viewers and those present in the event's audience remember experiences belonging to other black Britons, which also encourages collective mourning.

*Mysteries of July* illustrates the inexplicable deaths of black Britons in police custody and how the penal system has failed black Britons. I study it as a film on mourning following *The People's Account* opened space for collective mourning. Mourning is a way to work through grief. I analyse it through notions deriving from Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefanic 2005; Raengo 2016), such as legal storytelling, which uses narration as a strategy in legal contexts (Delgado and Stefanic 2005). I also use interest convergence to demonstrate how racial issues are linked to the interests of hegemonic Britain (Delgado and Stefanic 2005). A further concept is racial realism, which creates a space where racially oppressed communities can build their arguments in a legal context (Delgado and Stefanic 2005).

These works explore the relationship of black Britain with hegemonic Britain. They also present the unity and resilience of black British communities in the face of the injustices deriving from the malpractice of British hegemonic bodies. From black Britains' collective experiences of estrangement emanates the power to resist and rebel against what has been considered official history and memory. As Kobena Mercer argued, "by encoding alternative versions of the real, from the viewpoints of black subjects themselves, it renders present that which has been made absent in the dominant discourse" (1994, 84).

---

<sup>61</sup> When I don't use italics for the title *Culture for Freedom*, I am referring to the event and not the production.

### 6.1. *Handsworth Songs* and the Ghosts of Other Stories

Black Audio's *Handsworth Songs* explores the political and social events surrounding the riots of 1985 in Handsworth, which took place between the nine and eleven of September 1985. The riots are a pretext to address not only the present experience of black migrants in the U.K, but also how they deal with the failed dream of belonging to it.<sup>62</sup> *Handsworth Songs*' multi-layered form contributes to its topic. The work is an essay film in which archive and found footage, synch-sound design, voice-over narration, fragments from previous films and press cuttings build a non-linear narrative of collective remembrance.

Its critical acclaim makes it one of the most provocative and important art films in Britain, overshadowing Black Audio's remaining productions (Eshun 2004). Its contradictory reception reflects the debates around race and ethnicity in cinema during the eighties (Mercer 1987; Mercer 1989; Mercer and Julien 1996), making it an example of the important and provocative debates of that time (O'Pray 1987; Malcom 1987; Chambers 2021). In fact, Paul Eliot signals that *Handsworth Songs* is an example of a film that "[r]adically redrew the lines of demarcation in terms of British experimental film and issues of race and ethnicity, forging new aesthetic debates in an area previously dominated by structuralism and documentary realism" (2019, 173).

The most (in)famous debate on *Handsworth Songs* is between Salman Rushdie, Stuart Hall and Darcus Howe. As Kobena Mercer wrote, the older generation of black intellectuals tried to "[c]onceal their antipathy" (1994, 238). For Rushdie, "Songs doesn't Know the Score" (1987): the language used by the collective was not appropriate, failing to portray the other stories not told in the riots. He maintains that just because a black collective has managed to say something—given the lack of spaces to do so—it does not necessarily have to be praised (1987). Arguing this, Hall replied with "Songs of Handsworth Praise" (1987), stating that "[o]f course, black artists deserve something more from us than a mere celebration for having managed to say anything at all" (1987, 12) He adds that Rushdie and those who align with his thoughts have missed "[t]he struggle which [*Handsworth Songs*] represents, precisely to find a new language." (1987, 12). For Hall, the work breaks with the

---

<sup>62</sup> I'm using black as a political label to designate both Afro-Caribbean and Asian migrants. The work focuses on Afro-Caribbean migrants, but Asian migrants also appear in some scenes. When Asian subjects are depicted, I will specify it.

traditional riot-documentary style and its originality lies in Black Audio telling the black experience as a British one (1987).

Howe replies to both Hall and Rushdie claiming that he sides with Rushdie and also believes that Rushdie has not missed the point on how Black Audio tried to create a new language. However, Howe and Rushdie believe that the point is how black people should not be told what they can or cannot say for themselves (1987). They believed they did not need a new language to articulate their ideas but a platform to express the ideas that already existed. Black Audio was aware of this debate. John Akomfrah confessed in an interview with Paul Gilroy and Jim Pines for *Framework* that “[i]n the end, what Rushdie and other critics found really objectionable about the film, and some audiences found problematic, is precisely that anti-ethnographic bias” (1988, 14). Despite this debate, there is widespread agreement on its innovativeness in both meaning and structure (Williamson 1986).

Some critics highlight how *Handsworth Songs* reflects on the reality created by Thatcherism, which makes it a political film (Fusco 1988; Hall 1988; Curtis 2007; Macedo 2007; Aikens 2009), underscoring the multiple issues affecting Britons (Petley 1989) even if it can be applied to other places (Enwezor 2007). Some scholars have underscored how the work engaged in the politics of representation, self-definition, and resistance without speaking for anyone (Pines 1996; Chin Yun Shin 2011; Ezra 2005; Petty 2008; Rascaroli 2017; Fulani 2018). Its form has also been discussed (Snead 1988; Corner 1996; Rees 1999; Alter 2008; Mercer 2008; Nwonka and Saha 2021), specially with reference to its use of footage and montage (Lipman 1987; Pines 1996; Rascaroli 2017), camera movements (Diawara 1993), archival practice (Russell 1999; Power 2011; Brunow 2015; Smith 2015; Marriott 2015) and sound (Totaro 2002; Eshun 2007; Fisher 2007; Clark 2015; De Groff and Symons 2015;).

Newspapers, magazines, and Channel 4’s viewers engaged with *Handsworth Songs*. Phillip Bergson and Peter Paterson criticised the film. For Bergson, writer of *What’s On London*, the work did not consider the tastes of the majority of viewers (1987, 20).<sup>63</sup> According to Paterson, *The Daily Mail*’s writer, “it was a stab at the he history of the West Indian community” (1987, 26). In fact, one anonymous viewer called Channel 4 and complained: “We’ve had enough. All the riots started with the beginning of Channel 4.” (1987, n.p). For Henderson Dyson, writer for *The Voice*, the film was “a little pretentious

---

<sup>63</sup> When I do not provide the author’s name or surname and I give the journal or magazine’s name, it is because at the BFI the name did not appear.



cinema vérité-docu-archive-collage [...] with some frankly unintelligible Afro-Caribbean interviews for which subtitles would have helped” (1987, 6).<sup>64</sup> Progressive publications praised *Handsworth Songs*. For Derek Malcolm, the film is an example of how a work can be poetic while also portraying present discontents and the importance of it for misrepresented groups by the media (1987).

The different opinions about *Handsworth Songs* show how it became the tangible archetype of the change in black British filmmaking in the eighties and, as Pratibha Parmar wrote, it “[b]raves the storm of criticism” (1987,4). These scholars and critics have not explored the film in its totality but have used it in conversation with other works by other artists or to contrast it with *The Passion of Remembrance* (chapter three) since they premiered at the same time (Mercer 1994). I offer an in-depth analysis of the work linking it to the context of Britain’s post-war migration history.

A snippet of *The Colony* (1964) by Philip Donnellan opens the work.<sup>65</sup> A black guard is watching a Victorian piston’s engine. The extreme close-up reveals his bewilderment at the engine’s mechanism. The second part of the work explains this confusion. He cannot understand how open minds of the past developed this engine whereas contemporary minds cannot find a solution to the political, social, and technological decay of Handsworth’s present. The subsequent intellectual montage creates an eerie atmosphere. It includes birds squawking, a blurry police van accompanied by police sirens, a clown moving his head to the beat of synthesised music, a shot where the camera pans from left to right on a barricade of policemen and journalists, and the words “this day remains” in a loop. This audio-visual discontinuous editing creates an uncanny space where the sounds dictate rhythm. The last two images of the montage are the statues of James Watt, and Joseph Priestley in Chamberlain Square.<sup>66</sup> The duration of the shot with the police and journalists is longer denoting that they play a key role in the work. Rhythm is also marked visually by the colour grading, from black

---

<sup>64</sup> LUX’s Project ‘Slow Emergency Siren ongoing: Accessing Handsworth Songs’ (2022) solves this problem by making *Handsworth Songs* accessible through audio description and creative captions. For a review of the project see Piqueras-Pérez, Maria. “Slow Emergency, Siren Ongoing: Accessing Handsworth Songs, Sarah Hayden (2022)” *MIRAJ: Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 12, no 1 (2023):290-296.

<sup>65</sup> *The Colony* displays the life of first-generation Afro-Caribbean workers in Birmingham. One of the workers it portrays is the man in the opening scene of *Handsworth Songs*.

<sup>66</sup> Watt and Priestley were part of Birmingham’s lunar society in the eighteenth century. For the watchman of *The Colony*, they are instances of the greater minds of their time in Birmingham. Watt with the steam engine and Priestley with the discovery of gases including oxygen. They are figures of Birmingham’s industrial history.

and white in *The Colony*, to dominant monochrome blue and red tones in the montage. The grading creates the psychological impression that danger is approaching as does the rhythm of the montage's soundscape.

The montage contrasts the guerrilla hand-held camera footage with images of the police containing protesters. This positioning denotes that the filmmakers are on the side of the black community and not the police or journalists. This contradistinction and the impossibility of paying attention to just one image or sound indicates that *Handsworth Songs* has a non-linear construction where attention is needed. For the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, what happened in Handsworth are “[s]enseless occasions completely without reason.” However, Handsworth is not an isolated case, and it is related to events that took place before 1985, such as the 1981 riots in places such as Brixton, Toxteth or Moss Side. A tracking shot of a young black youngster being chased and outrun by eight policemen who reduce him on the ground emphasises this idea. The teenager is unable to climb from the pile of shields of the policemen to offer his point of view, but *Handsworth Songs* will.



**Figure 41. A Young Black Briton Being Chased by the Police in *Handsworth Songs***

*Handsworth Songs* does not give the exact reason behind the riots, unlike *The People's Account*. However, it records the opinion of Handsworth's black community. In an interview, a young black man maintains that even if the media tried to convey the message that the riots were based on the tensions between the Afro-Caribbean and the Indian community, the police force is to blame. As he affirms, “everybody just joined together [...] and paralysed the stupid situation.” For black British communities, mass media and the police are to blame for the riots. In this interview, the young black man points out his truth and indicates that Handsworth's riots are not disconnected events affecting solely black Britons but the symptom of a society in crisis, as Hall's opening quotation of this chapter advanced. As the voice-over contends, “between Thatcher's swamping speech and the Falklands expedition lies another melodrama of consent. The war of *naming the problem*” (emphasis).

By not disclosing exactly the reason behind the riots, Black Audio states that there is not an unequivocal angle on them. The inability of finding the originating conflict behind the riots proves that their origin dates back to a time young black British generations fighting in the streets have no recollection of but was lived in a similar way by preceding generations. As Silke Arnold-de Simine argues, “memory is used to describe a way of relating to the past [...] based on lived experience (one’s own or that of others) and requiring empathy and identification” (2013, 16). The younger’s generation experience of marginalisation has been in the country in which they were born.

The disregard of post-war migrants’ history and memory and the marginalisation of their descendants erupted in the form of riots. As such, for those who overlook this history and memory, the riots were “unexpected”, something that has “suddenly come up...” “a complete mystery to the police, to everybody...” However, for those suffering this situation, it meant the explosion of an incubated anger brewing since older generations in Britain realised belonging to Britain was not possible. As John Solomos points out, there is danger in approaching riots as something “[s]udden, unexpected, and unnatural given that it deems the event to be an example of what Hall refers to as historical forgetfulness and makes it easy to decontextualise the happening and be linked to criminalised black subcultures, which are in turn depoliticised and marginalised” (1986, 3). *Handsworth Songs* depicts the consequences of disregarding Solomos’ warning.

The collective amnesia displayed by the mechanisms and institutions dismissing black Britons’ memory embodies the historical forgetfulness Hall refers to. As he discusses, historical forgetfulness is what “[I] want to call the loss of historical memory, a kind of historical amnesia, a decisive mental repression which has overtaken the British people about race and Empire since the 1950s” (1978, 25). In footage included in *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013) by Smoking Dogs Films, Hall asserts that “the end of Empire instead of being something taking place far away, overseas, and on the news, becomes something taking place in the street, next door, and, through television.” The riots are the explosion of their collective memory, which is taking a stance against the past adventures of the British Empire while also making a claim for the future by preventing the perpetuation of historical forgetting. This reveals the tension between black Britons’ need to remember and hegemonic Britain’s wish to forget. In fact, “how a society approaches the histories and memories of minorities is particularly relevant, as it also testifies towards their position in the present” (Horvat 2021,3), and hegemonic Britain denies black Britons a present.

*Handsworth Songs* continues by encoding the different messages newspapers launched about the riots, “Let no one Talk of this as a Race Riot. This is Murderous Criminality”, “Riot of Death”, “the Bloody Battleground”, “the Bleeding Heart of England”, “Anger, Frustration, and Destruction”, “Handsworth in Flames.” The soundtrack accompanying these headings changing from imperial music, backing Hall’s previous idea, to post-punk, and ending with “Chariots of Fire,” marks the change from the days of the Empire to the present, where giving up is not an option.<sup>67</sup> Unity and resistance honour those migrating to the promised land. The newspaper’s headlines fading out and leading to a photographic gallery with photographs of the forties, fifties and sixties accompanied by dreamy music supports this idea. The change of mood from the contemporary problems to the dreams of the past is an example of both how multi-layered the work is as well as how the past and the present are linked.

The work fades into a ballroom with people dancing as the voice-over mentions some names such as Bunny Enriquez, Greta Bork, or Lady June Barker. Akomfrah declared in an interview with Stoffel Debuysere that the names belong to real people from the Caribbean in the 1940s, “they are the very many people in the film [who] would have left [...] because immigration is a profoundly utopian act” (2013, n.p.). *Handsworth Songs*’ utopian desire is displayed in the intermixed cuts of West Indies couples dancing in the U.K. into a new life and leaving behind rural life in the West Indies. The words of the voice-over “that night, I moved from an idea to a possibility. I was born in a moment of innocence” confirms this idea. As Paul Ricoeur claims, “utopia is [...] a dream that wants to be realised. The intention of the utopia is to change-to shatter-the present order” (1986, xxi). The post-war generation arriving in Britain wanted to escape their current logic by pursuing a “construct outside history” (Ricoeur 1986, 1), a quixotic construct. This impulse of the work explains its discontinuous temporality, navigating the past and the present making *Handsworth Songs* an instance of “film as thought” (Elsaesser 2019). For Christopher Pavsek, cinema and utopia are connected. For him it is a complex temporal dimension uniting the present to both the past and the future (2013).

Gilroy notes a similar idea through the politics of transfiguration (1993b). For him, they “[r]eveal the hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity [...] constructing both an imaginary anti-modern past and a postmodern yet-to come” (1993b, 38). Between the

---

<sup>67</sup> *Chariots of Fire* (1981) has crystalized as an anthem, instigating people not to give up. The underlying idea behind using it is asking the people of Handsworth to resist despite the messages put forward by the media.

imaginary anti-modern past and the postmodern yet-to come lies a utopian space. *Handsworth Songs* highlights this by including footage of the King of Calypso, Lord Kitchener, singing “London is the Place for me” to the postmodern yet-to come. Nevertheless, as the riots of 1985 indicate, this utopian desire never came.



**Figure 42. Footage of Lord Kitchener Singing ‘London is the Place for me’ in *Handsworth Songs***

The first generation is stuck between the anti-modern past and the postmodern yet-to come. Young black Britain has seen that (post)modernity has failed them. Luisa Passerini explains this generational gap through the difference between memory and utopia. For her, memory is directed towards the past and utopia towards the future while both converge “[i]n their strong grounding in the present” (2007, 8). For earlier post-war migrants, there was hope for a future. For the younger generation, without the assertion of their memory (past) and the acceptance of a new order in the present, there can be no future.

As the narrator attests, “once there was land to be cleared and bones to be rebuilt from the ashes.” Namely, once there were post-war migrants wishing to reconstruct Britain and fit in their mother country. *Handsworth Songs* underlines this through a panning over the mural “The Dream, The Rumour, and the Poet’s Song” (1984), by Gavin Jantjes & Tam Joseph, in Brixton. The mural represents quintessential black British moments. Some of these are black migrants arriving in the U.K, the New Cross fire, or Linton Kwesi Johnson (LKJ) reading to a group of young people. The camera zooming in on the arriving migrants adds to the idea of the promised land and the utopian desire. LKJ reading and young generations listening to him symbolise the change in narrative where young black Britain discover their past and make a claim for their future. Footage of the riot’s aftermath allow the viewer to see the tangible consequences of the failed utopian impulse. As a woman in the streets of Handsworth contends, “the youths are angry. [sic] [It is] not only the unemployment [...] it’s the harassment that is going on with the black people in the area.” Some of the problems young

black Britons were facing were the lack of housing, employment, and education opportunities.

The mural gives hope to future generations if they listen to the past. Listening and reflecting are encouraged in the photographic gallery which constantly reappears. On it there are photographs of children, such as Vanley Burke's "Boy with a Flag" (1970). This space contrasts with the fast-paced construction of the work. It serves as a site of transmission of past memories, which are necessary for the younger generation's sense of identity. The zooming into Burke's picture and the superimposition with a newsreel of Afro-Caribbeans arriving in Britain supports this. As the newsreel is on screen, the voice-over narrates the story behind it which gives significance to black Britain's past:

They appeared in unison on the deck, summoned by the water. And they stood there brooding in collective silence. Suddenly, a man in a black felt hat and a lively gabardine suit heaved hopelessly and uncontrollably, and his soul ran for the sea. But the winds rushed in and carried it back onto the deck. There it sat, abject and exposed. Without warning the water swept his soul from the deck. Zachariah looked at the water and felt the song swell inside him. It was said that each person recognized their fate in the song. As he stood there, the Caribbean sank into the water. The land was there, but he will not go to it anymore.

This poem encapsulates the exact movement in which the utopian impulse dies as the ship carrying them docked. Zachariah chose water, meeting those who did not survive the middle passage. For him, dying was safer than the hostile land in front of him. The identity of those on the deck was about to change in Britain since migration is a one-way trip (Hall 1996a). As the lyrical poem introduced by a different character indicates. For her, there is an impossibility to return to her home and even if there is land or "a new horizon" ahead, her journey "has been washed away." Her identity and her past have changed unlike Zachariah, who chose death. The generations following those who chose collective silence will transform the collective silence into collective action. For them, returning is not an option or a goal, Britain is their home.

As Mark and Trevor Phillips wrote, "immigrants before the decade of the seventies are isolated and marginalised, humbly accepting their lot, until the following generation, which has grown up [in Britain] [...] strides into the arena and rejects racist limitations by rioting during the eighties" (1998, 352).<sup>68</sup> Black Audio manages to uncover the burden of memory through the re-enactment of Afro-Caribbeans arriving in Britain and its juxtaposition

---

<sup>68</sup> *Riots and Rumours of riots* (1981) by Kuumba further deals with these ideas.

with young black Britons rioting in the present. At the same time this exercise creates not only an archaeology of the history of Afro-Caribbean migration, but also gives a sense of history to present generations.

The smooth transition from Caribbeans arriving in Britain to a man's testimony in the present on how he saw the police beating a young boy shows the correlation of the past with the present. However, as the voice-over reminds the viewer, "in time, we will demand that which is right because what will be just will lie outside present demand. ... In time, I will be right to say, 'there are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories'" The link between the past of migration and the present of the riots is cathartic in this sentence. The echoing of these words contrasts with the idea of collective silence.

Frantz Fanon wrote about collective catharsis, as he reasoned, "in every society, in every collectivity, exists—must exist—a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released" ([1952] 2008, 124). The riots illustrate the forces accumulated released in the form of aggression. *Handsworth Songs* is an instance of visual collective catharsis. In fact, collective catharsis is a mechanism to stop collective amnesia and the historical forgetfulness of those who "pull the strings" in Britain. It is also a step forward in the fight against collective silence and the "[m]yopic refusal to acknowledge the centrality of the historic contribution which the labour of black people has had" (Piper 1994, 12).

Black Audio makes a conscious effort to have black Britons re-entering the frame. Mrs. Cynthia Jarret's funeral long-take exemplifies this.<sup>69</sup> Mrs Jarret was a black British woman, who died from a heart attack after the police entered her house looking for her son. I explore this episode in the following work. The editing of this funeral is bounded by the rhythm of drums as the hearses move. The rhythm provides a unit of time in the work, which enables the viewer time to remember Mrs. Jarrett. The archival material used by Black Audio and its editing is the negative of black Britain's postcolonial history and memory. As Kate Bolgar Smith argued, "the archive is understood not only to reveal an official memory of the past but also to signal the absence of certain narratives and moments that speak of the black British experience" (2015, 89). The recovery and reworking of archive material remediate the absence of black British experiences and make the archive a dynamic space. At the same time, it helps "[e]nliven and personalise forgotten histories" (Hirsch and Spitzer 2017, 86) by

---

<sup>69</sup> Ceddo recorded the footage used in *Handsworth Songs* for this funeral.

bringing from the shelf of oblivion the ghosts of other stories before *Handsworth's* riots that have not been acknowledged.

The archive is not only the negative of history for black Britons but also its starting point. From it, they can construct their sense of history by re-negotiating multiple histories and narratives (Brunow 2015). *Handsworth Songs* shows that “the past cannot speak, except through its ‘archive’” (Hall 1991, 152). And it functions as “[r]eservoirs of memory’, [...] to attest to the diasporic subject’s existence” (Alter 2018, 273). By diverting attention to its footage, which captures the everydayness of past migrants, the duration of the work is altered, bringing to the foreground forgotten migrants’ histories, which fill in the gaps of the past.

A further example of black Britons re-entering the frame is the use of archival filmic material of television cameras trying to record a panel discussion “on the causes of the disturbances” for Thames T.V. Eye. They are facing technical problems because “the video looks slightly dark on white” “you’re worried that there are too many whites obviously there”—adds one of the organisers of the program—“no, in lighting terms, I’m talking about”—replies another person—“the reason is the colour of their skins.” The inclusion of this discussion reminds the viewer of the history of lightning in television and cinema history and how it was calibrated for white subjects (Dyer 1997). Therefore, aesthetic, and economic reasons account for the lack of representation of blackness on television and how the camera was biased towards them. However, *Black Audio* challenges this idea by creating a work where black people dominate the frame.

In spite of this, the failure of the utopian dream haunts *Handsworth Songs*, “what have they done with our dreams? Where are our hopes?” asks the narrator as reels of Caribbean women working in post-war Britain appear. One of these workers claims, “we don’t want any special privileges, or anything more than any other British worker has in this country.” The disapproval of black Briton’s role in reconstructing Britain made the failure of the dream of belonging even more traumatic, making them wonder where their home and their roots were. As Mike and Trevor Phillips noted, “Britain is where I live. Is Britain my home? I don’t know, not until the British tell me that they accept me as being part of their country” (1998, 398). The realisation that Britain is not their home explains why the film states, “there are no stories in the riots. Only the ghosts of other stories. If you look there, you can see Enoch Powell telling us that we don’t belong. You can see Malcom X, visiting us in 1965, when the conservatives said, ‘if you want a nigger for your neighbour, vote labour’.”



The ghosts are black Briton's space-time embodiment of their conglomerated collective memory: "New Cross Massacre is one, Newham is another, Mrs. Groves, Mrs. Jarret, Rush Seymour, all of these are injustice." Following Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* ([1993] 2006), these ghosts epitomise the loss of cultural identities and the trauma created by the dismissal of black Britons' stories of marginalisation through time. As Derrida states, "by forgetfulness [...], by foreclosure or murder, [the ghost] will engender new ghosts" ([1993] 2006, 109). The ghosts of other past stories were present in the riots. These ghosts can cross transnational borders. The footage of Malcom X visiting Birmingham and, as the film signals, his "voice swooning over the ashes of decline" indicate this.

A further example of black Britons' disregarded ghosts before Handsworth's is the Empire. A tableau vivant establishes the link with the Empire through objects such as a Union Jack flag, a marble plinth, chains, and a magazine with the title, "the races of Europe" and the helmet of an expeditor. This tableau reminds the viewer of *Expeditions I* (1984a) in chapter two since the elements on both works are similar. The link between colonialism and post-war migration is established by superimposing images where the chains that are in the tableau appear in the footage of a factory with Afro-Caribbean workers. The intertitle supports the idea: "chains for workshop and factory. Chains for the toiler in the mine. Chains for those who go down to the sea in ships."



**Figure 43. The British Empire, a Tableau in *Handsworth Songs***

The combination of the remnants of the Empire and the modern workforce contrast with Thatcher's 1978 swamp speech worrying that the U.K. "might be rather swamped by people with a different culture." However, "these people", as *Handsworth Songs* shows, are here because Britain colonised them. As the narrator reminds the viewer, "England is so rich with the culture of the past that nothing the living can do can destroy the vast wealth of accumulated tradition over the years. Anybody can come in and take no notice of the living. We can elevate ourselves learning from the dead." The work does not offer a resolution, but it

does not finish on a negative note. The final voice-over expresses that a woman, who has not dared to speak before, manages to do so thanks to the stories included in *Handsworth Songs*:

She began to feel that these thoughts would die before her, die trying to be heard. She didn't understand them, but she feared the savage state of death more than ignorance. So, she opened the doors and slowly the words came alive and began to speak to her saying, 'these are for those whom history has not been friendly, for those who have known the cruelties of political becoming, those who demand in the shadows of dying technologies, those who live with the sorrows of defiance, those who live among the abandoned aspirations which were the metropolis. Let them bear witness to the ideals, which in time, will be born in hope. In time, let them bear witness to the process by which the living transforms the dead into partners in struggle.

These words reinforce the idea that it is the living—the younger generations—who instigate an act of social responsibility for the past, present and future by breaking the chains that silenced previous generations. By doing so, they transform “[t]he dead into partners in struggle”, and, in the future they will become voiced ghosts contributing to the rewriting of black British history. This is a necessary step since, as Walter Benjamin signalled, “even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins” ([1939]1968b, 257). The following work unapologetically demonstrates how black Britons refuse to be silent and faces the power of British hegemonic structures.

## 6.2. This is the truth behind *The People's Account*

*The People's Account* deals with the riots in Brixton, which took place from the twenty-eight to the thirty of September 1985, and the riots of Tottenham, on the sixth of October 1985. Its angry tone indicates the complicated relationship between the black community, the police, and the media. The work blatantly establishes the perspective of black Britons in these communities as well as their defiance towards both the police and media. In Brixton, Mrs. Cherry Groce was shot by a policeman while looking for her son. In Tottenham, the police entered Mrs. Cynthia Jarrett's home using keys taken from her son causing her a heart attack. These incidents triggered the mobilisation of black Britons. *The People's Account* is quite direct in form, employing traditional documentary techniques like talking-head interviews. It also stands out for its juxtaposition of archival footage, found and live action footage and its didactic impulse.

The work is the first direct account of the uprisings from a black perspective (City Limits 1987) as well as a response to the media hysteria about black Britons (Petley 1988a;

Diawara 1993). The film relies on oral histories and first-person in the work since it wanted to emphasise the community's perspective (Parker 2020). *The People's Account* represents a shift in black British cinema, even if expressed in a realist mode (Pines 1988; Kamba 1987), which underscores the need to present the reality behind the riots. In fact, for Chi Yun Shin, *The People's Account* shows the effect of reality as a rhetoric element (2010) while also stressing the significance and urgency of its message (Mercer 1994). It is urgent because “[a]t the core [...] was the question of rights: the rights of those in Tottenham, Brixton, Handsworth and elsewhere to live without fear for their safety—as well as the right to speak and be heard” (Radio 2018, 207).

*The People's Account* challenges (mis)information about the riots and black Britons' past just as *Handsworth Songs* did. However, given its directness, it faced censorship. In an interview with Coco Fusco, John Akomfrah signals that *The People's Account*, a “straightforward, monological documentary on a politically controversial issue” (1988, 52) did not air whereas *Handsworth Songs*, a more avant-garde work, aired even if it was attacked because of its experimentalism. As for its censorship, as Isaac Julien specified in a panel discussion with filmmaker Mari-Carmen de Lara, Linda Mabalot and *Black Film Review* managing editor Jacquie Jones, the work “[i]tself was constructed in fairly monolithic terms, a realist agit-prop . . . but there was nothing drastically wrong with it” (1990, 22). For me, analysing this work after *Handsworth Songs* helps see how there was not an acceptance of the multiple black aesthetics developed by new black British filmmakers and how hegemonic British media has prevented black Britons from articulating their perspectives.

The work, financed by Channel 4, scheduled for transmission on three different dates (20<sup>th</sup> July 1986, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1986, and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1987), failed to air despite agreement from Channel 4's lawyers (Miller 1987). The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) was dissatisfied with its content and its use of language.<sup>70</sup> Ceddo was approached by the IBA to include a debate balancing the work if it was to be emitted (Radio 1987). In disagreement with this proposition, Ceddo approached the IBA's director, David Glencross, stating that the work “presents a view within the black communities of the consequences in the domain of public order of the persistently lawless—not yet to say racist—policing we experience” (1988b, 95). Implementing the suggested changes would have meant failing black British communities and not portraying the people's account.

---

<sup>70</sup> The IBA was the body regulating television transmissions in the U.K.

The IBA also asserts that the work could not be transmitted since the trial for the death of policeman Keith Blakelock had not happened (Rose 1988). After the trial, the IBA managed to find further objections. As Julien Petley wrote, this issue gives “a glimpse into the Kafkaesque world of television censorship” (1988a, 29). For Ceddo, it was clear that “if you are not speaking the same language as the establishment, you are going to be censored” ([1987]1988b, n.p.). *The People's Account* was a weapon for mainstream British television. Ceddo refused to make the changes given that they take them as “[p]art of the conspiracy that’s been going on in this country for years” (Harrison 1987, 5). This issue attracted the attention of newspapers and scholars equally. The banning of the film in British television did not prevent Ceddo from screening it in international festivals in Italy, Germany, and the States, as well as in youth centres around the U.K. (Harrison 1987).

*The People's Account* is an example of counter-media as a result of Ceddo not following the wishes of the IBA. They defy the hegemonic narrative and counter misrepresentation by codifying their point of view, which also remediates the mainstream British media. As Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney indicated, “remediation is concerned with the ways in which the same story is recalled in new media at a later point in time and hence given a new lease on cultural life” (2009, 8). *The People's Account* uses both images distributed by mainstream British media and original material to counter the biased hegemonic narrative. This exercise discloses how black British communities, the media, and the police are involved in a battle where there is more repression than expression.

The idea of the uprisings in Brixton being “[s]parked off by an act of police lawlessness against a black woman” opens the work. By using the word uprising and not riot, which is employed by the police to justify the exercise of force denoting that riots are senseless causes, the work is already framing black Britons’ perspective. Two juxtaposed photographs, one of Mrs. Groce and another one of a policeman with a gun on which the camera zooms in to the sound of two-gunshots, recreate the death of Mrs. Groce. This construction highlights Millard Scott’s opinion, “it wasn’t a riot, it was a civil war. . . . The people feel they have no choice but to fight.”

The work illustrates the difficulty behind the subjective practice of documenting the truth. The perspective from which a story is told shapes significant parts of reality. Different newspaper headlines depict the death of Mrs Groce: “Mother Shot by Police Paralysed”, “the Policeman Claimed that he Mistook her for a Man.” These narratives were disputed, “the black community believes he did that deliberately.” Numerous hand-held shots contribute to black Britons’ point of view since the camera is placed with the mod and not with the police.

In fact, as Imruh Bakari argues, thanks to Elmina Davis, who had links with the Broadwater Community, they managed to get the footage. It was impossible to access Broadwater Farm at the height of the conflict with a camera (2024, n.p). This camera placement fosters a sense of urgency and indicates the hostility towards black Britons by mainstream media. Astrid Erll wrote, “a memory which is portrayed by media and institutions must be actualised by individuals, by members of a community of remembrance, who may be conceived of as *points du vue* (Maurice Halbwachs) on shared notions of the past” (2008, 5). *The People’s Account*’s antagonistic moments change the past’s mode of remembrance by collapsing and questioning it from the present. Black British communities update their distorted narratives through this technique.

Attentiveness is key in reconfiguring the past. The long take of Mrs. Jarrett’s funeral is an example. As the narrator argues, “while the police were busy planning for a riot in Tottenham, it is clear that the first response of black people to the death of Mrs Jarrett was entirely peaceful.” Nevertheless, “for some still unexplained reason, the police took action to prevent the people leaving the Estate and, it was this action by the metropolitan police, which directly caused the uprising.” “This is not fiction, this is fact”, claimed the West Indian leader Arthur Lawrence. By including this, the work encourages its viewers to be alerted to discover where the truth lies, guiding them to the idea that it is with black Britons and demonstrating that the truth is an ideological construct. A further instance is the collage of three images that were part of the justice for black people campaign’s flyer of 1985: pictures of Mrs. Groce and Mrs. Jarrett next to the question “Who next?” The silent background contributes to the feeling of fear and urgency while making the collage a space for mourning and collective reflection. “Who next?” also marks the union of black Britons since the importance of the deaths transcended from the familial to the collective, public frameworks.

*The People’s Account* also raises the consciousness of the community by being didactic at times. For example, the presentation of Scotland Yard statistics on arrests and premises searched after the uprisings demonstrates that “the Tottenham police has set a state of vendetta.” The work also shows how black British communities cannot trust the police. As Scott confesses, “when the police come to your house, and it leads to the death of a person, how do you put trust in the system now? . . . The system is not going to work for us. It only leads to oppress us.” For them, there is no justice, “the law is what the policemen interpret to be the law”, “if he cannot abide by the law and we abide by the law, and he breaks the law [...] then there is no justice.” Black Britons cannot relate to the imagined community which is Britain.



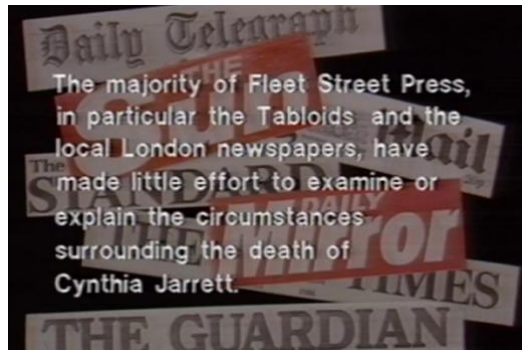
**Figure 44. *The People's Account* Wondering who the Next Target Will Be**

The distrust is placed on both the police and the media, which controls public opinion.

*The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *the London Standard*, *the Times*, and *the Sun* illustrate this. These conservative newspapers, as the work indicates, “have made little effort to examine or explain the circumstances surrounding the death of Cynthia Jarrett” “Press coverage exposes an uncritical stance towards police information and a considerable editorial willingness to uncritically represent the police point of view.” The headlines expose hegemonic Britain and construct ‘the people’s account’. Berny Grant embodies how black Britons are a scapegoat. The newspapers refer to him as “the black leader of Haringey; mad Bernie.” The language uncovers the racism and media hysteria towards the black community. As Grant argues, “they want to undermine the position of any black person in authority.” An additional case of hysteria is how the media supports unfounded police’s claims. According to the police, the black community in Broadwater Farm had stored petrol to ambush them. Hired architects indicated it was impossible to store petrol there, debunking the police’s account.

Through a montage of black Britons brutalised by the police to the sound of people marching, as found in *Territories*, *The People's Account* demonstrates how silence is broken audio-visually. The technique of montage is an example of black art and how “[g]athering and re-using is an essential part of black creativity. . . each piece within the piece has its own history, its own past, and its own contribution to the whole: [and a] new function” (Himid 1988, 9). The function is creating a new angle and preventing forgetting. The montage includes media in black and white and colour. Those in colour belong to the directly lived experience of black British communities’ younger generation, such as the New Crossfire placard “thirteen dead and nothing said” and the face of Colin Roach. Those in white and black are postmemories (Hirsch 2008; 2012).





**Figure 45. Newspapers Traditionally Scapegoating Black Britons, *The People's Account***

The police's strategy to contain black Britons' anger—launching a campaign to recruit black Britons—proves inadequate. As Richard Wells, Deputy Assistant Commissioner at New Scotland Yard, contends, “if it becomes clear that black people are part of successful policing, and they join the service. . . that will be much better than if they resist. . . and somehow stay outside.” The initiative was unwelcome: “Before they expect black people to join the police force they have to clean their own house [...] it is insulting and patronising for them to come up with this kind of solution.” The need to clean the police force is supported by John Fernandes, a lecturer of multicultural studies at the cadets' school. He discloses some of the essays written for an assignment where cadets had to express their opinion about the presence of blacks in Britain.

A voice-over reads some of these essays materialised through a collage, “they come to Britain and take up our homes, our jobs and our resources and contribute relatively less to our once glorious country.” “Do black people burn better with oil or petrol on them?” Ceddo discloses that the police hired 99% of the cadets writing these essays. The figure and the inclusion of this strategy emphasises black Britons' account and their intention to resist oppression. The soundtrack, with songs like “I'm Gonna Stand” by Sweet Honey in the Rock, where it is heard, “we shall not bow down to racism. We shall not bow down to injustice,” is matched to takes of black Britons marching with placards stating, “Enough is Enough”, “Justice for Black People.” The soundtrack in this long take creates a space with a message that transcends language. This long take is juxtaposed with images of black people in Handsworth and South Africa. This construction specifies that for black Britons, as part of the Black Diaspora, oppression and resistance transcends national borders.

Footage of Handsworth and Thatcher welcoming the president of South Africa highlight “the concrete links between Britain and the whites who hold black South Africans in their grip” and how apartheid was also present in Britain. By showing that “the struggle is not just about Broadwater Farm”, the work is a space for union and remembrance that arises “[o]ut of a conviction, shared by a broad community, that the moment recalled is both

significant and informed by a moral message” (Winter 2008, 62). The uprisings of 1985 materialise the message that injustice needs to be stopped and solidarity is found beyond Britain.

The work finishes on a prophetic note: “we are stepping out of the game for a while. . . . We are going to think about our own rules and then, we are going to come back with our own rules and, if you don’t want to play the game with the rules that we want in there, then we are going to make sure the game stops.” After a long history of struggle, as *Time and Judgement* revealed, staying silent is no longer an option. As claimed by one member of Broadwater Farm, “I am not suddenly going to forget the injustices that my people have suffered.” *The People’s Account* is an instance of how “the identity of the community is constituted (in part) by community members who share not simply similar narratives, but also patterns of thought and/or lived history” (Manier and Hirst 2008, 254). The subsequent work, *Culture for Freedom*, demonstrates that hostility and repression can be countered through a silent visual construction.

### 6.3. Breaking Silence through Remembrance: *Culture for Freedom*

*Culture for Freedom* addresses the benefit event of the same name organised by the Broadwater Farm defence campaign at the Hackney Empire and where artists such as She Rockers, the Bemarrow Sisters, Gatecrash, Irie Dance Company, Craig Charles, Lioness Chant, Leo Chester, Roger Robin, Hepburn Graham, Treva Etenne, Asward & Soul II Soul performed. This campaign was established following the conviction of life imprisonment of the Tottenham Three (Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghupathi) for the death of Keith Blakelock.<sup>71</sup> Its form—characterised by juxtaposed images, collages, and the muted recording of the benefit event—makes it a sequel to *The People’s Account*. *Culture for Freedom* is not silent but wordless except for a few signalled occasions, which I explore. It uses selective silence as a subversive standpoint to convey its message and avoid the censorship faced by *The People’s Account*. Instead of speech, the audio-visual construction builds the narrative. Long takes of dancers and musicians are not censored, stressing how music is a vehicle of free expression.<sup>72</sup> The work is constructed with archival footage of the

---

<sup>71</sup> The charges against the Tottenham Three were dropped in 1991 for lack of evidence.

<sup>72</sup> There are no previous sources engaging with this work.



benefit nights' interventions, which is juxtaposed with archival footage of newspapers and photograph of black British historical events.

After the death of Mrs Jarett—as *The People's Account* showed—there was an inquiry, but no police officer was disciplined. However, after the death of police Keith Blakelock—as is read in a pamphlet produced by the Tottenham three's campaign—369 people were arrested “[e]ven if no forensic evidence was recovered” (1991, 2). The Tottenham Three's campaign, as part of the Broadwater Farm Defence campaign, tried to denounce the injustices faced by black Britons. The campaign attracted international attention given that it uncovered that “the legal system is less than willing to admit its mistakes. The establishment would rather let innocent people languish in gaol than to undermine public confidence in British justice” (The Tottenham Three pamphlet 1991, 4). The European Commission of Human rights and US legal experts such as Judge Brunham argued that the convictions were not based on enough evidence. These bodies raised “[s]erious questions regarding the fairness of the trials and the safety of the convictions” (Harris 1988, 1). With this unsettling context, the benefit night underlined black Britons' unity and gave visibility to the campaign since several celebrities participated. The work is an example of community-oriented media, and the lack of a sponsor supports this argument. *Culture for Freedom* reveals that black Britons distrust the media, the police, the legal and the penal systems. The social repercussion of the campaign managed to mobilise people from all over the U.K.

The post-production decision of making the work largely silent means that words are only heard in strategic moments. On the one hand, this decision is a response to the censorship faced by *The People's Account*, expressing that the collective disagrees with it, and they will continue producing thematically similar works. On the other hand, it is a strategy to force the viewer to critically engage with the work and black Britons' account. Content and form make *Culture for Freedom* a counter-documentary where hegemonic perspective is challenged. The silent dialogue between the viewer and the benefit night is a talking cure (Freud [1893] 1955a). Nonetheless, unlike in a psychoanalytical therapy session, words are not the vehicle of expression, but they are replaced by images and music. Ceddo is the analyst, and the viewer is the patient who must overcome amnesia and deconstruct hegemonic Britain's enforced point of view, emphasising the active role of the viewer in working through the meaning of silences and absences. Against the historical misrepresentation of black Britons, the viewer's attentiveness helps fill in the gaps in their knowledge about black Britishness.

A police's siren introduces a fading-in collage of different moments of black British oppression. This beginning, with sound and images, illustrates how the construction is audiovisually led. The siren is a synecdoche for the police and its hostility towards black Britons. The colour grading of the sign 'Welcome to Broadwater Farm' from green to red and yellow highlights the idea of resistance. This chromatic superimposition represents the colours of Ethiopia's flag, a symbol / emblem of liberation and the Rastafari movement. The footage of the sign is cut together with a collage of a young black man, a policeman and high-rise buildings. This collage exemplifies the pressure of the streets and stresses the tense relationship between the police and the black community.

A fast-paced flow of black and white superimposed images with instances of black Britons in riots, marching, and protesting follows. These images construct black Britons' history and memory of resistance. By not providing photos of the police and black Britons fighting but rather black Britons protesting, the work also indicates that the focus of the work is on black British communities' perspectives. The superimposed images start gaining colour. The colours red, yellow, and green appear contributing chromatically to the idea of resistance. The colour grading happens as the song "Breaking Down Barriers" by the Twinkle Brothers is heard. Its lyrics encode the message of the benefit night: breaking down the barriers restraining the black community. As Rick Altman wrote, "silent films depended heavily on music" (1992, 27).

A noticeable silent moment is the dramatic recreation of a police interrogation performed on stage. The person interrogated narrates afterwards what he was asked, giving more credibility to the recreation. However, viewers of *Culture for Freedom*, cannot hear neither the performed interrogation nor its explanation. He embodies fellow young black Britons. Four key scenes contain speech. The first one is the reiteration of a drawing of the Tottenham three behind bars and an off voice repeating the sentence, "release the Tottenham Three." Newspaper's headlines accompany the drawing: "Broadwater Appeals for Justice", "They are not Guilty" "Riot Amnesty Campaign Steeped up." A further occasion is a speech about how the mass media is to blame for the imprisonment of the Tottenham Three. As the speaker claims, "the media and this unjust government who will have these crucified three men imprisoned for life. The succeeding scene is a satirical conversation performed by the Bemarrow Sisters, who impersonate two mothers. One of them is Winston's mother. They talk about injustices in daily life, including the imprisonment of Winston.

This dramatised conversation is a vicarious memory. As Emily Pond highlights, "vicarious memories are memories that people have in reference to events that they have not

directly experienced; rather they heard them second-hand” (2020, ii). People at the benefit night and the Bemarrow sisters are not parents to the Tottenham Three. However, they know about them and are part of the movement trying to free them. Pond argues that a vicarious memory is “[t]he mentally constructed scene of an event from another person’s life” (2020, 16). The dramatised conversation and the police’s interrogation denote that the benefit night and *Culture for Freedom* were created following vicarious memories. The viewers also participate in these memories. They are aware that it did not happen to them even if they can feel moved by them. This is a prerequisite of vicarious memories. As Pond adds, it is “[i]mportant to note that when recalling vicarious memories, the individual is aware that the event happened to someone else” (2020, 16). The performed vicarious memories are also cathartic for Winston and Raghip’s families who are at the benefit night. Their presence is the bridge that allows the community to connect with the personal experience of the Tottenham Three’s families. As David B. Pillemer et al. wrote, vicarious memories refer “[t]o recollections people have of salient life episodes that were told to them by another person, such as a friend or family member” (2015, 234).

In the final hearable moment, a woman asking for help with the Tottenham Three defence campaign claims:

What we would ask of you, not tonight because tonight it is light, but tomorrow morning, when you wake up from your bed, spare a thought for the Tottenham three. You say to yourselves, ‘ok, I went to the benefit for the Tottenham three, but now I’m going to do something about it’. You can put pens and paper and pressurise the home secretary, put enough pressure on him as he has done on the families and on members of the Broadwater farm defence campaign.

This cry for help shows how black Brittan acts as a united family against oppression. Ceddo includes the telephone number of the campaign on *Culture for Freedom* to seek the viewer’s support. *Culture for Freedom* demonstrates that selective silence is a strategy allowing for symptomatic readings of controversial episodes. The performances of *Culture for Freedom* underline how black Britons are an expressive culture (Gilroy 1991), which seeks alternatives to their reality.

The recording of people entering and leaving the benefit night is muted, symbolising the impossibility to speak after a traumatic event such as the riots and the arrest of black Britons. It also indicates that language has failed black British communities. For them, language is not reliable anymore and only non-verbal elements encourage them in their fight against oppression. The benefit night is also a space for collective remembrance and

mourning. Mourning and grief lead the topic of the next production, *Mysteries of July*. It continues the work inaugurated by the three analysed works connecting with the last message that *Culture for Freedom* shares on screen, “we want our people back.”

#### 6.4. The *Mysteries of July*: Collective Mourning, Grief, and the Prison System

*Mysteries of July* considers the relationship between police custody and black British communities given the number of deaths in police custody. It remembers the deaths of Jamie Steward, Blair Peach, Winston Rodes and Colin Roach. *Mysteries of July* links the private world of mourning and grief to a wider familial and community context where the malfunctioning of police custody and justice affects black Britons. Formally, it contains juxtaposed archival footage with live action one. It includes dramatic reconstructions, tableaux, and talking-head interviews, which help inquire into the police's power in custody and in the criminal system.

The focus of the work is the relationship between the police, the black community, and how the criminal justice system has failed them (The Times 1991; Turner 1992). For John Fisher (2007), the film reveals that one needs to pay attention to ideological manipulation. Mercer claimed that the work discloses, through its mournful aura, the crisis of unknowing (2007; 2016). The lack of an extensive engagement with the work derives from its difficult access. I analyse the work by exploring the relationship between the police and black communities and how for the latter sharing their point of view with their community is both a way of mourning but also keeping the past alive.

*Mysteries of July* alternates its narration with the recurrent appearance of a museum of the dead or room. In this room there are photographs of different episodes of black British history and people dead in situations involving the police. This museum is introduced through a blue filter, giving the work a melancholy aura where the coldness and isolation of those in police custody is felt. This space is used as a transition or interval between the different narratives, and it is a space where mourning is encouraged, as religious elements such as candles and funeral flowers indicate. In the film, mourning is an act transcending the narrative and giving visibility to the memories not acknowledged by hegemonic Britain. These memories are present in the museum of the dead. By forcing mourning and remembrance, black Britons are encouraged to work through the event evading melancholia (Conley 1999). In this space, mourning is a self-reflective exercise to deal with deaths in police custody.



**Figure 46. Mourning Room in *Mysteries of July***

*Mysteries of July* opens with a dramatic recreation of policemen on patrol and the explanation of the narrator:

When confronted with a suspicious death in police custody, the bereaved would enter two mutually exclusive worlds. The world of inquest and judicial procedures and the private world of grief. Separating these worlds are unanswered questions about the treatment of citizens incarcerated by agents of the state and it is this treatment that today raises alarming and disturbing questions about police powers and accountability. According to inquest, there have been over seven hundred deaths in police custody in the last two decades. In 1989 there were thirty-seven such deaths in London. Four in July alone. We saw the life of Vincent Graham, Edwin Card, Sullivan Vaghuanu and Jamie Steward fade before our eyes.

The public world of justice and force, and the private world of grief and mourning are intertwined. This is seen in the names of the people dead in police custody (public) and how families try to mourn them (private). In the interstices of these two worlds *Mysteries of July* presents itself as an essay film.

As Laura Rascaroli wrote, “the essay film, as thinking cinema, thinks interstitially—and that, to understand how the essay film works, we must look at how it forges gaps, how it creates disjunction” (2017, 11). In the disjunctions created by the audio-visual rhythm of the work are the “[u]nanswered questions of these two worlds.” James Steward’s mum is the first narration *Mysteries of July* introduces. His son, “crudely and tragically lost his young life on July the first 1989.” A tableau recreating his wake and his family visiting his graveyard accompanies the narration, making it an example of counter-mourning as political action (Frazier 1999). For Jo Frazier, dialogues about the dead are similar to militant cries which “preserve that site as a commemoration of life-taking and the denial of justice” (1999, 109).<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Frazier wrote this about the Chilean context, but I apply it to black Britain given that there is a denial of justice and the need to expose the accounts of the deceased as a political action, as the interviews show.

As the narrator indicates, “mourners become keepers of the shrines [...] in captivated acts of remembrance to the names of their lost ones, the names of others.” The account of Steward’s mum and the visual construction show how intertwined the private world of mourning and the public world of (in)justice are.

Solicitors are figures linking both worlds. The solicitor, as a storyteller, gives the testimony of two of Steward’s witnesses. Thanks to the (legal) storytelling technique employed by the documentary and the recreations accompanying it, the viewer is able to picture what Steward’s arrest may have looked like.<sup>74</sup> Resorting to narrative and storytelling is a technique used by critical race theory. As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic wrote in *The Derrick Bell Reader* (2005), legal storytelling is a means “by which representatives of new communities may introduce their views into the dialogue about the way society should be governed. ... They offer insights into the particulars of lives lived at the margins of society, margins that are rapidly collapsing toward a disappearing centre” (2005, 118). Storytelling reveals the need for a new British justice system since centre is challenged by counter-voices such as black Britons.

An added technique deriving from critical race theory is asking readers temporally to “suspend judgement and the rules of technical feasibility and listen in [...] Analysis, argumentation and criticism merge with hypotheticals that pose difficult legal question” (Delgado and Stefancic 2005, 780). *Mysteries of July* is an instance of visual critical race theory in a British context. Viewers are encouraged in the mourning room to forget about the legal world and remember and mourn the dead. Black British experiences are unique narratives, and legal storytelling helps stress their history. As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic advocate, “the legal storytelling movement urges black and brown writers to recount their experiences with racism, daily life, and the legal system and to apply their own unique perspectives to assess law’s master narratives” (2005, 11). Black Audio, as black creators, open a space with *Mysteries of July* where black Britons get a voice against the British legal system.

---

<sup>74</sup> The reason given for Steward’s death is cocaine overdose. However, the solicitor argues that it is a mystery still how he would have swallowed cocaine in a room filled with police officers. *Mysteries of July* also points out that Steward had been screaming for long before four policemen found him unconscious. As he claims, “it is very difficult to swallow that story, it is one of these cases which are very frustrating, where you can say with a pretty high degree of certainty that what you’ve been told is not the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. As to what the truth actually is, that is a mystery.”

Steward's solicitor tries to reconstruct verbally and, Black Audio, visually, the truth behind Steward's case. As was indicated, there are "unanswered questions." The policemen's account in the interrogation room with Steward vary. When Steward was taken to hospital someone had told them that he had an epileptic episode, knocked his head against the wall, and was unconscious. However, who invented this story remains unknown. Black Audio uses the technique of racial realism to give voice to black Britons and reconstruct their truth. Racial realism is "[a] legal and social mechanism on which blacks can rely to have their voice and outrage heard" (Delgado and Stefanic 2005, 147) given that it "[a]cknowledges the present reality of blacks' subordinate status" (Delgado and Stefanic 2005, 720). *Mysteries of July* is cinematic racial realism.

Steward's case discloses the subordinate status of blacks in the streets—"a laboratory of fear which began in the 1970s." This laboratory is London's black inner cities, where there is lawlessness for black Britons. The laboratory of fear (public) contrasts with the museum of the dead (private). The juxtaposition of people in the museum looking at photographs of black British history of oppression is a wink to Maggie's montage in *The Passion of Remembrance*. This space constitutes a living repository of images where mourning and remembering are in dynamic conversation.

The work offers more instances of black Britons who have not found justice. A further example is the Southall protest of 1979 which "[r]emains one of the most public acts of execution on mainland Britain." Blair Peach is the victim of this protest. His solicitor, Tony Ward, introduces his inquest supported by the reconstruction of an eye witness:

I was in my garden when two police vans came about. . . they decided to break a line of people and push people, pulling them by the hair and hitting them with their sticks. This boy was standing on the corner next to the wall when everybody came running past. He got tangled up and knocked over. When he was lying on the ground the police came rushing pass. . . one of them hit him on the head with the stick.<sup>75</sup>

The eyewitness' narrative indicates the importance of oral memory and storytelling for black Britons and their vulnerability against the judicial system. The museum of the dead highlights the significance of this technique and its relationship to cinema. As the narrator claims:

---

<sup>75</sup> Tony Ward's book *Death and Disorder: Three Case Studies of Public Order and Policing in London* (1986) accounts for this and the information from this book is in *Mysteries of July*. As Ward wrote, "when all the evidence was assembled it showed that Blair Peach had died from a blow to his skull. ...The blow had been struck by a police officer" (1986, 31). Peach was also mentioned by Linton Kwesi Johnson in his poem "Reggae Fi Peach."

Early film goers called cinema a theatre of ghosts and forgetting. Blair Peach's body was laid in state in Southall cinema, but here cinema became a theatre of mourning. A memorial service takes place in Southall each year, where the names of the dead are voiced and honoured. Blair's name is among them. In the theatre of mourning, we see another kind of remembrance, a ceremony of silence. [sic] [It is] held in honour of those that are made powerless by the judicial process.

By introducing the idea of silent cinema, Black Audio emphasises how, for black Britons, cinema, remembering and mourning co-exist and prevent those who died without justice from being forgotten.

Cinema and mourning are linked in this museum where there is “[a]n active, conscious, coming to terms with historical and collective experience” (Elsaesser 1981, 146). For Jacques Derrida, cinema and an analytic session are similar. As he confesses in an interview with Antoine de Baceque and Thierry Jousse, “you go to the movies to be analysed by letting all the ghosts appear and speak. . . . You can let the spectres haunt you on the screen” (2015, 27).<sup>76</sup> These ghosts are as silent as the ghosts of *Culture for Freedom* were, indicating that there is a repression of black Britons' voice. Derrida adds that cinema is a “[m]agnified work of mourning, and it is ready to let itself be imprinted by all the memories in mourning, that is to say, by the tragic or epic moments of history” (2015, 26). Cinema and the museum of the dead are spaces of collective grief.

The narrator reminds the viewer that injustice is present in the constructed police's narratives, which affect the future of young black Britons, who are “[p]artners in struggle” with the ghosts of the past, as explored in *Handsworth Songs*. An example is the 1982 Tory conference stating that “in every urban area, there is a large minority of people who are unfit for salvage.” As these words are said, a tableau of young black Britons with torches in a police station walking around corpses appears. This tableau symbolises how the ideological and repressive state apparatuses are stealing black Britons their future. As the narrator maintains, “the urban black becomes synonymous with police criminality and threats with public order . . . as suspicion and paranoia serves to authenticate intensive policing of these urban blacks.” The sound of their pacing echoing an army marching together with their torches indicates their willingness to resist and be “the fire next time”, to paraphrase James Baldwin.

Winston Rodes' case is shown. He suffered an episode deriving from his mental illness and, as his wife asked for help, the social services called the police instead of the

---

<sup>76</sup> The interview took place in 1988 but was published in 2015.



hospital, leading to Rodes' death in the police's van. His solicitor contends that "so many other people who have died are black, one has to assume that perhaps some percentage of what causes their deaths is a conscious or unconscious form of racist attitudes and behaviour." The case of Blair Peach, Jamie Steward, and Colin Roach—the next presented case—confirms this. Colin Roach, as Barnor Hesse—a social researcher—declares, is an astonishing case: "a young black man of twenty-one [...] walks into Stoke Newington police station and decides that it is a good place to commit suicide." This case triggered several demonstrations and campaigns in 1983. Hesse reveals how Roach's case displays the contradictions between history and memory, facts, and manipulation. As Hesse further argues in the film, "they pass into the annals of history as settled matters, and what we find here is a political reconstruction of people's own sense of history." A hegemonic sense of history which *Mysteries of July* challenges by uncovering the mysteries of police custody's deaths.

Solving these mysteries would guarantee a future for black Britons. As Steward's mother argues, "if my being here can help my neighbour and prevent this from happening to the next Jammie out there, then it would have been worth it at all." Black British communities suffer the consequences of "interest convergence" given that racism works in the interest of white elites and working-class whites (the police) who have no interest in eradicating it (Delgado and Stefanic 2005). For Alessandra Raengo, Critical Race Theory shows how racism is ordinary and no "[r]acial progress occurs unless there is convergence of material interests" (2016, 5). The convergence of material interests is interest convergence. In the film, it is shown how there was no agreement or change improving the situations black Britons lived across history—as the museum illustrates. However, Black Britons create their sense of history through the museum of the dead and through cinema. These spaces are sites of political engagement where a struggle takes place "in the absence of any democratic control of a force or means to make it fully accountable to the public."

*Mysteries of July* depicts how the hostility of black people towards the state depends on a "[h]istorical perspective" (Ramdin 1999, 250) and how portraying black people as "[t]arget of police brutality is a sensational way of looking at black experience" (Fusco 1988, 26). *Mysteries of July*, by introducing the museum of the dead creates a sense of history and community union through remembrance. It also underlines how mourning, and grief are acts carried equally individual and social frameworks for black Britons since it affects all of them.

## 6.5. Conclusion

The films in this chapters have explored the union of black Britons, especially younger generations, against the historical neglect of their memory and history and the systematically marginalisation Britain has enforced on them. They carry the memory and consciousness of early generations. As such, this accumulated anger explored in riots and events which unapologetically denounced the injustices black communities in Britain has experienced. My analyses reveal how different cinematic forms and theoretical frameworks can account for and provide a space of representation for episodes of oppression, suppression and repression.

Through this union, it is revealed the importance of social and collective frameworks for the expression of memory and to combat the mechanisms hegemonic Britain has used to oppress and suppress black British voices like the prison system, the police, or the media. By doing so, black British communities manage to construct their own sense of memory and history. The creation of a sense of history and moving beyond sensational ways of looking at the past—while advocating for a transcultural perspective—are ideas explored in the following chapter. The upcoming works signal the importance of uncovering the transcultural face of black British experiences



## CHAPTER 7. IS LONDON THE PLACE? REWRITING THE SELF IN TRANSCULTURAL BRITAIN

“Identity is an endless ever unfinished conversation”  
(*The Stuart Hall Project* 2013).

This is the first of two chapters dedicated to the transcultural representation of black Britishness. The transcultural turn in memory studies presents a significant framework to perceive memory as fluid through the links between different cultural contexts. It encompasses the dynamics of memory within and between several structures (Bond and Rapson 2014), transcending traditional boundaries and borders, which had traditionally shaped our interpretation of the past (Bond and Rapson 2014).

By discussing *Twilight City* (1989) by the Black Audio Film Collective, *In-Between* (1992) by Sankofa, and *Testament* (1988) by the Black Audio Film Collective this chapter will extend previous theories and emphasise Britain’s connection with other locations, exploring how these interactions shape identities and force individuals to re-evaluate and rewrite themselves. These works reflect how migrants are carriers and creators of memory in the diverse contexts they interact with. They reflect Britain, particularly London, as a space of change. This setting prompts the protagonists of these films to reconsider themselves in relation to their place of birth, where they no longer fit in.

The search for a new cultural self is central in all these films, and it is accomplished by movement—whether it is through driving (*Twilight City*), running (*In-Between*) or walking (*Testament*). These productions highlight how identity is created in in-between spaces. In *Twilight City* it is created through the shift between the old and the new London; in *In-Between*, through the transformations in oneself after embracing the differences between two cultural codes; and in *Testament*, it is forged through the alternation between a pre- and a post-revolutionary world where the revolution has failed. A further convergence is to be found in how the main characters use art, whether writing or film, to express themselves and find refuge from the changing world and from the instability produced by unstable identity.

*Twilight City* portrays the altered face of London under Thatcherism and examines how its transformation into a global city involves forgetting the foundations where previous cultures and histories wrote their narratives. I will read *Twilight City* through ideas related to travelling memory (Erll 2011b), which underlines how memory travels through different frameworks. Further concepts are alternating time (Gurvitch 1964), where the past and the future compete in the present, trajectory of living (Middleton and Brown 2008), which shows

how experiences have an effect in the future, and productive nostalgia, which is equally oriented to the past, present and future and, by linking the three time frameworks, it becomes productive (Blunt 2003, 717). These concepts will guide my exploration of the way *Twilight City* captures the social atmosphere created by Thatcherism.

*In-between* examines the identity crisis faced by its filmmaker and protagonist, Robert Crusz, who discovers that the Western codes he learnt in Sri Lanka do not apply in London. There, he wears a white mask that needs to make space for a black one. I will analyse *In-between* through psychoanalytic notions such as the Oedipus complex and the theory of ‘anti-Oedipus’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1983), which revisits and expands Freud’s ideas. Britishtalgia, a term I coined to denote the nostalgia for a British experience, errantry (Glissant [1990] 1997), which expresses how wandering contributes to the creation of identities. These concepts in combination with further ideas contribute to the process of adopting new cultural values to rewrite and find one’s position in society.

*Testament* considers the internal dilemma arising from the varied ways history is remembered and how individual memories of an event differ. *Testament* follows its protagonist’s experience of exile in London. Abena, after the failure of socialism in Ghana, returns to her native country as a journalist. Here, a warzone of memories haunts her present. The analysis encompasses a discussion on the distinctions between exile and diaspora, and the use of ‘erratic time’ (Gurvitch 1964), which is the temporal space of uncertainty and discontinuity. Further ideas concerning responsibility, accountability and witnessing will also help in this analysis. Of additional importance will be the notions of talking back (hooks [1984] 2015), where oppressed people manage to express their troubles, and agonistic memory (Bull and Hansen 2016), where remembering relies on different testimonies, highlighting the affectivity of the different testimonies for each person. These works reveal the interplay in the construction of postcolonial identities in a postmodern Britain while engaging in the transcultural turn in memory studies.

### 7.1. “London Has Left me Exhausted”: Change, Return and Urban Decay in *Twilight City*

*Twilight City* engages with London’s physical and social transformations under Thatcherism and how these transformations affect its social texture. Eugenia goes back to Dominica, while her daughter Olivia stayed in London. A few years later, Eugenia sends Olivia a letter expressing her wish to come back to London. Olivia, a journalist, interviews diverse intellectuals as part of her job who express their opinion on London’s transformation. As she

tries to craft an answer for her mother, she learns about London's reality and warns her that the London she left behind has changed. If she wants to return, she needs to let go of the old London. *Twilight City* is an essay film incorporating archival footage, dramatic constructions or tableaux, traditional style interviews, and an edited soundtrack.

Black Audio describes *Twilight City* as a film about the marginal histories of London (1989), where social transformation and disintegration (Anwar 1989; SpareRib 1989) combine with a contestation of national identity (Bourland 2019) as a consequence of Thatcherism (Malcolm 1989b; Marks 2000; Fisher 2007). It also depicts how migrants deal with the experience of rootlessness (Naughton 1989). For Kodwo Eshun, *Twilight City* is one of the first contemporary works portraying London as a global city (2004). Kobena Mercer highlights how *Twilight City* discloses the ghosts of the black Atlantic and how complex its cultural roots are (2008). The Black Atlantic connects with Manthia Diawara's referral to the work as a diasporic space (1993).

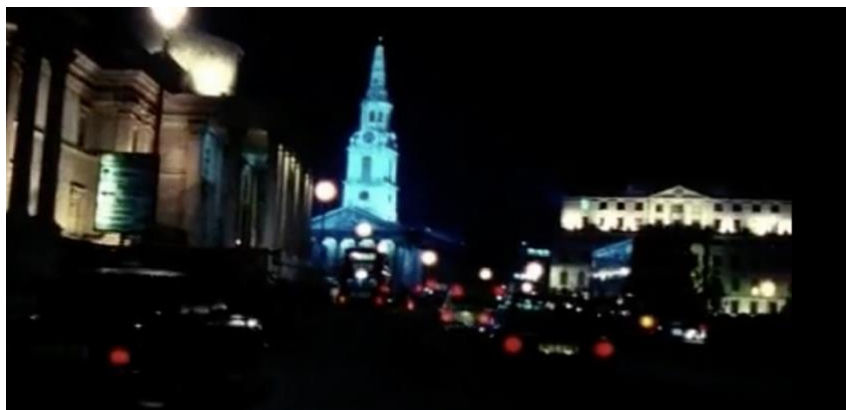
*Twilight City* is self-reflexive and encapsulates black Britons' eighties postcolonial context (Shin 2011). The interventions in the film of figures such as Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, Gail Lewis, George Shire, Femi Otitoju, Rosina Visram, David Yallop, or Savariti Hensam illustrates this. The film's form is evocative and poetic (Charity 1989), mixing personal and fictional narratives (Stimpson 1989) and disclosing the co-existence of personal and colonial histories (Omelsky 2018). The archival footage in the work gives stability to its fragmented plot and "[o]pens up the psycho-geographical conditions of London's recent uneven urban developments" (Demos 2019, 38). Some critics raised their voices against it, like Jeff Sawtell, from the progressive *Morning Star*, who found its prose pretentious and depressing (1989b). For me, the film illustrates how postcolonial subjectivities are involved in a relentless process of transformation and self-discovery. It also demonstrates how a geographical location has an impact on identity formation.

*Twilight City* consists of two intertwined narrative spaces. One is Olivia's interviews, the other is Olivia's audio-visual epistolary answer, which is based on the information taken from the interviews. For the answer, the work combines essay and film. Jacques Rivette in *Rossellini's Viaggio in Italia* indicates that the essay film is a "confession, a logbook, and an intimate journal" (Rascaroli 2017, 2). The intimacy is denoted in the opening lines, "dear mother, it's strange how a simple letter can change your life."

Olivia cannot understand why Eugenia left and why she wants to return to an altered London. Eugenia has a displaced postcolonial identity, who has discovered that migration is sometimes a one-way trip (Hall 1996a). To comprehend Eugenia, Olivia reconstructs the past

“[o]n the basis of the present” (Halbwachs [1925]1992, 40). An instance is how she drives “[t]hrough the city searching for something, halfway into the night [she forgets] what [she is] looking for, so [she plays] a game using old and new buildings as a guide home. . . . A new London is being born.” Olivia’s answer in the form of an essay film makes it a cinematic stream of consciousness happening as she or her ideas are in motion—through writing or driving.

Astrid Erll’s notion of travelling memory links memory and movement. As she wrote, “memories do not hold still—on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement [...]. Not so much ‘sites’ of memory but rather the ‘travels’ of memory” (2011b, 11). Examples of these travelling memories are the memories of migrants and diasporic subjects since they are carriers of memory as “products of transcultural movement” (Erll 2011b, 11). The intellectuals in *Twilight City* are diasporic subjects “who share in collective images and narratives of the past, who practice mnemonic rituals [...] and can draw on repertoires of explicit and implicit knowledge” (Erll 2011b, 12). They ‘scaffold’ Olivia’s travelling memory and stream of consciousness. Black Audio, through cinema, also allows memory to travel (Bond and Rapson 2014).



**Figure 47. Olivia Driving at Night Past The National Gallery (London), *Twilight City***

The gap between Olivia and Eugenia is spatial, temporal, and generational. Eugenia migrated to London, moved by the idea of London as a city signifying “[a]ffluence, modernisation, a better way of living.” She discovered the streets of London were not “[p]aved with gold” and did what Miss T. in *Dreaming Rivers* (chapter five) could not do: leave. Georges Gurvitch’s notion of alternating time clarifies the different relationship of Eugenia and Olivia with London. For Gurvitch, alternating time shifts “[b]etween delay and advance, where the realisation of past and future compete in the present” (1964, 33). *Twilight City* shows this through the diverse montages of the old and the new London and the dissimilar perspectives of Eugenia and Olivia. Eugenia symbolises delay and the past, and

Olivia advance and the present. According to Gurvitch, alternating time is characterised by its “[d]iscontinuity [which] is stronger than continuity,” (1964, 33). The disjunction of *Twilight City* as an essay film mirrors this discontinuity. For Gurvitch, alternating time is characteristic of economic groupings and “[g]lobal societies at the inception of capitalism” (1964, 33). The old London is making way for the new global London, where the culmination of neoliberal economics through Thatcherism and the power of technocracy are visible.

As writer and critic George Shire reveals, “businessmen are the technocrats who govern in the conservative party. These businessmen build their industry in the inner cities, where black people live making the space a “contested territory” (*Twilight City* 1989).<sup>77</sup> Because of this, Olivia feels that “now the city is falling apart”, and what she has in common with Eugenia is “the past, and even that is in a bad way, stuck somewhere in a casualty ward in a hospital called redevelopment, and the notice on the wall says sacrifice a piece of the past for the whole of the future.” The word redevelopment discloses the identity problem Olivia is facing: if she wants to move forward, she has to make amends with the past (her mother) and accept the present changes in a city that—like herself—is under construction. As she states, “there are now two Olivias in this world, and you took one with you to Dominica. . . . I’ve got no teachers, and I am nobody’s pet. Is this the Olivia you want?” Eugenia does not know the new Olivia, and if she is to come back, she cannot expect Olivia to fit into the memory she holds of her.

Gilroy discusses his memory of the old London as he learnt, as a child, that there were certain parts of the city he should not go to. As he declares, “gradually you incorporate that kind of map into your own movements around the city. Now, that map, that pattern of development is something which is no longer useful to me.” He manifests Britain’s hostility towards the black community while also demonstrating how taking refuge in an old mental map (like Eugenia) is not the solution since the map has changed. Bhabha also argues that it was hard for him to adjust to London’s constricting cartography (*Twilight City* 1989). Gilroy and Bhabha learnt to navigate the uncertain rhythms of the city and its chronogeography, which illustrates how one moves in through space and time, how new maps of existence are created. Chronogeography exemplifies the differences “[b]etween various forms of time in

---

<sup>77</sup> For clarity purposes, when scholars intervene in *Twilight City*, I’m leaving the parenthetical reference when it is ambiguous since I also use essays by these scholars to support my arguments.



relation to the nature of place and the vehicle of movement” (Marada et al. 2023, 103001).<sup>78</sup> The people in *Twilight City* try to contain the entropy of the new London through their chronogeographies.

To represent the rapidly changing London, *Twilight City* includes an aerial shot contraposing St. Martins-in-the fields and the National Art Gallery (the old) with the skyscrapers under construction in the City (the new).<sup>79</sup> Another visual transition symbolising the evolving London is the docklands’ development. Olivia signals that in the modern London, communities such as the Lascars (East Indian sailors) and the place’s stories are fading into oblivion. *Twilight City* dusts off some of these stories through Olivia. An example is the Blitz, which severely affected the docklands. Footage of buildings on fire accompanied by Olivia’s narration of her troubles pays homage to this episode, “every night I wander through a great fire, in last night’s dream I wondered through the ruins of an old city.”

The Blitz suggests the perils of erasing memory since the buildings demolished by Thatcherism recall and re-enact the histories of violence coexisting within a city.<sup>80</sup> *Twilight City* proves this through Olivia, who seeing these buildings, recalls thinking as a child that “something terrible has happened here.” Another instance is the introduction of footage of the Isle of Dogs, where the East India Dock was, denoting the role of colonialism in the creation of the old London and underscoring the dangers of forgetting it. The foundation of modern London is rooted in a tale of violence. Olivia uncovered that in the nineteenth century, seamen from Bombay and Calcutta, brought by the East Indian company to the Isle of dogs, were abandoned. Their untold accounts lie buried in the foundations of the new development.

The tension between the need to preserve and the inevitable loss Olivia refers to is a trajectory of living (Middleton and Brown 2008). For David Middleton and Steven Brown, selfhood is “[t]he shifting intersection of experiences of which our present consciousness is only the leading edge” (2008, 241). Olivia is a present consciousness trying to understand the past to ‘lead the edge’ into the future. Middleton and Brown suggest that experience matters “not so much in terms of what happened in the past but in terms of how we build the past in the future in ways that make for the possibility of becoming different. In other words, how we actualise alternative trajectories of living” (2008, 242).

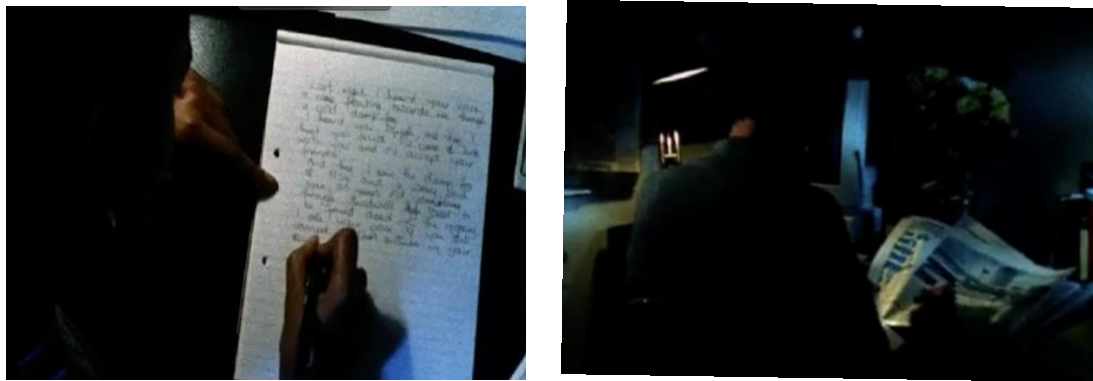
---

<sup>78</sup> This concept is related to the one of chronotopes by Bakhtin since there is a juxtaposition of diverse temporalities (Marada et al. 2023).

<sup>79</sup> By City I mean the financial district of the City in London.

<sup>80</sup> The work also includes references to the Great Smog of London (1952) as a geographical history of violence.

Olivia's letter writing and her interviews, which discuss and reconstruct the past, are instances of alternating time in her trajectory of living. In a rapidly changing city, the only certainty is the past. As Olivia comments, "I went back to the Isle of Dogs yesterday. Partly for research but also because I was hoping to be touched by a vague sense of nostalgia." However, Olivia does not have time to dwell on nostalgia. She knows it is not the answer for the future, the past is only useful as a reconstruction for an imaginary future (Middleton and Brown 2008). Olivia's nostalgia is productive (Blunt 2003) since it is "[o]riented towards the present and the future as well as towards the past" (2003, 717).<sup>81</sup> For Blunt, productive nostalgia "does not represent a longing to return to the past" (2003, 722) but inspires a diverse vision of the past and a place with a consequence in the future, as Olivia is doing.



**Figure 48. Olivia Writing her Reply in *Twilight City***

Gilroy's interview helps Olivia to gather fragments of the past, as he explains that London "[h]as been decentred in its most radical way, fragmented." The technocrats' new buildings in the Docklands are antagonistic to communities which are pushed to the margins. This reveals the dehumanisation of London's present. *Twilight City* illustrates this through a sequence of technological advancements contrasting with footage of the East Indian Company. As Bhabha maintains, "in the centre of the city, in areas which for years have had a different history, a history of depression, a history of devastation of migrant population [...] you'll find that the edges of these spaces, they'll begin to have new developments" (*Twilight City* 1989). The work introduces an animated construction of a building's plan envisioned in front of All Souls, Langham Place. The future building will dramatically contrast with the architecture of All Souls and serves as a metaphor for future London.

---

<sup>81</sup> Blunt uses the term with relationship to the Anglo-Indian community to indicate the interplay of the term with "memory, home and identity" (2003, 718).

If London's architecture changes, so does its social texture and the shared histories of implication. Olivia, with her productive nostalgia, adjusts to London's transformations, whereas Eugenia "[m]ust sacrifice a piece of the past for the whole of the future." Accepting the social and physical alterations, even if she wishes to "[m]ake whole what has been smashed" (Benjamin [1939] 1968b) is the way forward. This includes accepting Olivia's new identity. As she states, "you said you hope I've not joined the city's lost souls [...] your lost souls are becoming more visible. I suppose in one way or another most of my friends are the people you warned me about." Eugenia was a sympathiser of the conservative party whereas Olivia was on the side of the fight for social change and advancement as was Maggie in *The Passion of Remembrance* (chapter three).

Olivia is not willing to hide her identity and convictions, "I live in two different worlds, in both worlds belonging was never an easy question [...] the real tragedy would be if I failed to convince you of this." As Eugenia was in London, Olivia was trapped between her mother's belief system and her own experience as a young, black British woman.

Homi Bhabha explains the argument Olivia builds for Eugenia. As he claims:

The kinds of politics that actually plays itself out there may not have a narrative of progress and development. A utopian narrative at all. I think it doesn't, but it has a narrative of survival and in the survival within the city of groups, blacks, gays, various other socially oppressed groups you begin to see in the interface between them and authorities how a critique is developing of the so-called social contract of Western bourgeois capitalist society. (*Twilight City* 1989)

Bhabha signals the connection between politics and socio-geographical changes and how it impacts "[v]ariously oppressed groups." This argument reveals how Thatcher's government promoted social eugenics and devised solutions for purported social issues as a means of control.

The mechanism of eugenics, which tried to improve human beings genetically, and was linked to social Darwinism, are seen in Thatcher's social control. Under Thatcherism, eugenics advocated for the need to intervene in society to prevent subversive identities, such as the poor or migrants, from being in the ideal family she envisioned for Britain. By not supporting them, they could not create their families, securing reproduction for those who were part of Thatcher's neoliberal plans. Eugenia, a name etymologically linked to eugenics, similarly exerted control over her daughter.

Thatcherism also tried to repress homosexuality. An example is Clause 28. In *Twilight City*, Olivia saw Eugenia's church friends holding a banner against homosexuality as she was

marching against this clause.<sup>82</sup> She thinks of her mother's words, "fewer things lower the moral fibre and injure the physic life of the nation more than tolerated homosexuality." This scene makes Olivia rethink her answer since she does not know if Eugenia would support her or her church's friends. As she maintains, "London has always been a city of uncertainties..." "why should communities be criminalised because of whom they love?" While expressing these thoughts, the work includes a montage of the march against clause 28.

Olivia realises that her mother's religious teachings have failed her, "we share the measure of our faith by the extent of our commitment to other people", she used to say. It is her church friends the ones who align with Thatcher's ideal family and paternalism against minorities. Ironically, for Savariti Hensam, religious groups pose a threat to Thatcherism given their sense of religious responsibility and denunciation of the paternalistic notion that the rich can do what they like with poor people (*Twilight City* 1989). *Twilight City* reflects this Victorian value through a Victorian picture depicting someone undergoing an organ extraction. It serves as a metaphor for what Thatcherism was doing: tearing "the bad" out of the ideal society Thatcherism envisioned.

The identities *Twilight City* presents "[p]rompt further questions such as how the use of memory in everyday spaces and places may express political hegemony, and whether there are spaces of/for resistance" (Drozdewski, Waterton and Sumartojo 2019, 267). Olivia and her friends embody this. Her interviews make her think of how memory and the past can be utilised to become "[p]artners in struggle" (*Handsworth Songs* 1986, chapter six) with the identities that are relegated to oblivion. This is why Olivia claims that "if you really want to know someone, listen to their silences [...]. In order to understand the city, you have to do the same thing." Carrying out a symptomatic reading of the city would disclose previously ignored narratives of unheard voices, which are crucial for their existence in the future. As Olivia maintains, "we are the guardians of the old city, and our secret is the power of inheritance."

Olivia cannot comprehend why her mother would want to return to a contradictory London, where Somalis have no food, despite Britain's colonisation and how they produced food for Britain. She questions why the Isle of Dogs could not be protected against the Blitz's fires if it is surrounded by water. She wonders why Eugenia joined the conservative party when she was the Carnival Queen of 1943. The new London, as David Yallop affirms,

---

<sup>82</sup> This law, passed in 1988, forbade local authorities, including schools, from using material fostering homosexuality (legislation.gov.uk 1988, n.p.).

demonstrates that “you don’t have to be a slave to lose your roots, you can do it here in this very city, and under Thatcherism the loss of roots is accelerating” (*Twilight City* 1989). Thatcherism fosters the rootlessness and displacement of minorities who are not deemed profitable for the global and capitalist society imagined by Thatcher’s government.

As the work approaches its end, Olivia appears writing her letter. Her answer, derived from her journalistic job and personal thoughts, demonstrates that it has been carefully researched and crafted with the materials available to her. While writing, the camera pans to the right, uncovering the heading of newspapers such as *The Evening Standard* revealing the marginalisation of communities. Simultaneously, footage of conservative politicians, including Thatcher, is shown. These politicians have destroyed the old London and have committed “architectural murder.” Under the pretence of progress and development, they have not addressed the political issues affecting the people. As a reporter in a newsreel claims, while your children “ask for bread [...] you give them not stone but dead concrete, a building like this lifeless, faceless, hopeless, joyless [...] defeating in advance any hope of giving London a complex of modern beauty on the South Bank of the Thames.”

For the speaker, the architecture of John Nash, such as The Royal Pavilion (see chapter 5), Buckingham Palace or Park Crescent, contrasts with the de-industrialised London changing under Thatcherism. The co-existence of Nash’s legacy and the de-industrialised London mirrors the uneven social texture of London’s modern face. Here, the identities Eugenia despises were moving from ‘de-margin to de-centre’ (Mercer and Julien 1996), contributing to the creation of a dynamic society and opposing the Thatcherist bid for homogenisation.

Olivia uncovers in her letter that she is part of the new London these identities occupy. As she wrote, “in the house of old fears the new is always fragile, it struggles to breathe and fight. I have made my choice, but my choice will not live with your silence. That would destroy me forever.” She stands up for her rights and beliefs making theirs Gail Lewis’s recommendation: “don’t mess with me because I am here” (*Twilight City*, 1989). These words give Lewis and Olivia’s generation a “[s]ense of community [...] [coming from] people born in this country”, distinguishing them from Eugenia’s generation. Olivia is willing to adjust and follow the rhythms of London: Britain is her home, and she does not long for a different country.

As she conveys to her mother, “don’t come back for the city, the streets would have forgotten you and the new buildings would probably ignore you. The old securities are fading and if you are looking for them, you’ll find nothing but pain.” She continues, “don’t come

back for memories because memories are not enough [...] silence may not love you, but I do. So, I want you to come because I want you to love me and, small as it is, I have a feeling we will need it in our new world.” If Eugenia wants to be part of the new London, she has to fully immerse herself in its transformations, forget the narrative of return, and obey the thought of a new beginning in a new world (unknown to her) where a British identity (her daughter), who has managed to rewrite herself, is inviting her.

The uncertainties of the new world are unknown to Olivia, but the work does not have a gloomy tone. On the contrary, as Gail Lewis reveals, “I’m optimistic on the symbolic cultural side” (*Twilight City* 1989), signalling that if the cultural identities rewriting themselves and adjusting to change manage to secure a space to voice themselves as British identities, London may be the place to be. The rewriting of selfhood and attempt to find one’s place by rejecting previous cultural codes is the topic of the next work.

## 7.2 *In-Between* Sri Lanka and London: Black Skin, White and Black Mask

*In-Between* explores director Robert Crusz’s journey in forming his identity as a post-colonial subject against the narratives of Britain and Sri-Lanka, which have significantly shaped him. Confronting both cultural codes, which make him feel as an outsider, he builds a new self with the help of cinema. *In-between*’s form blends archival and found footage, including photographs and videos from Crusz’s family, fictional recreations, and the filmmaker’s own performance. This mixture defines *In-between* and Crusz’ personal struggle (Reber 1996).<sup>83</sup> By exploring this film, I underline the importance of rewriting oneself as part of the task of finding a different articulation of subjectivity.<sup>84</sup>

The work navigates between three distinct spaces: Sri Lanka, a location in ruins and London. As it begins, three juxtaposed shots introduce these places. Firstly, an extreme close-up captures a young black man sleeping. The next shot, a non-diegetic insert, presents an imaginary space where a woman walks through ancient ruins, alluding to Crusz’s deconstruction and reconstruction of self. The last shot features Crusz’ parents dancing in a living room, signalling their impact on his childhood. An intertitle with Nietzsche’s words, “man’s tragedy is that he was once a child” solidifies this idea.

---

<sup>83</sup> The lack of engagement with the work derives from its difficult access.

<sup>84</sup> This film is the only of the three collectives exploring a British-Asian identity. However, the label black, as I explained in the introduction, still applies.

As a child, Crusz dreamt of being British, believing that his Western upbringing would afford him this identity. As he confessed, “I was taught to speak, write, and make love in English, to pray and feel guilty in the Romanic Catholic tradition [...] and to leave Sri Lanka, settle in England and lay claim to my cultural, intellectual and psychological inheritance” (Sankofa 1992, n.p.). In Sri Lanka, Crusz experiences what I call ‘Britishtalgia’ – a longing for all things British. His Sri Lankan self, a (counter)cultural identity in opposition to Sri Lankan values, was forged admiring British codes.<sup>85</sup> His admiration for Britain, unlike that of the Windrush Generation, was not as a promised land with better opportunities but as an intellectual Mecca. As he expresses, “I was constantly looking outward and [sic] Western. England was where I would have liked to be, and I felt I had to be.”

But the Western identity he created could not be performed in Britain. In Britain, he was placed in a context of difference, revealing that he had been wearing a white mask despite being black under British terms, embodying “[t]hat political position which has no country no flag or national anthem.” Drawing inspiration from Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, he discovered that “beneath the body schema [he] had created a historical-racial schema” (2008, 91). Initially, he desired to be recognised not “as black but as white” ([1968] 2008, 45), but soon uncovered that this aspiration was a chimera: he had to find a different position in society. As Hall wrote, “constituting oneself as ‘black’ is another recognition of self through difference” (1996c, 116). He found his place by facing the cultural and racial disparity (Bhabha 1996) of his subaltern identity and resisting his father’s transculturation.

Realising he had to rewrite himself, he embodies how “[o]ne has to break oneself before making oneself.” In relation to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of the Tragedy* and the quotation in the intertitle, Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghausen wrote that “the destruction of the symbolic heroic individual is both terrible and promising because it releases the temporary vision of a homecoming of humanity returning into the bosom of nature” (2010, 86). Crusz takes the shock of non-belongingness as an opportunity to blossom in a new direction by creating his identity away from the social and cultural norms his father imposed on him.

Crusz’s life reflects an amalgamation of various European cultures, a consequence of Sri Lanka’s colonial history. *In-between* articulates this through a montage with footage of Sri Lanka’s Portuguese, Dutch and English colonial past. From 1505 to 1948, Sri Lanka’s

---

<sup>85</sup> Gilad Padva, in *Queer Nostalgia* (2014), wrote about femininostalgia to signify an early queer identity where boys, not conforming to traditional male codes and exhibiting femininity, find their real selves in femininity. I have coined the term Britishtalgia inspired by the idea of femininostalgia.

national identity was shaped by external influences. After 1948, it embarked on a journey to define its own character, mirroring Crusz's exercise of self-discovery. Born two years after Sri Lanka's independence, "Asia and the East had little chance against this [Western] overwhelming combination." His narrative navigates the dichotomy between Western and Eastern influences, while trying to find his voice amidst his father's sensibility and his mother's sensitivity.

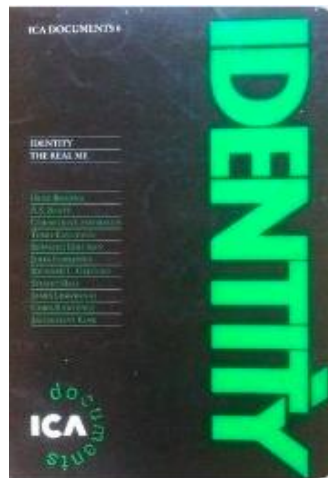
In the work, his father's recreated interventions centre on his passion for biology, European Languages, and fine art, whereas his mother focuses on her love story with his father. As Crusz reflects, he "[a]ttempted to make sense of father, mother, male, female, reason, emotion, knowledge, love and, encompassing all of these, Europe, and Asia. [He] did not know what [his] position was in that equation." Unable to choose, he ran away to Britain and in "running away [he] went West, [he] came to England hoping [he] would find security, redemption and meaning and end [his] dilemma, but England did not live up to these great expectations." His father's passion shaped his childhood. As he states, "this combination of European science and art, gave me a sense of being different from and superior to [...] other Asian people of Sri Lanka" and even massacres taking place in Sri Lanka were for him "somebody else's problem." Away from the internalised ideals of his father, he created his new identity by attempting to accept the coexistence of his white mask with his black one.

Crusz represents the "[e]xperience of cultural fragmentation and displaced selfhood that has become such a general preoccupation in postmodern trends" (Mercer 1994, 74). The work dramatises this through a tableau of Crusz reading the collective volume *Identity: The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity* (1987), based on a conference held at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Crusz's crisis is described in Hall's essay: "Minimal Selves": "the real me was formed in relation to a whole set of other narratives. I am aware of the fact that identity is an invention from the very beginning" (1996c, 116). Crusz's selfhood has been an invention through his father's lenses. As he maintains, "things began to go wrong with my way of looking at the world. The mesh of history and biography that kept me secure for so long began to unravel with frightening speed. My father's England [...] made me feel displaced, different, and sometimes unwelcome."

The word subaltern is disclosed as the camera pans left across the sentence "the subaltern subject" in one of the ICA's essays. As a postcolonial subject in Britain, Crusz is pushed to the margin from where he starts his quest for viable position in it. His journey towards liberation from his in-between state is a nightmare, compelling him to reconcile between the East/West, father/mother, Inwards/Outwards dichotomies. As he indicates, "the



psychological and the cultural centre I had come to trust and depend on became deconstructed [...] words became post-modern and lost their secure meanings [...] finding the real me in this land of lost content was becoming a nightmare.”



**Figure 49.** *Identity: The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity* (ICA 1987)

This tableau contrasts with a reconstruction of children playing and the repetition of the intertitle “man’s tragedy is that he was once a child, man’s tragedy is that he chose knowledge. That he invented reason.” His childhood, even if based on false ideals, provided a secure framework for him. It was a period of “[r]ebellion against the modern concept of time, the time of history and progress” (Boym 2001, 24). This perspective aligns with Maurice Halbwachs’s view, when he writes about the impression of childhood as “[v]ivid, precise and strong” ([1925]1992, 46). Following Alison Landsberg, “an individual’s personality, according to Freud, is quite literally the product of specific memories from childhood [...] he nevertheless understood memory as a modality operating at the interface of history and fantasy” (Landsberg 2004, 15). Crusz’ childhood memory operates between the history of what he lived in Sri Lanka and the fantasy of how it would have been in Britain, driven by his Britishtalgia.

The work initiates the process of identity deconstruction by breaking away from his father's imposed narratives. A montage featuring the overwhelming presence of women, especially mothers with children and Madonnas, appears. The camera zooms in on these women's bodies and children's faces as they look at their mothers, seeking a secure gaze, resembling Crusz's search for his mother's sensitivity away from his father's domineering temperament. This montage is interrupted by the drawing of a priest asking the viewer to be silent after the erotization of motherhood and children's desire towards their mothers. The construction of the sequence invites viewers to revisit the Oedipus complex to express how

the child (Crusz) desires his mother and her sensibility and strives to rebel against his father's expectations.

Crusz shares a childhood episode that highlights the unhappiness of living under his father's gaze, who "[w]ould make the decisions for [him], all [his] protests were in vain." In a piano performance, he made a mistake and infuriated his father: "performing and speaking in front of an audience were not my strong point, they were my father's." His father's gaze made him doubt if there was any substance in him, and to combat this, "he put on the temporary masks of Europe, of masculinity, of intelligence and reason but when these worlds fell apart, [he] displayed the secrets of false personas. . . an empty centre." As he faced the Western world, he discovered his identity was unstable, and that he was "in-between, like a nomad, always in transit, without roots or foundations," involved in errantry.

Errantry is not detrimental; rather, it facilitates Crusz's self-creation. According to Caribbean thinker Édouard Glissant, errantry calls for new forms of identity: "this thinking of errantry, this errant thought, silently emerges from the destruction of compact national entities that yesterday were still triumphant and, at the same time, from difficult, uncertain births of new forms of identity that call to us" ([1900] 1997, 18). It is not aimless wandering, "[o]ne knows at every moment where one is in relation to the other" ([1990] 1997, xvi); Crusz is in an in-between space, actively seeking self-discovery. What holds significance is not the root but the route (Clifford 1997). Exile disintegrates one's sense of identity, as the next work, *Testament*, evidences. Nevertheless, errantry reinforces it (Glissant [1990] 1997).



**Figure. 50 Robert Crusz in *In-Between***

To reinvent himself after his errantry, Crusz transcends the boundaries that constrain him. As John Belchem noted, "migration is now perceived as a creative 'in-between' without secure roots, the point of departure for existential transnational routes crossing geographical, chronological, and imaginative boundaries, enabling, and facilitating multiple subjectivities" (2014, xvii). An intertitle defines Crusz' new identity: "nomadic form, without specific

territory, and from no definite epoch: transhistoric.” For Avtar Brah, “the concepts of border and diaspora together reference the theme of location. This point warrants emphasis because the very strong association of notions of diaspora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of location can easily dissolve out of focus” (1996, 177). Crusz’s identity poses a challenge to monolithic and essentialist conceptions of Britishness. His diasporic and transnational self “decentres the subject position of ‘native’ [...] in such a way that the diasporan is as much a native as the native now becomes a diasporan through this entanglement” (Brah 1996, 238).

The non-diegetic insert, a dramatisation of a conversation between a walking woman, Gradiva, and an archaeologist, symbolises the deconstruction of Cruz’s identity.<sup>86</sup> The off-screen voice asserts, “according to Freud, this man had a long-repressed desire for this childhood friend; when he meets her again, he gets cured of his so-called illness, he marries her and lives happily ever after. He becomes normal again, but is this what the story is really about?” It is not. In this space, Crusz builds his own psychoanalytical reading, rebelling against his father’s intellectual frameworks. “The vertical position of [Gradiva’s] right foot. The representation of someone in motion”, in errantry, moves the archaeologist.

Crusz follows Sylvère Lotringer, who rejects Freud’s application of psychoanalysis to literature. As Lotringer wrote, “I will attempt to turn literature against psychoanalytic interpretation” (1977, 174). In the introduction to his essay, Lotringer argues that Freud had never gone so far...” (1977,173), indicating that his own reading has gone beyond Freud’s. Crusz in *In-Between* surpasses Freud’s analysis by breaking free from the “unstable, insecure and temporary” identity imposed on him. Crusz distances himself from psychoanalysis, transforming his Oedipus complex into an anti-Oedipus (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983) and moving, through errantry, like Gradiva.

For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, desire is revolutionary. Freud was also aware of desire’s subversive potential in relation to society. However, Deleuze and Guattari gave Freud’s discussion a different turn. They express that “every position of desire [...] is capable of calling into question the established order of a society [...] no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised” (1983, 116). Crusz’ fascination and desire for ‘his childhood friend’ Gradiva,

---

<sup>86</sup> Freud often compared psychoanalysis to archaeology. Jensen’s *Gradiva* ([1907] 2014) served as a basis for his theory of repression and “the cure through love” (Freud Museum webpage 2018, n.p). This section refers to Freud’s reading of *Gradiva*, which is more famous than the novel. *In-Between* draws parallels with this reading.

whose legs are in motion, represent his revolutionary raw thoughts that compel him to challenge all the structures he has known, questioning the established order to fulfil his desire of creating a new identity. Throughout the work, Crusz has described his identity in relation to his parents and how they have experienced the world, but now he is on the road of becoming, of moving in search of a different articulation of subjectivity. As the narrator contends, “could it be that the archaeologist is more attracted to the fact that this woman was walking? Did he really want to be cured by getting married and living happily ever after”? The close-up on Gradiva walking indicates this. In the conversation, the man confesses that her walking reminds him of the lost part of himself, “the part that walks, the part that is free, free to reedify, remain, the part that walks constantly between two places.” For Crusz, in movement, there is freedom.

Crusz is now torn between the desire to “[r]eturn to the safety of the womb, the only place where language and speech do not intertwine” and the realisation of his need to have “[t]he freedom to walk, to transcend the power of the words and to make my own meanings.” He reconciles both wishes through cinema, “sitting in the dark in the cinema, and watching the bright moving picture is the closest [he] can get to being in the womb and walking in the same place.” He shares this as a recreation of him watching rolls of film falling down appears. The work concludes with a sequence of him looking through his camera’s lens, and what he sees—himself—is reflected on his glasses, symbolising that his involvement in filmmaking has helped him to find his own gaze, a different position in society, and configure his cultural identity. Crusz’s story exists at “[t]he intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes” (Brah 1996, 181). My interpretation of *In-Between* supports Brah’s assertion. The subsequent work also explores the idea of moving to understand oneself despite dislocation. However, instead of a diasporic identity, it presents an identity in exile.

### 7.3. Calling on History: The *Testament* of Ghana’s Socialist Revolution

*Testament*’s premise is based on Abena’s reconciliation of private and public memory and history. Abena is a journalist, who was formally affiliated with the CPP (Convention People’s Party). However, as the party’s political project ended up failing, she sought exile in London. In the present, Abena returns to Ghana to record a programme covering the events narrated and locations shown in Werner Herzog’s *Cobra Verde* (1987), a film that deals with the slave-trade in Ghana. *Cobra Verde*, previously hired by a slave owner in Brazil, is sent to Ghana

hoping he will be killed. However, Cobra Verde re-installs the slave-trade in the area. The film creates a fake story, at times filled with stereotypes, in a place where real narratives of violence happened and have not been filmed. A narrative of violence is the one Abena introduces in *Testament*. She was supposed to interview Herzog in one of *Cobra Verde*'s locations, but he did not attend, which gives her time to ponder on a real story as she returns to Ghana, which is for her a “warzone of memories”, as the work’s subtitle indicates. Confronting her past, memories, and friends, Abena endeavours to comprehend the complexities of what went wrong, reassessing her accountability and interpretation of Ghana’s past.

Like the previously discussed titles, *Testament* is also an essay film, characterised by the use of archival and found footage, by its fragmentary, poetic style, and by powerful intertextual echoes of other works that deal with Ghana’s recent history, such as *Cobra Verde*, which it criticises, or *Yeleen* (1987) by Souleymane Cissé. *Yeleen* narrates the story of a magician who has to confront his father, who has abused his own magical power. In his journey he discovers his past and ancestry, which mirrors Abena’s experience in Ghana after her exile. *Testament*’s soundtrack is characterised by the presence of a trio of female singers strolling through several scenes. They provide a context for the events Abena experiences through a musical commentary. It is always difficult to know if for Abena the women produce a diegetic or non-diegetic sound, which contributes to the experimental form of the work and how it deceives the viewer’s expectations.

The work was an intellectual challenge (Fusco 1988; Eshun 2004), partly deriving from its fragmentary and poetic style (Maude 1989; Bourne 1989; Robinson 1989; Petley 1989; Headon 1989; Dennis 1989; Bourland 2019). Some critics and scholars took an interest in how the film explores the gap between past and present memories and its impact on migrant identities (Moon 1989; Johnstone 1989; Ofori 1990; Harris 1991; Petty 2008). It also exhibits a sense of homelessness and melancholia through the figure of Abena (Mercer 2016; Harvey 2023), who finds new meaning and connects her African and British identity (Shin 2010; Ribeiro Sanches 2014). However, other critics argued the production lacked emotion and insight and was confusing (French 1989; Hasan 1989; Sawtell 1989a). These views explain why I bring this work in dialogue with the previous two since *Testament* presents how the past is reflected in the present and how it contributes to the articulation of subjectivities that experienced a painful past. Additionally, it underlines how a new location, such as London, can help to reflect upon one’s own past locations and the forms of agency associated to it.

An opening scroll providing historical context opens the work:

The Gold Coast became Ghana in 1957. Led by a charismatic leader, Kwame Nkrumah, the C.P.P commenced the first experiment in “African socialism.” The C.P.P (Convention People’s Party) became the inspiration for other liberation movements in Africa. The party was overthrown in 1966 by a military coup. This scenario has haunted African politics since.<sup>87</sup>

This information is followed by some definitions of Ghanaian cultural aspects to help the viewer decode the work, showing how Black Audio mediates an African context and aesthetic for a Western public. It explains how black, blue, and red Ghanaian colours of mourning. It also indicates how rivers are Ghanaian memory gods and goddesses.<sup>88</sup>

The non-simultaneous squawking of vultures accompanies the written explanation of Ghanaian cultural codes. The sound appears before the vultures’ image (birds which are sacred for some cultures (Andreoni 2016), which symbolises death. An intertitle with a quotation by Zbigniew Herbert, “all we have left is the place, the attachment to the place we still rule over the ruins of temples...if we lose the ruins nothing will be left,” acts as a bridge between the sound of the vultures and their appearance on the screen. The quotation mirrors Abena’s internal dilemma, who started “running from family and friends” twenty years ago and is confronted with the self-made land of remembrance she took with her to London and the untold stories she carries, which are present in the ruins she visits. As Bjørnar Olsen and Þóra Pétursdóttir wrote with reference to modern ruins, “their presence thus acts as a temporal disturbance, a noise that provokes our assumptions of time, history, progress and sustainability” (2014, 4).

The alternation of past and present, as embodied in the different ways the characters remember, characterises *Testament*. Time is erratic (Gurvitch 1964) since characters, and especially Abena, behave and occupy the temporal space in irregular, uncertain, and unexpected ways. For Gurvitch, erratic time is the time of uncertainty “where contingency is accentuated, while the qualitative element and discontinuity become prominent. . . .The present appears to prevail over the past and the future, with which it sometimes finds it

---

<sup>87</sup> Similarly, *Cobra Verde* commences with a griot providing its context, paralleling the textual beginnings of *Testament* and *Yellen*. Both *Cobra Verde* and *Testament* introduce references to death, with *Cobra Verde* featuring the sentence, “Francisco leave me, I’ll soon be dead” and *Testament* using vultures.

<sup>88</sup> Akomfrah gives a detailed explanation of colour symbolism in Ghana in “Colour Symbolism in Ghanaian Society” (2007a).

difficult to enter into relations” (1964, 32). Abena’s struggle to comprehend her role in the past, along with her friend’s reluctance to discuss it, exemplify this. Abena’s experience is one of exile, “[a] painful punitive banishment from one’s homeland” (Peters 1999, 19) and not so much one of diasporic subjects trying to begin anew in a country as Crusz did. Diasporas are “[t]he sites of home and new beginnings” (Brah 1999, 193) and have a component of hope. For Gurvitch, erratic time is typical of “difficulties and conflicts resulting from the politics of colonial expansions” (1964, 140) and Ghana is an example of it.

*Testament*’s action commences with the juxtaposition of an extreme long shot of Ghana’s desert and a pair of vultures. The alternation of different filters in front of the lens alters the colour and brightness of the sequence creating different meanings. As the camera pans to the left from one vulture to the other, the shot is superimposed with a river. A montage suggesting Abena’s struggle is constructed through a man emerging in the river, seeking to drown, accompanied by the singing of mourners, and a different scene featuring two conjoined twins. The close-up on the part uniting the twins indicates that separation, as Abena did from Ghana, is an important theme. It also represents Ghana’s history as a country gaining independence and facing the failure of the revolution. The yellow filter symbolises the past, and its change to a blue filter—the present—introduces Abena returning to Ghana in a boat, as also happens in the film *Cobra Verde*.

As was explained in the definitions at the beginning of the work, in Ghana rivers are gods and goddesses of memory. The viewer accesses Abena’s recollections and memory as she looks at the water. She was a “[s]tudent at the Kwame Nkrumah ideological institute” and believed in the establishment of African socialism in Ghana.<sup>89</sup> In 1966 Nkrumah’s government was overthrown and Abena “has been running ever since.” Using a yellow filter, footage of Nkrumah’s ascension to power accompanies the narration. The contribution of Nkrumah and the CPP to Ghana is not remembered. As Abena contends, “history takes hold in turns and in turning is lost a memory.” For Christina Lee, “this personal anecdote signifies

---

<sup>89</sup> Nkrumah was the architect of the independence of Gold Coast (Ghana). Nkrumah attended the fifth pan-African conference in Manchester in 1945. On his return, he founded with other leaders the United Gold Coast Convention in 1947. However, tensions broke out, and Nkrumah founded the CPP in 1949. Abena and Akomfrah’s parents belonged to this party. As a Pan-African activist, Nkrumah “[a]dopted unity as the doctrine of this party, the CPP, which led the struggle for independence in the Gold Coast, his country, to which. He gave the name of the ancient empire of Ghana” (Kaba 2017, 13). This Pan-African influence derives from being in contact with radicals and activists from America and Britain (Kaba 2017). The following chapter explores some of these activists.

more than a requiem for a past that cannot be recovered. It highlights the importance of spatial memories for identity” (2012, 125). Despite the passage of time, Abena has not processed the events, and from exile, memories have haunted her. She is experiencing Freud’s deferred action or *Nachträglichkeit*, but her job, as Olivia’s in *Twilight City*, compels her to work through her memories. She hopes that by touching the ancient ruins, she can rebuild and rewrite her past.



**Figure 51. Abena Returning to Ghana in *Testament***

For Abena, remembering is a “[d]iscontinuous process holding back the burden of the past” (Middleton and Brown 2008, 248) and forgetting is not a weakness of memory but “[t]he return of experience to imaginative re-elaboration” (Middleton and Brown 2008, 248). Through imaginative re-elaboration, because her friends do not speak to her, she interrogates, enacts, and re-enacts history and memory. “Re-enactments often address traumatic and dramatic events—moments of importance in national narratives—and in doing so, they play a significant role in the broader cultural memory of those moments” (Warren 2013, 292). The work’s form helps both Abena and the viewer in this task through the dramatisation of her past and the inclusion of historical footage. Resorting to dialogues and flashbacks to portray a version of the past is a “[d]ramatic analogue to the narrative representation of consciousness.” (Neumann 2008, 340), which Abena enacts through her flashbacks and memories. These help her to fill in the gaps of what she cannot understand, creating an alternative history mediated by her willingness to find answers.

For Andrew Hoskins, “the tension between the traces of the past versus the contingencies of the present in the production of memory is even more profound with the onset of the digital media” (2009, 95)<sup>90</sup>, and it is media production, the recording of a programme, that encourages Abena to confront the past. Abena moves around the people she

---

<sup>90</sup> *Testament* does not use digital media. However, there is media production in the film through Abena’s programme.



once knew as a ghost hunting the present of a disappeared old place or as a witness of a crime she needs to face to understand her accountability and work through it. As Alfredo Gonzalez-Ruibal wrote, “there is responsibility in seeing, which makes up for the obscenity of questioning. The archaeology of the contemporary past, more than any other archaeology, links knowledge and ethics. From the moment one starts working with recent ruins, one accepts responsibility” (2014, 368). Abena’s ancient ruins are not only the buildings loaded with Ghanaian history but also her friends.

Abena’s time is one of agony (González-Rubial 2014). As González-Rubial writes with reference to the Spanish Civil war, “a modern ruin lies somewhere in-between death and life. It is precisely in this twilight zone where most things happen in an archaeological site” (2014, 372). Abena is like an archaeologist and a zoom-in as she touches the ruins denotes this. This action is followed by a group of mourners wearing Ghanaian mourning colours and acting as the chorus in Greek tragedies commenting on the present and the past that Abena needs to face. They sing: “we are calling on history today. Calling our ancestors [...] to reveal to us your spirit of defiance [...] what pact did you make with the foreigners that they now control our lives? Beware an omen is upon us? and take heed and answer us. Let there be harmony.” Abena listens to them, and a shot-reverse shot discloses her look of concern and guilt, reflecting on the role she may have played with the foreigners. Foreigners for her are those who did not believe in the CPP.

The subsequent sequence shows Abena dealing with the failure of her ideals through a dramatisation of her with her friends in the CPP’s institute: “In 1966 I believed two bodies could be one, together they would live without shame or fear given that they lived life and because they unite together. . . . Twenty years ago, I had friends who believed this.” Abena believed Ghana could be independent and become a socialist country. Footage of different books on Marxism being burnt evokes the failure. At this point, Abena’s disjointed visual epic trying to understand her friends’ perspective starts. Her visit to Danzo, who does not look, talk, or acknowledge her in any way, is an example. Abena is a ghost from the past haunting Danzo’s present. Like Miriam in *Home Away from Home* (chapter five), who could not speak, Danzo embodies postcolonial disillusionment and seeing Abena means facing the past. *Testament* builds up the dramatism behind the visit through a sequence starting with a re-establishing shot followed by an establishing shot highlighting the emotional and physical distance separating them.

In this conversation, Abena struggles to understand Danzo’s frustration since Danzo admitted that “the coup left us without directions and the party was vanishing by the hour

[...] Danzo did not want to leave, but she also had doubts about staying.” She stayed and Abena left “[l]ike a thief in the night.” A further sequence where Abena interviews Mr. Parkes reveals that “three months after the coup, those who had a chance made a pact with history, they would take an oath of silence, and history would shout at them from the violence of events.” Danzo chose silence whereas Abena chose to talk back (hooks [1984] 2015). For bell hooks, “moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, making new life and new growth possible” ([1984] 2015, 3). From London, occupying a different position, Abena could talk back (hooks [1984] 2015).

Parkes’ interview introduces Abena to an in-between space given that she is both the woman who experienced history and the journalist who has to decide what is true and worthy of inclusion. Barbie Zelizer wrote about journalism as an instance of a memorial practice (2008, 13), acknowledging that “journalism has come to be seen as a setting driven more by its emphasis on the here-and-now than the there-and-then” (2008, 379). Abena longs for a here and now to understand the here and then. For Zelizer “the past came to be seen as so central to journalism that it emerged as an unspoken backdrop against which the contemporary record-keeping of news could take place” (2008, 380). The historical/memoristic and historical/journalistic voices co-exist in the work through Abena’s first person interaction with her friends, as a narrator of what she remembers and her (journalistic) interviews. These voices are built against the background of their recent history.



**Figure 52. Abena Reconnecting with Ghana’s Past in *Testament***

Abena’s memories and those of the people who stayed in Ghana are agonistic. Agonistic memory as a mode of remembering, following Anna Bull and Hans Hansen is significant “[i]n the context of socio-political struggles and individual/collective narratives which led to mass crimes being committed” (2016, 18). It involves remembering by relying on testimonies of the different people involved, recognizing the affective side of the event

and the emotions related to it (Bull and Hansen 2016). As Hall claims, “testimony tells a story that inevitably speaks from a ‘position’, an experience inscribed politically, geographically, historically” (1991, 58) Along with Abena, the viewer is involved in the task of making sense of the past. The song of the mourners confirms this idea: “let us pour liberation [...] a terrible injustice has been committed. Whoever was responsible must now answer to these rivers.”

As the work advances, Abena’s dress style becomes less Westernised, and she walks through Ghana errantly looking for answers. In her dreams, she recalls the day she had to leave, a visually enacted manifestation of *Nachträglichkeit* haunting her. Her work of reconstruction aids her in confronting the past. An instance is her visit to the cemetery where “[t]he partners in the struggle” (*Handsworth Songs* 1986) of African socialism are buried. It remains ambiguous whether Abena is searching for her father’s grave, those of her fellow militants, or Nkrumah’s.<sup>91</sup> Abena seeks physical remnants of what went wrong in their revolution. The last scene of *Testament*, capturing her after recognising a dead body in the cemetery, exemplifies this and marks her decision to leave Ghana again, but as a self-imposed choice.

In a fervent conversation with one of her friends, Rashid, she maintains, “we were in a position of power [...] I’m trying to understand.” He argues that her opinions are “exile talk,” diminishing her position. He asks her if she feels guilty and she answers that she feels responsible. Rashid doesn’t blame “[t]he people, history [...] it’s too late now, it’s too late.” He has accepted the past and given up on the revolutionary act of socialism in Ghana. As Abena argues, “sooner or later those who dream for too long become lost in their own dreams”; The dream of revolution was utopian. It is challenging to navigate Abena’s accountability given her discontinuous presence in Ghana. However, “[t]he self that remembers is the self that performed the act and is therefore accountable for it” (Poole 2008, 268), and accepting this accountability is her step towards liberating herself from the past. This conversation is even more emotionally loaded through the following scene where Abena visits Nkrumah’s vandalised statue.<sup>92</sup> The statue symbolises the speech that marked Nkrumah’s declaration of Ghana’s independence. After the coup, the statue was vandalised and lacks an arm. The diverse alternating shots between Abena’s observing Nkrumah’s statue

---

<sup>91</sup> Abena’s father was also a revolutionary and believed in Nkrumah. He died in a failed assassination attempt targeted at Nkrumah on august 1962. It was known as Kulungugu bomb attack.

<sup>92</sup> The statue was placed in 1975 in the garden of the National Museum of Ghana.

and the high angle shot of the statue showing Abena as inferior indicate the impact of Ghana's political evolution in her life.

Abena realises the distinction between real and fake testament and how they coexist in Ghana by going to Elmina Castle, one of the locations of *Cobra Verde*, to record her programme. There, Abena feels "[t]rapped by fake testament" because Herzog portrayed invented episodes, and that is why she "saw bones but no names, simulated traumas but no events." In contrast, a real trauma, of one of those who followed the CPP, has not been recorded. This scene contrasts with Abena's visit to the institute where she has a flashback of the night she was arrested. Her real and personal trauma contrasts with the artificial one in *Cobra Verde*. "Between 1966 and 1967 the accusations finally came in [...] over the years, we committed blunder after blunder, and we were a disease in Ghana and in Africa." This is what has been codified as official history. However, it is fake testament for Abena and her friends.

She accepts her accountability by claiming that "in our drive to create a sense of nationhood, we found ourselves splitting the new nation into far more intractable divisions than the ancient tribalism." As she utters these words in a voice-over, a sign indicating the direction to Britain is shown signalling that she is willingly returning to London where she can follow her reason, given that for her the CPP was a victory, even if forgotten by Ghanaians. This is a view mirrored by Edward Said who wrote, "borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familial territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity" (2012, 185). Ghana is now a prison of memories for Abena where there is no reason, and in London, she can continue with her ideals through other figures like James Baldwin, to whom *Testament* is dedicated. *Testament* shows the fragmentary modes of remembering, highlighting the interplay between public and private memory. It also marks the importance of comprehending the past to reconcile the present and the future. The work demonstrates the significance of introducing historical figures to engage the viewer.

#### 7.4. Conclusion

This chapter underlines how the transcultural turn in memory studies is present in the works by Black Audio and Sankofa included here. The productions indicate how memory is fluid and transcends national boundaries and social structures. They also demonstrate how transcultural memories are displayed in comparative rather than competitive fashion. This

movement is necessary for migrants, as carriers of memories, to rewrite themselves and articulate their positions in a new context. Additionally, in these films London—which differs from the spaces they occupied earlier in their lives—offers them the possibility of finding the position they want to occupy in society and articulate their subjectivities.

In the three films movement, be it through writing and driving (*Twilight City*), walking (*Testament*) or running (*In-Between*) helped to articulate the characters' identities and to revise old positions amidst a hostile present reality. In *Twilight City*, it was the changing London, in *In-Between* through the lens Crusz's father had enforced on him since childhood and in *Testament* via the failure of the Ghanaian socialist revolution, and the painful memories attached to it.

The subsequent chapter extends this theme and continues this transcultural line of thought by exploring several productions by Ceddo and Black Audio that underline the influence of Pan-African intellectuals on black British history and culture and the cosmopolitan side of transcultural memory. These productions expand the transcultural perspective pursued in this chapter, establishing connections between the UK, which occupies a local and global position for the characters in each film and other global locations, such as the USA and South Africa.



## CHAPTER 8. TRANSCENDING BRITAIN: LIBERATION BEGINS IN THE IMAGINATION<sup>93</sup>

“The discontinuous histories of black populations in the US, Africa, Asia, Caribbean, and Europe have contributed to the distinctive experiences of blacks in this country for several hundred years”  
(Gilroy 2021, 38)

This chapter extends the transcultural dimension of memory introduced in the preceding chapter. Specifically, this chapter investigates the cosmopolitan side of transcultural memory within the Black (British) Diaspora. According to Dany Levy and Natan Sznajder, cosmopolitan memory is “[a] memory transcending ethnic and national boundaries” (2002, 88). It underlines how nations are connected and,—as such, local preoccupations or events have a global effect. Cosmopolitan memory highlights the intellectual and cultural impact of local figures, models, and structures from a specific context on wider and global places (Bond, Craps, Vermeulen 2017). I study several black figures of transnational influence on diasporic black communities. Cosmopolitan memory is also characterised by how different countries experiencing similar situations, such as oppression, establish connections and dialogue to achieve a communal and global outlook. The emphasis in building links of union and drawing similarities what characterises the cosmopolitan impulse. Cosmopolitan memory is linked to the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993b) considering its emphasis on shared past, histories, collectivity, and the possibilities of liberation.

This notion is central to my discussion in this chapter. By discussing *Who Needs a Heart?* (1991b) by the Black Audio Film, and *We are the Elephant* (1987) and *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (1992), both by Ceddo, this chapter emphasises Britain’s connection with the Black Diaspora and Pan-Africanism. The narratives in these films reflect the imperative of decolonisation and resistance against oppression through ideological mobilisation. These works feature prominent intellectual and cultural figures crucial to the Black Diaspora, such as Michael X, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Steve Biko, and notable South African musicians including Hugh Masekela, Louis Moholo or Pinise Soul. Their histories and their relationship with broader historical contexts underline the significance of past voices in the elucidation of present realities.

---

<sup>93</sup> Title inspired on the book *Liberation Begins in the Imagination* (2021).

*Who Needs a Heart?* examines the enigmatic persona of Michael X and his impact on British Black Power. I will read the work using notions related to cosmopolitan memory (Levy and Sznajder 2002, 2016) and mnemohistory (Assmann 1997; Tamm 1992), which involves researching not the past but rather how it is recalled. The film also recreates instances of racial threats (Defina and Lance 2009) which underline the interaction between white and black Britons. Narrative identity (Ricoeur 1991) helps to narrate Michael's X fragmented biography. Symbolic interactionism (Mead [1934] 1972) is a further concept I use to indicate how societies create meanings through allegorical interactions, and Black Power is one of those allegorical interactions.

*We are the Elephant* depicts the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the efforts carried to combat it. The work underscores the significance of black consciousness and the pivotal role played by Steve Biko. I will analyse *We are the Elephant* within the context of memory film (Erll 2013), which makes *We are the Elephant* an example of codification of memory. I also use the concept of decolonising the camera (Sealy 2019) to indicate how it is members of the Black Diaspora—Ceddo—the ones who record and present a reality affecting blacks in South Africa using a first person lens. Also, I investigate the importance of black consciousness, which aids the formation of a liberation movement, and how transcultural/transnational memory is present in apartheid South Africa.

*Blue Notes and Exile Voices* examines the experiences of South African jazz musicians in exile in London during apartheid and their influence on British jazz. It incorporates a discussion on music as a visual language, social solidarity (Olick 2010), which is needed for oppressed communities, resistance narratives, which are cultural answers to experiences of oppression (Moses and Rothberg 2014), and roots and routes (Hall, Segal and Osborne 1997), with reference to how South African jazz was mixed with European traditions and the former had an impact on the latter. These concepts will guide my exploration of the way *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* captures the artistic expression of the Black Diaspora and the role of the UK in the fight against apartheid.

These works signal the role and implication of black Britons within the broader Black Diaspora. The productions inhabit a cosmopolitan realm within transcultural memory, accentuating the global unity of the Black Diaspora. While influenced by African and African American history, memory and paradigms, the UK occupies a specific and noteworthy position within the Black Diaspora. Additionally, the cosmopolitan tropes introduced in the films contribute to the creation of shared cosmopolitan memories (Kennedy 2017).



### 8.1. *Who Needs a Heart?* The Enigma behind Michael X

*Who Needs a Heart?* addresses activist and organiser Michael X and his impact on British black power. The work shows how he influenced the lives of those who believed in him. The production alternates archival footage of Michael X's life with the fictional narratives of a group of friends, who were followers of Michael X. These friends are Faith (a journalist), Louis (a painter), Jack (a photographer), Sydney (a musician), Naomi, Millie, Simmi and Abigail. They embody the underground culture of the 1960s and 1970s. *Who Needs a Heart?* tracks the micronarratives of these friends and Michael X's life in non-chronological order between 1963 and 1975, the years during which Michael X's influence rapidly emerged and disappeared.

The work is an essay film, distinguished by the large number of characters—Michael X's friends, and the complex camera movements following the group of friends, which shows their activities and, by default, Michael X's. *Who Needs a Heart?* also uses archival footage to include Michael X in the narrative, and found footage, which represents the events' the characters live and witness. The soundtrack is continuously manipulated. In fact, when actors are discussing controversial issues, jazz songs are heard instead of dialogue. Additionally, jazz creates the bridge between the different scenes or years.

For Laura U. Marks, the fragmented form of *Who Needs a Heart?* emerges from the excavation of unrecorded events in Michael X's life (1995). Kodwo Eshun also highlights its contradictory logic since there is no explanation of certain events (2004). Jazz permeates the soundtrack, serving as a means of communication in wordless sequences. According to Stuart Hall, Michael X was passionate about jazz (2009). The work functions as an exploration of jazz's potential as a vehicle for establishing a black aesthetic as a mode of expression (Eshun 2007, 95). For John Akomfrah, the divergent perspectives on Michael X influenced Black Audio's approach to *Who Needs a Heart?* (2007b), elucidating why Michael X's absence from the narrative with the group of friends is compensated for through the reconstruction of events via the fictional narrative since these mirror Michael X's biography (Mercer 2007; Eshun 2006).<sup>94</sup> Black Audio disclosed that they endeavoured to undertake a novel approach, crafting their script in an attempt to examine Michael X's persona and his influence on the lives of others (Akomfrah 2007b). This turned the production into an archaeological project.

---

<sup>94</sup> Michael X's autobiography *From Michael de Freitas to Michael X* (1968) is the primary account of his life. It was ghost-written. In *Who Needs a Heart?*, some characters embody episodes and people mentioned in it.

*Who Needs a Heart?* has been referred to as an exciting mixture of fact and fiction (Elley 1991), dramatising the race politics of the sixties in Britain (Bourne [1998] 2001). For Kodwo Eshun, in this production Black Audio was not trying to correct history but to demonstrate how multiple positions can contribute to the construction of a narrative (2006). Michael X's persona is characterised by its hybridity. As Horace Ové claimed, "Michael would critique every level of society [...] Michael could be on the block with all the hustlers, the drug dealers, white and black [...] and two hours later, he'll say I have an appointment, and he's up somewhere else with Lady this and Lord so" (2017, n.p). He was perceived as a criminal by some, while others regarded him as an important political and public figure (Pervaiz Kahn 1992). This conflicting duality explains the ambiguous nature of his legacy. By analysing this film, I want to show how the work is an example of cosmopolitan memory and how Michael X is an important–yet almost forgotten–figure in British Black Power.

Michael X contrasts with Black Power figures such as Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King, who have passed into the annals of history as heroes.<sup>95</sup> Malcolm X, Carmichael and King are monomyths, heroes whose difficult journey achieved recognition in the fight against oppression. Despite sharing similar origins to Malcolm X—from a hustler to his reinvention as a black leader—Michael X's legacy, as Hall confesses to Les Black, "is a tragedy, because he had exactly the same formation as Malcolm X, who transformed exactly the same hustling background, and Malcolm became something and Michael lost his way" (2009, 672).

Michael X founded one of the earliest Black Power organisations in Britain named RAAS (Racial Action Adjustment Society), he was involved in the establishment of the Notting Hill Carnival and the counter-culture movement of the 60s, which afforded him connections with intellectuals and artists such as Allen Ginsberg, Muhammed Ali, William Burroughs and John Lennon.<sup>96</sup> The media portrayed him as a subversive and dangerous individual, emphasising his criminal past and casting him as an even greater threat in the context of Black Power. In fact, Michael X was the first non-white person prosecuted under the Race Relations Act of 1965. Despite these contributions and his social and cultural

---

<sup>95</sup> Malcolm X inspired Michael X to set up RAAS. From Martin Luther King, Michael X learnt how a professional works (Malik 1968). Carmichael's influence on him was the importance of Black Power and seeing black people as a force (Cooper 2015). Black Audio's *Martin Luther King: Days of Hope* is an essay film reconstructing King's life and showing his contribution.

<sup>96</sup> RAAS coexisted with Black Power groups in Britain such as Fasimba, The Black Unity and Freedom Party, The Black Liberation Front, The British Black Panthers, or The Universal Coloured People's Association,

activism, his legacy was clouded by his ultimate fate—being convicted and hanged in Port Spain based on inconclusive accusations of murder.<sup>97</sup>

One notable distinction between Malcolm X and Michael X lies in their biographies. As Akomfrah observes, “there’s no point at all in [Malcolm X’s] [...] where his hustling life is given a political reading because that’s seen by him as a period of darkness not worth evaluating” (1993, 3). In contrast, Michael X’s biography suggests that his past played a pivotal role in his political becoming and self-education. While US Black Power served as a source of inspiration for Michael X, attributing the origins of Black Power in the UK solely to the influence of US leaders would be historically reductionist. It overlooks the unique struggles and historical context of the black community in Britain, dismissing the distinctiveness of their own context and fight for liberation. As Paul Gilroy wrote, “the political environment here [Britain] was less vividly connected to the successes of triumphant settler colonialism. It was defined less by the continuing nomos of racial slavery and more by histories of migration, citizenship and exclusion operating in a spatial and geographical regime very different to the version of apartheid operating in the US” (2021, 35).

Despite this, US Black Power functioned as a catalyst for British Black Power, exemplifying a form of cosmopolitan memory within the Black Diaspora. According to Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “national and ethnic memories are transformed in the age of globalisation rather than erased. . . . The common elements combine with pre-existing elements to form something new” (2006, 5). This process is evident in how the ideas of US Black Power leaders intersected with British ones, resulting in a unique manifestation of Black Power activism and cosmopolitan memory. For Rossane Kennedy, Levy and Sznaider “[a]ssign global media, especially film, a formative role in producing a shared ‘cosmopolitan memory’” (2017, 49). In fact, Black Audio’s productions on Malcom X (*Seven Songs for Malcom X* 1993), Martin Luther King (*MLK: Days of Hope* 1997a) and Smoking Dogs’ *Martin Luther King and the March on Washington* (2013), indicate how they have contributed to the creation of cosmopolitan memory through media.

An illustration of Michael X’s connection with Malcom X and, therefore, cosmopolitan memory is present in *Seven Songs for Malcolm X*.<sup>98</sup> At one point in the film,

---

<sup>97</sup> During his time as an active member of the London Free School, Scotland Yard advised Michael’s colleagues that he was a criminal (Malik 1968). Michael X claims that he distrusts the media and describes how he consciously avoided the limelight, drawing lessons from American organisations (Malik 1968). The accusation of Michael X’s racial hatred comments towards whites resembles Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech of 1968, which incited the same towards black British communities. However, Powell was not imprisoned.

the voice-over argues that Malcolm “[h]ad met up with some of the leading political thinkers and activist in Africa. . . . he had learnt instantly that the world was far more complex than the world of Harlem and the inner cities of the US” (1993), which in turn had an influence on Michael X. In his biography, Michael X claims that during Malcolm X’s visit to London, he had recently returned from Africa. Through conversation with Malcolm X, Michael X was influenced by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, highlighting the interconnectedness of black liberation across different geographical areas.

*Who Needs a Heart?* opens in media res in a house, which serves as a recurrent space for Michael X’s friends. The house functions as a site of memory, where memories crystallise and reflect the ideological changes of the group over the years (Nora 1989). The year 1972, marking Michael X’s conviction, is the first year depicted. A radio report introduces this information, accompanied by a montage of Michael X’s presence in Port Spain. The significance of the scene lies not in the news itself, but rather in his friends’ reaction to it. By this time, some of them had lost hope in Black Power and had moved on from it. Their relationship with Black Power in the present is characterised by conflicted mnemohistories (Assmann 1997). For Jann Assmann, “unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered” (1997, 9).

Each member of the group has a different interpretation of the past, shaping their presents. Some remember Michael X’s impact, while others have forgotten or chosen to ignore it. Their discovery of his conviction in the present is “[h]aunted by the past and the past is modelled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present” (Assmann 1997, 9). Marek Tamm’s definition of mnemohistory suggests that mnemohistory involves “[r]elinquish[ing] a positivistic investigation of the past in favour of a research into the actuality, not into the factuality of the past” (1992, 501). This approach is exemplified by Black Audio’s use of the house, which is a mnemotope (Assmann 1992) or place of memory for Black Power. Therefore, the focus is not on uncovering the truth of what happened, but rather on understanding how different “[w]ays of constructing the past enable later communities to constitute and sustain themselves” (Tamm 1992, 511).

The conflicted mnemohistories are portrayed according to their differing attitudes towards Black Power. In the street, with a point of view shot, Naomi observes Millie holding

---

<sup>98</sup> *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* is an essay film reconstructing the most important events in the life of Malcolm X and how they are linked to his biography. It includes interviews with his wife, Spike Lee and others which signal his legacy.

a banner with the words ‘Angela Davis is innocent’ and invites Naomi to march with her. A medium closeup shot of the faces of both women reveals that Millie is optimistic about the march and Naomi disillusioned and reluctant to participate. Following this scene, the friends receive news of Michael X’s conviction, triggering varied reactions. Naomi rushes to inform Millie, who collapses. As Millie is taken inside the house, the absence of dialogue accentuates the tension, with looks conveying the characters’ emotions. Several point-of-view frames emphasise the mutual distrust among the members of the group, reflecting their divergent positions towards Black Power. Considering their association with the movement, some choose to remain in the house, while others fled. Louis and Simmi—still dressed in Black Power attire—stay, while Jack and Faith, who abandoned Black Power in 1968, leave.<sup>99</sup> The impact of Michael X’s conviction leaves those committed to Black Power with a sense of post-Black Power nostalgia, similar to postcolonial nostalgia (Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 2004).

As Jack is leaving the house, a glance at Louis triggers a memory from 1963, transporting Louis back to a time when he sold pink carnations on High Street Paddington to pay for his education while trying to meet Michael X, who was a rent collector in this area alongside Peter Rachmann (Malik 1968, 939). This temporal shift exhibits the evolving nature of the group’s relationship with Black Power. The spaces and aspirations they once shared serve as examples of symbolic interactionism (Mead [1934] 1972). According to this theory, societies establish meanings through figurative interactions, and individuals develop their views and communicate with one another within society. In 1965, they were fully engaged in creating and sharing meanings as part of Black Power, both in public and private spaces.



**Figure 53. On the Left: Louis, Sydney, and Jack. On the Right: Faith, Naomi, and Millie in *Who Needs a Heart?***

<sup>99</sup> Before 1986, Jack, as a photographer, used to capture the group’s moments. Jack embodies Michael X’s photographer friend John Hopkins (aka Hoppy).

The conversation between Louis, Sydney, and Jack about their aspirations in a church serves as an example of this. As Jack claims, “I’m a writer and you are an artist and Sydney is a musician, and so we can still speak for each other.” As artists, they believed that “freedom defines the future.” Their aspirations typify the British black activist scene and illustrate how it shaped individual identities using symbolic interactionism. Their relationship signals how friendship acts as a social framework. Each friend narrates different years, reflecting the idea that “collective memory is not only what people really remember through their own experience, it also incorporates the constructed past which is constitutive of the collectivity” (Misztal 2003). The memories of each member contribute to the collective understanding of the past.

The subsequent sequence depicts a party where Simmi, Jack and Louis are interviewed by Faith about RAAS. Jack’s response to Faith’s inquiry, questioning if she is aware of white organisations like the Ku Klux Klan, reveals his distrust of journalists and their framing of Black Power as dangerous. As a white individual who identifies with Black Power, Jack interprets Faith’s question as a racial threat to their black organisation. According to Robert Defina and Lance Hannon, the racial threat hypothesis suggests that “[w]hites impose social controls when confronted by perceived threats to their dominant, economic, and social position” (2009, 37). In this context, Faith, as a white journalist, represents a potential racial threat to RAAS. Louis, who fancies her, replies that “the organisation was set up initially to promote racial harmony.” Jack’s verbal attack on Faith exhibits a lack of racial harmony, contradicting RAAS’ foundations. The scene functions as a critique of RAAS, highlighting the internal conflicts of the society.

In this year, 1963, Michael X made his first public emergence as the leader of RAAS in Preston where he defended the rights of migrant workers. This significant event explains his absence from the party. A montage reconstructs this crucial moment in Michael X’s life and the history of British Black Power. As Michael X confesses, “RAAS appeared to be a terribly powerful organisation and we were much in demand. Groups from all over the country were contacting us, asking for help with their various problems, and we began to receive up to four hundred letters of application for membership every week” (Malik 1968, 153). This increase in demand and interest explains the high number of attendees at the friends’ party, which gradually decreases as the years progress.

Placed along the fictionalised parts, the alternating factual reconstructions serve as a retrospective testimony, which acts as evidence appearing after the characters’ actions (Fan 2014), preserving cultural memory. As Renate Lachmann suggests, “preserving cultural

memory involves something like an apparatus for remembering [...] by the representation of the absent through the image [...] by the objectification of memory [...] and by the prevention of forgetting through the retrieval of images” (2008, 302). This is Faith asking Louis if Michael de Freitas and Michael X are the same person and Louis’s hesitancy. This moment highlights the dual nature of Michael X’s persona, portraying him both as a hustler before Black Power and as a political leader after it. This duality is exemplified through footage of Michael X being interviewed as a rent collector two years earlier and in the present as the leader of RAAS.

In 1966, an interview with Michael X underscores his transition from hustling towards a devotion to RAAS, emphasises his commitment to Black Power. At the same time, the friends gather frequently, which shows the impact of Black Power as a collective framework. Within these gatherings, the social shifts of the 1960s, including women’s sexual liberation, are evident. As Florence Binard wrote, “the vast majority of British feminists described themselves as socialists and believed that feminism was inseparable from socialism” (2017, 4). The women in the group, regardless of ethnicity, embody the intersectionality between feminism and leftist politics. Footage of Carmichael’s assertion that London is a filthy racist white town contextualises the effervescent ideological moment. Nonetheless, for RAAS whiteness was welcomed because, as Louis replies to a journalist, “blackness is not a statement of colour. It is a statement of mind.” The idea is echoed by Mosibudi Mangena claiming that “being black is not a matter of pigmentation, being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.”<sup>100</sup>

The Footage of Carmichael and Michael X in a car around London introduces 1967. Michael X had invited Carmichael to speak at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference. In the fictional narrative, Louis had been driving them. Louis is the only character with a personal connection to Michael X, which explains his strong attachment to the activist following his conviction. Louis recounts this story to Faith, who recalls it from Louis and acts as the storyteller for the viewer in this sequence. This illustrates how the fiction narrates Michael X’s identity. For Paul Ricoeur, narrative identity is “[t]he sort of identity to which a human

---

<sup>100</sup> The inclusion of white people in RAAS was a practical necessity, as Michael X argues, “I outlined the dilemma, we were in due to money and astonished everybody by suggesting there was a simple answer—that we make greater use of sympathetic white people” (1968, 159). Among these sympathetic individuals was Jack, who had aristocratic ties and supported the cause. Michael X highlights that he has always been open to co-operating with white people. An example of this is the London Free School. He could see that “black organisations could benefit from the experience and help of white friends” (Malik 1968, 163).

being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function” (1991, 73). *Who Needs a Heart?* achieves this visually, using storytelling as a means to shape the characters’ identities. In 1967 the group begins to dissolve, signalling Michael X’s decline in popularity. Numerous shots of them arguing enact this disintegration.



**Figure 54. Michael X and Carmichael in London, in 1967. *Who Needs a Heart?***

In 1968, the women collect Millie from a detox clinic. She represents the end of the summer of love.<sup>101</sup> Before her discharge, she appears creating a collage featuring Michael X. As she approaches his face with her brush, she trembles indicating Michael X’s impact on her life. The women have moved on from Black Power and their sisterhood strengthens. Their aesthetic differs from that of men, who continue wearing Black Power attire. This contrast is emphasised by a tracking shot recoding their departure from the clinic and stepping into the outside world, suggesting that they have detoxed from Michael X’s Black Power. Dominic, who is in the clinic, is ignored by the women. He is a ghost from the past.

From 1968 onwards, other British Black Power movements gained relevance. Millie immerses herself in photography and uses collage to depict the fragmented present of her friends. She reveals that Simmi and Louis are “the boys on the scene” as they hold a portrait of Malcolm X in their living room, underscoring their commitment to Black Power. In 1968 she photographs Michael X in London, wearing a British black panther badge, symbolising how RAAS has lost importance, but he is still a Black Power figure. The women discover “Africa” and embrace African practices and aesthetics. For instance, they wear traditional African attires and Naomi has become a priest. Michael X builds a black house with white money, including contributions from Lennon and Yoko Ono, but the house burnt down, and he left London.

The collage operates as Millie’s narrative voice. *Who Needs a Heart?* shifts back to 1972, depicting how Michael X’s presence in London vanished after 1968. The news report

<sup>101</sup> Michael X’s girlfriend, Carmen, was in a detox clinic in 1968 as was Millie.



announcing Michael X's conviction contributes to the ambiguous interpretation of his personality and legacy. He was "one of the first ones to see that there was money in colour, he built himself as a leader not because of racial injustice but because he saw profit in it for himself." The radio reporter epitomises the interest of dominant groups opposed to Black Power, aiming to erase Michael X as a defiant leader. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote, "some narratives cancel what happened through direct erasure of facts or their relevance" (1995, 96). As footage of an interviewed woman indicates, "[we] lost faith in Michael in the end, everyone wanted Black Power to succeed, and it could have succeeded if Michael really wanted to work hard at it." This cultural amnesia (James 2008) underscores why Black Audio felt compelled to uncover Michael X's persona, who was a flawed but necessary figure in Britain.



**Figure 55. Footage of Michael X Receiving John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Peace Hair in *Who Needs a Heart?***

In 1975 the radio reporter announces Michael X's execution. As he claims, "his hanging will come as a major blow to his supporters. For two years now, they have mounted international campaigns [...] supported by popstars, writers, and political activists in England and in the United State. . . . Campaigns which have attempted to show Malik as a political prisoner..." Upon hearing the news, Louis burns all remnants of his association with Michael X and commits suicide. As the friends mourn Louis, his body is surrounded by pictures of Michael X and Malcolm X, symbolising their collective sacrifice for Black Power. Louis' death is a cathartic moment for the group. Through mourning him, they also mourn Michael X and Black Power. Although the production lacks a conclusion, a dramatic recreation of an interview with Michael X points to the idea that even if he is not around, Black Power will endure because, as he states, "there is more than one way to skin a cat," providing a degree of closure.

*Who Needs a Heart?* stresses the importance of delving into the lives of controversial figures who have not made it into the annals of history and prompts us to wonder why.

Michael X's downfall may have been influenced by his association with the Nation of Islam, the power of British media in shaping public opinion and creating moral panics, or perhaps by trying to assess him using the same criteria as US Black Power leaders. Nevertheless, as Michael X's wife reveals in an interview included in *Who Needs a Heart?*, "we don't have many people of our own, we need them." Michael X challenged British politics, leaving behind a legacy of resistance and activism revisited by Black Audio. His promising trajectory as a black British hero was cut short, making him a tragic hero. The closing words of his biography, "[t]he immigration law in this country is a very clear indication that blacks are an unwanted minority" (1968, 205) serves as a reminder of the dynamics of black British communities and hegemonic Britain. The next work explores a different narrative of unwanted minorities, focusing on South African apartheid and its connection to Britain.

## 8.2. *We are the Elephant*: South African Apartheid

*We are the Elephant* presents one of the many narratives of violence within the Black Diaspora, concentrating on South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. Apartheid is the "[b]elief in inner difference based on the appearance of physical features and, with them, sociocultural practices. Built on a racist foundation, apartheid has come to stand for an entire structure of legalised racism rooted in South Africa" (Sithole 2016, xvi). *We are the Elephant* sheds light on various sectors of society, including students, workers, or journalists, who united to resist apartheid. It emphasises the profound connection felt by British black communities with the anti-apartheid movement. The work is a direct documentary, given its didactic impulse, using talking-head interviews, montages of still and moving images, which indicate the work's use of archival and found footage, dramatised reconstructions, and theatrical satirical performances. In fact, during apartheid it was difficult to record in certain areas. However, Ceddo had established connections with South Africans organisations and one of its members, Glenn Ujebe Masokoane, was a South African exiled in London (Bakari 2024).

For Shannen Hill, *We are the Elephant* is political cinema, a weapon against apartheid (2015). According to Julian Petley, the production is an example of black resistance (1988b). Both Petley and *The Independent* highlight the quality of the footage used depicting the war on children (1988).<sup>102</sup> For me the film is in dialogue with the works included in this chapter because it transcends transnational boundaries and indicates how black communities in South

---

<sup>102</sup> The lack of further engagement with the work reflects its difficult access.

Africa organised to oppose to their situation, which highlights cosmopolitan memory. Additionally, it includes the figure of Steven Biko, who—as was the case of Michael X—is not as discussed or remembered as Malcom X. *We are the Elephant* is a memory film (Erll 2013), contributing to the cultivation of consciousness among those directly involved in the movement, subsequent generations, and individuals across different geographical locations. For Astrid Erll, “the most impressive popular versions of the past can be encountered in the cinema of cultural memory—which produces and disseminates [...] ‘memory films’” (2013, 19). Erll distinguishes between memory-reflexive films, which engage with memory concepts and facilitate individual and collective acts of remembering, and memory-productive films, which disseminate images of the past on a global scale (2013). *We are the Elephant* encompasses both categories, serving as a platform for individual and collective remembrance while also influencing black struggles in other countries, eliciting empathy and support.

Ceddo’s use of archival footage and dramatised narrative presents an effort to disrupt and decolonise how Western countries approach Africa. Mark Sealy, in *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* (2019), encourages the disruption of racial ideologies encapsulated in Eurocentric visual narratives. As Sealy wrote, photography transformed “its own visual language from a purely anthropological tool to a social instrument and because of this, no one else photographed South Africa and the struggle against apartheid better [...] than South African photographers” (2019, 116). Ceddo mirrors this approach in cinema, challenging dominant perspectives. The collaboration of South Africans, acknowledged in the closing credits, and the director’s South African background underscore the work’s commitment to the struggle. Through this strategy, the production delivers a contemporary critique of decolonisation, confronts South African racial violence, and fosters a Fanon-inspired process of decolonising the European viewer (Sealy 2019) and mediating the ethnographic gaze.

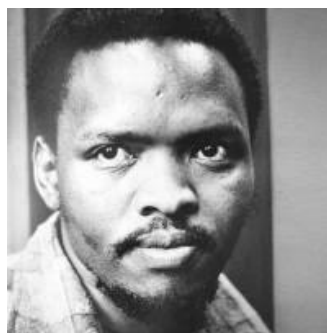
The opening scene of *We are the Elephant* features a dramatisation of Stephen Bantu Biko’s 1974 court testimony.<sup>103</sup> Steve Biko is a decolonial philosopher (Sithole 2016), founder of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) in 1969 and president of the Black People’s Convention (BPC) in 1972. During this scene, Biko is confronted by the

---

<sup>103</sup> The dramatised speech was extracted from Frank Talk’s ‘I write what I like: Fear-an Important determinant in South Africa’ (Sithole 2016)..

attorney regarding his use of language in relation to the Sharpeville massacre.<sup>104</sup>As he reads from Biko's account, "on this day scores of defenceless black men, women and children were massacred because they wished to register the rejection of notorious passed laws." The attorney argues that such language will have a negative impact on the perception that black South Africans have of whites. Biko contends that in poetry like in politics there is "[l]icence for what one might call justifiable exaggeration. This is a bit of political licence."

Biko is one of South Africa's national heroes, closely associated with the rise of "black consciousness" in the 1970s. This movement was deeply rooted in ideologies such as Pan-Africanism and Negritude, which found expression in various countries including the US, the UK, Senegal, or Brazil. For Tendayi Sithole, Biko saw the "need for consciousness-raising and from that recognition was born his concept of black consciousness. In essence, black consciousness represented a liberation movement of the mind. A psychological revolution aimed at forging black thought [...] and black unity" (2016, xiv). It would enable blacks to "rid themselves of the inferiority complex" (Mangena 1989, 12). Black consciousness aligns with other movements such as Black Nationalism (Malcolm X), Black Power (Carmichael) and British Black Power (Michael X). For Shannen Hill, black consciousness believes in the importance of "self-realisation and liberation of the mind" (2015, xv).



**Figure 56. Steven Bantu Biko**

In the trial, Biko discusses how liberation is both physical and mental and both are important to destroy apartheid using black consciousness (Sithole 2016). The attorney asks Biko if he considers the system intends to "systematically and premeditatedly extinguish from the surface of the earth the entire black nation?" The attorney's deranged facial expression, captured through an extreme close-up shot, underscores the irony of the case, and draws attention to its mockery since what the attorney asserts corresponds to the real

---

<sup>104</sup> The massacre occurred on March 21, 1960, under apartheid. The police attacked peaceful protesters marching against a passed law asking black South Africans to always carry identity documents. This event made apartheid escalate globally.

struggles experienced by black South Africans. Biko answers, “it would seem that the greatest waste of time in South Africa is to try to find logic in why the white government does certain things.” As he utters these words, the camera pans to the left revealing the witnesses’ faces encouraging Biko to continue.

Paralleling Aimé Césaire’s words, Biko claims, “when I turn on my radio, when I hear that negroes have been lynched in America, I say that we have been lied to. Hitler is not dead....He is likely to be found in Pretoria.” The camera pans left to the audience showing their agreement. A close-up on a Nazi flag reinforces Biko’s point. For him, “black people cannot respect white people in this country [...] no black man, no matter how intimidated can ever be made to respect white society.” Biko screams “Amndala,” which means power, and rises a clenched fist connecting with Pan-Africanism in the battle against oppression as did Malcolm X and Michael X.<sup>105</sup> Biko’s clenched fist is superimposed with a lit candle symbolising that his teachings live on those who continue opposing apartheid. *We are the Elephant*’s intertitle provides crucial context for the events surrounding Biko’s death and the ongoing combat: in 1976 the youth resisted in Soweto and one year later, the South African Secret Police murdered Biko. The struggle continues in the eighties with young people, who resist and combat.<sup>106</sup>

An establishing shot shows black South African workers protesting in an oil refinery plantation. As Neville Alexandra from the South African Council for Higher Education argues, the economic situation is a consequence of the fast industrialisation, the lack of white labour and the resort to black youth. This has led to an increase in the “revolutionary expectations of black youth.” As C. L. R. James wrote, the “[S]outh African industry has brought the natives together in factories, mines and on the docks, and the circumstances of their employment tended to drive them towards industrial organisation in the modern manner” (1977, 83). They challenged both white employers and the state (James 1977). As *We are the Elephant* indicates, “the black population are no longer prepared to remain voteless and rightless in the land of their birth.”

The young black British generation discussed in *Handsworth Songs* and *The People’s Account*, explored in chapter six, also exhibited their reluctance to stay silent in their

---

<sup>105</sup> In South Africa, the clenched fist is a symbol of black consciousness and of workers’ solidarity (Hill 2015).

<sup>106</sup> When South Africa transitioned to democracy in 1990s groups such as the Azanian People Organization and the African National Congress argued that they represented Biko’s ideal, making him a martyr (Hill 2015). On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976 black students in South Africa demonstrated against apartheid resulting in a bloody confrontation with the police in what became known as the Soweto uprising.

homeland, Britain. For one of the interviewees in *We are the Elephant*, South Africa is “a microcosm of the world and, in fact, in South Africa all the tensions and the contradictions that are tearing the world apart are concentrated in a way that you do not find in any other part of the world.” South Africa exemplifies the link of transnational and transcultural memories. As Aline Sierp argues, “while transnational memory describes frameworks that cut across memories tied to the narrow boundaries of nation states, transcultural memory is a wider concept going beyond national frontiers cutting also across divisions present within national societies” (2014, 104).

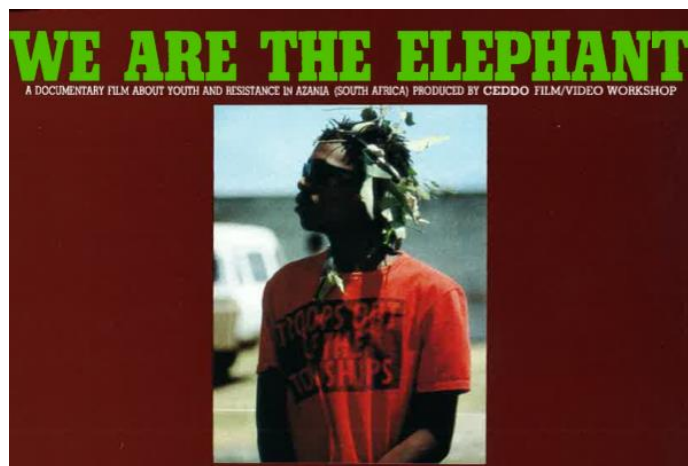


Figure 57. *We are the Elephant* flyer

The transcultural involvement of different nations against apartheid, or indirectly supporting it, illustrates this phenomenon. As the work indicates, this helped create connections between apartheid and the oppression of black communities in places like Britain. In London, people chanted for the liberation of Nelson Mandela as the footage included in the film reveals. This is an exercise of cosmopolitan memory. According to Peter Carrier and Kobi Kabalek, transcultural memory depends on the readiness of different groups or nations to share their memories (2014). The anti-apartheid march in London in November 1985 and the speeches advocating for the end of apartheid serve as evidence of this shared memory. One of the speeches acknowledges that “television did not create apartheid; it has exposed apartheid. We must end apartheid now [because] apartheid was founded by Nazi sympathisers.”<sup>107</sup> In *We are the Elephant*, these Nazi sympathisers are Ronald Regan and Margaret Thatcher. As Neville Alezandra claims in the work, “the movement is not simple a movement that is generated out of the national circumstances of South Africa but has

---

<sup>107</sup>Biko is a greater influence than Mandela for young activists (Hill 2015).

immediate and intimate connections with the international situation of the black peoples around the world.”

Nevertheless, South Africa has definitions of its own and a unique experience and the idea of Azania symbolises this. Azania means “land of the black people” (Wauchope n.a., 7). It is “[a] political programme that is accepted by all the oppressed people of this land. It embraces no less than the aspiration of the people for an undivided, anti-racist, socialist country” (Wauchope n.a., 8). The idea of Azania is similar to that of a liberated America for Carmichael, showing that liberation begins in the imagination. The fight against apartheid encompasses various spheres. *We are the Elephant* portrays a counterattack on ideological manipulation by illustrating how young organisations, newspapers, religious groups, women’s associations, and the arts combat apartheid. As Zackie Achmat of the Belville Youth Organisation admits, the youth recognised the importance of workers’ support, stating that “it is not only enough to raise our hands up in rallies, but also very important to organise, and that organisation in itself is a political act.” *We are the Elephant* reveals that students were not the sole participants in this struggle, preventing them from developing “a false consciousness of themselves as being the leading forces of the revolution.”

Despite this, Emeka Anyaoky, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth, describes in the film the involvement of young people as “[o]ne of the most moving parts of the experience. An exemplary youth organisation is COSAS (Congress of South African Students), taken as the “cutting edge of black resistance.” For Nujibe Nikete, a student leader of COSAS, the present generation is more politically engaged than his generation in 1976. This underscores youths’ commitment to the future, as they will be visibly affected by the inequality of education under apartheid. They have been involved due to the government’s war on the future, carried out by diminishing children’s educational opportunities. Echoing C. L. R James, who wrote, “the revolution might hold power and use it as a base for future extension” (1977, 52), Fity Blue from COSAS asserts that “the mass of our people has realised that there is no coming black.”

The narrator expands on “the war on the future” by showcasing the state of black schools under apartheid. Following the imposition of the state emergency in June 1986, children returned to schools after the students’ uprising in Soweto, the government reinstituted control on the population being more restrictive than previously. In fact, as the work argues, “children returned to schools, now occupied by the army.” Footage depicting children attempting to concentrate in class while being invigilated by the army and soldiers surveilling their journeys to school, visually encapsulates the “war on the future.” For the

government, “the state of emergency was declared to restore peace” but children were the victims of it, with parents seeing it as genocide committed against them through their children. The portrayal of funerals of some of the children/students killed under the state of emergency, introduced in a long take as the funerals of Mrs. Groce and Mrs. Jarett in *The People’s Account* (chapter six), reinforces this idea and stresses the unity of black South Africa.

The non-profit newspaper *Grassroots* emerged in response to the “[n]ews blackout permitting only the news reporting certain information.” Created by Grassroots, a counter-cultural and progressive group of South African thinkers, the newspaper serves as a critical voice. Grassroots believes in “[t]he need for alternative media because more and more commercial newspapers are being swallowed up by the state.” *Grassroots* is written in multiple languages and its style is accessible to ensure that uneducated individuals and children can comprehend it. Religion—as seen in black theology—is another area of resistance. Black theology is linked to black consciousness. As Hill contends, black theology is a “[s]ocioreligious ideology that shares numerous tenets with black consciousness” (2015, 33). In 1971 Biko argued that it was “the duty of all black priests and ministers of religion to save Christianity and Christians from the gross misrepresentation of Africa and Africans” (Hill 2015, 42). The production highlights this claiming that in the 70s, black theology inaugurated a new gospel “which takes liberation from oppression as its major theme, believing that the church must not sign with the rich and powerful. The state of emergency has created extremely difficult situations for priest interpreting the gospel in this way.” Workers’ unions and women also defied apartheid.

Susan Shabangu, an Executive member of the General Workers Union, emphasises the indispensable role of women in the present and how they confront daily challenges. As the production indicates, women “have demonstrated a remarkable power to survive and are now organised in trade unions and in other ways to fight each and every issue affecting their lives.” As such, Shabangu can’t see the struggle winning without women, since they live in the present and “it is very important for women to stand up together and to identify with the struggle.” The work accompanies these ideas with a montage stressing women’s active engagement in the fight against apartheid evoking the ideas discussed in *Omega Rising* (chapter three)

Art is also an anti-apartheid vehicle of liberation. *We are the Elephant* demonstrates it through a satirical theatre performance by the National Theatre of Azania. In the performance, an imprisoned woman, Zola, and a man, Dubula, embody contrasting



perspectives on apartheid. Dabula, wearing a white mask symbolising his alignment with the white oppressors, contends that “these people have been good to me, I think you misjudged their intentions. I’ve grown to learn the ways of the whites.” Zola reminds him of the ongoing oppression endured by black South Africans, as the work juxtaposes a montage with children in barricades trying to protect themselves. Dabula insists that “the white man has realised their mistakes and is prepared to change because the economic situation is critical.” Zola remains sceptical, asserting that “there have been many kinds of deaths. . . our history is persecution; our history is war.” She dismisses Dabula’s belief in white benevolence, holding that he is a “blind fool” who needs to deconstruct his white mask.

*We are the Elephant* does not provide a resolution; at the time of its recording, apartheid had not ended. By including the future plans of the organisations, the work gives a sense of futurity. The final idea refers to the future, with Strini Moodley, of the African People’s Organisation, maintaining that they want to create an “[o]rganisation of one nation, irrespective of colour, irrespective of creed, sex [because] we are fighting for one nation, one people, one Azania.” Believing in Azania offers mental and emotional liberation. Music also works towards liberation for South African exiles. The next production, *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices*, explores the intersection between apartheid, music, and exile in London.

### 8.3. “Exile Does Many Things to You”: Music as Resistance. *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices*

*Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* investigates the exile of South African musicians because of apartheid and how they used music as a tool of resistance and solidarity while in exile in London. The artists that feature the work are Pinise Soul, Hugh Masekela, Mervin Africa, Louis Moholo, Peggy Phengo, Trevor Huddleston, Miriam Makeba and Julian Bahula. What sets this essay film apart is its emphasis on music as a central element in political and social awareness as well as the construction of a sense of community for those South Africans exiled in London. As such, it builds a social and racial critique. In fact, long takes capturing musician’s performances are recurrent. *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* also incorporates interviews, archival footage, and montages of still and moving images to enrich the aesthetic mix of the film.

The film’s use of music caught the attention of Michael Appouh, who reviewed the work in preparation for the London Jazz Festival of 2018. The lack of previous engagement with the work derives from the difficulty to access it. For me, the production is in dialogue with the previous two given its continuation of apartheid and organisation of black

communities to resist oppression. Additionally, it is a tribute to the legacy and influence of South African musicians in Britain and indicates how music helps to shape and create cosmopolitan memory. The work initiates with a South African jazz performance lasting over a minute. Jazz serves as a visual language throughout *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices*. Jazz was also employed in *Who Needs a Heart?*, the key distinction lies in how jazz guides *Blue Notes and Exiled Voice's* narrative, while in *Who Neds a Heart?*, it functioned as a soundtrack mirroring the discontinuity of Michael X's biography and as a bridge to transition from one sequence to another.

The jazz performance is followed by a montage featuring juxtaposed newspapers' headlines and images of South Africa under apartheid. Pinise Saul, exiled in 1975, queen of South African Jazz, talks about her exile, "people like me and the rest of us we would [sic] families were torn, children, all, it's a struggle to be in exile." Exile became her only option if she wished to pursue her artistic career. After her intervention, the work does not explain apartheid-like Ceddo did in *We are the Elephant*. Instead, the opening concert is shown again, implying that the interview has interrupted the musical narrative rather than the reverse. Louis Moholo, exiled in 1964, describes how exile means that "your mind is in that country of belonging and your body is in the country that you are." The work jumps back to the concert, suggesting that the musical long-takes offer calm to those struggling with exile. In fact, jazz for South Africans has a spiritual component, enclosing the collective memory of South Africans (Reese 2019). Hugh Masekela, the father of South African Jazz, exiled in 1960, claims that "no amount of success can be significant to you"; if you know what is happening in South Africa, the achievement is bittersweet.

With these words, Masekela underscores the significance of collective memory as a site of solidarity and resistance. As Jeffrey K. Olick indicates, if there is no sense of national unity, social solidarity is in danger (2008). Commemoration is crucial for this, and *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* exemplifies this. The juxtaposed interviews convey a shared experience of oppression and suffering, emphasising the importance of sharing narratives as acts of resistance (Moses and Rothberg 2014). For Drik Moses and Michael Rothberg, resistance narratives are "[t]he ineluctable cultural responses to these experiences, constructed to invest the exiled or occupied subject with the dignity that his and her humiliating material conditions have stripped from them" (2014, 35). Mervyn Africa, a prominent South African pianist, exiled in 1981, reflects on the challenges of performing under apartheid contrasted with the freedom he found in London, where he could collaborate with musicians from all backgrounds.



**Figure 58. Hugh Masekela and Louis Moholo**

Pinise Saul occupies the next musical long-take. The close-ups on the players' faces highlights the depth of the performance. Symbolism is woven into the lightning and the colours worn by the musicians, with white, red, and blue predominating—a nod to the Union Jack's colours. Their ancestral roots are also honoured as some wear kufis. As viewers are captivated by Saul's performance, the production juxtaposes images of apartheid, displaying messages of segregation such as "whites only" "crossing by the bridge non-white only" "non-Europeans only." Saul's performance becomes a spiritual journey to South Africa.

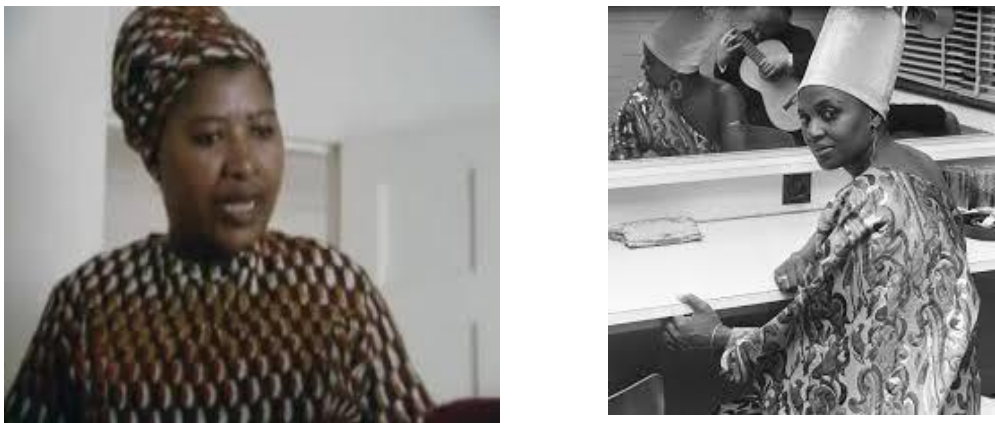
Peggy Phango, exiled in 1961 thanks to her role in the musical *King Kong*, shares her experience and narrates the episode which prompted her exile:

[O]ne day I was going to the pictures, there was a car accident, there was a white woman there in the street who was bleeding to death, all we had to do is to stop the bleeding until the doctor came. They won't let me touch her, she died. Why? I said I'm a nurse, I can stop the bleeding until the doctor comes. No. I'm black. So, she bled until she died. When the family came she was dead because I was not allowed to touch her, I was black. So, what's the point of learning to heal people if you are not allowed to? So, I gave up nursing and I went into show business.

The showbusiness, as portrayed in *A Family Called Abrew*, discussed in chapter five, offered her a path to free herself. Embodying colonial and historical consciousness, these artists share their stories to ensure that what happened is not forgotten. As Anna Clark and Carla L. Peck wrote, "the concept of historical consciousness refers both to the ways people orient themselves in time, and how they are bound by the historical and cultural contexts which shape their sense of temporality and collective memory" (2019, 2). The colonial and historical consciousness is embedded in the music they created. As Phango claims, "at home we are not allowed to talk politics, the only thing we are allowed to do is sing them. That's

the only thing we never got arrested for, so we did what we grew up doing, singing about our lives.”

Music provided collective catharsis for exiled South African musicians while also contributing to the artistic expression of the Black Diaspora in Britain. As Fanon wrote, “in every society, in every collectivity, exists—must exist—a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released” ([1952] 2008, 145). For these exiled musicians, this channel was music. Britain created a space for the elaboration of their musical memory and the configuration of black South African history and heritage. As Tom Lodge noted, anti-apartheid movements became an international concern (2011). As the film underlines, in the UK, organised opposition to apartheid would develop into “[B]ritain’s biggest-ever international solidarity movement.”



**Figure 59. Peggy Phango and Miriam Makeba**

Considering the relationship between the UK and South Africa, Masekela and Moholo highlight their contribution to British avant-garde jazz (Banks and Toynbee 2014) or black British jazz (Tackley 2014). For Mark Banks and Jason Toynbee there were “[n]ew jazz migrants, particularly émigrés from apartheid South Africa, [...] [who] represented a major creative force in jazz during the conjuncture of the late 1960s and early 1970s” (2014, 102). Catherine Tackley explains that “[t]he complexities of migration, racial politics and negotiation of identity are played out [...] within a body of music-making from over the past century which might be understood as ‘black British jazz’” (2014, 43). Moholo reminisces about his contribution to The Blue Notes as he reflects on a photograph with his former band, whose members are dead. The band The Blue Notes exemplify musical multiculturalism, extending beyond American Sources by blending traditional township jazz, the lyricism of South African traditions, and the dissonances of free jazz, coupled with McGregor’s expertise in arrangements (Banks and Toynbee 2014). The work includes an excerpt of them playing in

South Africa. The band had a “profound impact on the British scene” (Banks and Toynbee 2014, 104).

Masekela shares his story as part of the Jazz Epistles, “the first South African jazz band.” Masekela recounts the band’s contributions to the African National Congress and anti-apartheid organisations, making them the first band “record companies considered.” However, as they planned to go on tour, Sharpeville—which I explained in the previous work—happened, prompting a ban on gatherings of more than ten black people, and they had to disband. This event reflects the socio-political landscape that accompanied their music. A montage of Sharpeville is included with a musical soundtrack of South African jazz. The decision not to place the music at the centre, giving space to the visual construction, underscores the importance of Sharpeville. Masekela acknowledges Trevor Huddleston as pivotal in his life. He provided him with his first instrument, a trumpet. The trumpet Huddleston gave him was a gift to him from Louis Armstrong. This connection between Armstrong and his band made them famous making them “the first black group to be in white newspapers in the front page.” This link underscores the transcultural and cosmopolitan connections between members of the Black Diaspora.

Huddleston, an active protester against apartheid, is considered one of the founders of the anti-apartheid movement in London. Masekela’s decision to leave South Africa was prompted by the fact that “the African musicians didn’t get any chance to expand, and European musicians didn’t expand because through insulation they didn’t grow.” The transcultural link between South Africa and London facilitated the hybridisation of jazz, enabling European Jazz to broaden and South African Jazz to evolve by blending both styles and histories. As Howard Rye wrote, “back British musicians not only mastered the jazz styles of the day but also fused these with aspects of other cultures, often making reference to their roots and routes, resulting in a new, self-expressive hybridity” (2014, 41).

For Louise Bethlehem, “exile generates new circuits of professional affiliation and new venues for cultural production.” (2018, 53). *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* exemplifies the connection between music and the black Atlantic, emphasising how it is space of creative cultural exchange between different nations. The introduction of South African Jazz in Britain helped South African musicians to maintain their identity, as their exile aligns with Hall’s concept of “roots and routes” (1997). As Stuart Hall, Lynne Segal and Peter Osborne explain, “history depends on the routes. It is the replacement of ‘roots’ with ‘routes’. There are no routes which are unified. The further back you go, something else is always present, historically, and the movement is always towards dissemination” (1997, 32).

Dissemination describes the process of cultural exchange between both countries. As the work indicates, “British musicians learnt from South African music, absorbed it, and took it on their own bands.” This idea was also highlighted by Tackley, who uses the concept of roots and routes to provide a “useful basis for understanding the diversity of jazz produced by black British musicians: roots may be variously inherited and created, lost, and found, neglected, and cultivated as a result of ‘routes’, transitive and transforming processes resulting from the literal and psychological journeys of migration” (2014, 43). The Blue Notes exemplify this dissemination, as in the UK “[t]he ensemble was celebrated for the excitement, newness, and difference it brought to the London jazz scene” (Dalamba 2019, 217). A recording of them playing in Ronnie Scott’s emphasises this. As Barbara Pukwana, widow of one of the members–Dudu–argues, “everybody was shell-shocked of what they heard. They had never heard anything like it.” The Blue Notes captured the spirit of their time together with an increased “[u]nderstanding of jazz in black cultural nationalist terms as a symbol and voice of black resistance and as a species of postmodernism” (Dalamba 2019, 216). Moholo signals that their aim in London was to “[s]tand for the happiness, just to make the people of London happy, the people in exile rather, outside South Africa,” drawing attention to the trans-solidarity of exile.

For Indelwa Dalamba, they were quite successful since they managed to integrate the British avant-garde jazz and township jazz style with the free improvisation characterising European jazz (2019). However, this fusion also meant that South African jazz musicians’ history and memory and their style was reduced at times by European standards (Dalamba 2019). Consequently, they found themselves in an in-between space, caught between South Africa and Britain, unable to fully assimilate into either. In jazz and blues, a blue note is a note played with a divergent pitch. In fact, “[f]or white listeners, one of the most surprising characteristics of the blues is the appearance of blue notes [...] blue notes are not part of the (temperate) Western scale” (Carles and Comolli 2015, 89). The blue note in jazz is a token of these South African musicians’ identity and distinctiveness.

Masekela introduces Miriam Makeba, Mama Africa, “[t]he first African musician to grab world attention and also to bring attention of the world community [...] writing and signing about the lifestyle of South Africa.” Makeba’s music and activism raised awareness and brought together exiled musicians in the fight against apartheid. Footage of Makeba addressing the United Nations in 1964 underscores her activism, as she challenges the United Nations, “Would you keep silent and do nothing if you were in our place? Would you not resist if you were allowed no rights in your own country because the colour of your skin is

different?” Makeba’s speech inspired musicians to be voiced against apartheid. Pinise Saul explains the significance of Makeba’s speech by highlighting its effect on exiled South Africans. Exiles’ union became stronger, especially after the Soweto uprisings.

As *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* approaches its end, a meditative tone emerges, with Moholo offering insights into the transformative effects of exile on one’s identity. Moholo recounts the fate of each member of The Blue Notes and how exile impacted their lives. Nick Moyake, “he didn’t fit there at home because he missed us, and he had problems and he died from a brain tumour.” As Moholo claims, “this is again exile, you see. Exile does a lot of things to you. Exile gets us in different ways.” Mongezi Feza died of pneumonia. Johnny Mbizo died of heart failure. The last members were Dudu and himself. He asked Dudu to do a benefit concert, he said he did not have the energy, two days later he died. The emotional weight of Moholo’s narrative is captured by the camera’s close-up on his teary eyes. He finds calm in the transcendent power of music, which connects him to his friends. As he maintains, “they visit me in my sleep and sometimes I wish I was asleep longer. I wish I was always asleep because they come in my dreams, and this is the only time I am with them physically. I wish I was asleep sometimes longer for days and days to have this friendship happening somewhere.” Through their shared experiences of exile and music, Moholo suggests that their legacy endures as a powerful memorial. Following this scene, a long take captures Moholo with Viva La Black performing “Requiem” as a tribute to his friends.

Moholo speculates on the future of South Africa without individuals like his friends who fought against apartheid. As he expresses, “we are going to have a South Africa without these people [...] we have suffered a lot as well as people from South Africa in exile.” The work concludes with ‘the healing song’ by Masekela, with the audience joining in, creating a deeply spiritual and communal moment. The live performance transitions into a montage featuring Nelson Mandela, accompanied by the same song in the soundtrack, symbolising his role in post-apartheid South Africa. Mandela’s figure and the song signify that even though Moholo’s generation is not alive, their revolutionary ideas resonate through their music for future generations. *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* activates a mode of remembrance with music that transcends the political and the personal, offering hope for the future.

#### 8.4. Conclusion

The films in this chapter underscore the cosmopolitan dimension of memory through events and movements which had an international impact such as apartheid or Black Power. The

films studied also link the figures of different black activist around the world such as Michael X, Malcom X and Biko to highlight the cosmopolitan connection between them and how the media can evoke and encapsulate their importance. Therefore, the works transcend the local communities in which they operated and influenced leaders in other parts of the world like Michael X and Biko, who managed to create their own black movements in their countries while considering global intellectual influences.

Black Britons drew parallels with their oppression in Britain and attempted to organise anti-apartheid formations underscoring their cosmopolitan impulse. Additionally, Pan-African movements such as Black Power (US), British Black Power (UK) and Black Consciousness (South Africa) have demonstrated how, even though they were movements for liberation in different locations, there existed a global and collective connection through the experiences of oppression among black communities world-wide.

The films highlight how cosmopolitan memory and solidarity find expression through various art forms, including music like jazz, theatre performances and photography. These arts underline black expression and creativity, serving as transitional spaces that bridge fragmented narratives or underrepresented histories, such as those of Michael X or Steven Biko. By demonstrating the interconnectedness of different black communities, the chapter smoothly introduces the idea that unity and solidarity within these black communities ensure the existence of black cultures in the future.

The next chapter focuses on the futuristic dimension of the Black Diaspora through its creative expressions, particularly in notions related to Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism highlights how the Black Diaspora's contributions have shaped the future. Given their histories of oppression, rootlessness, and displacement, the Black Diaspora possesses the knowledge, based on their experiences, to confront the uncertainties of the future.





## CHAPTER 9. THERE ARE BLACK PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE: AFROFUTURISM AND BEYOND<sup>108</sup>

“Nations have no borders  
ancestral roots  
criss-cross gateways  
the sea-lanes  
and the cyber-ways  
that offer liberty”  
(Bakari 2017, 19)

This chapter inaugurates the futuristic dimension of the Black Diaspora, illustrating how it pursues liberation through imaginative creation. The two works I investigate are travelogues across space and time, bridging gaps in black memory and history to better understand the future. By discussing *The Last Angel of History* (1996) and *Memory Room 451* (1997b) by the Black Audio Film Collective, this chapter underscores the future-oriented nature of the Black Diaspora. Both productions are connected by the guiding principles of Afrofuturism, which emphasises the unity and influence of the Black Diaspora and its rhizomatic experience, which transgresses boundaries—as the previous two chapters showed. Afrofuturism enables the exploration of a future shaped by the contributions of black cultures. The rhizomatic experience elucidates its interconnectedness across space and time, despite its diasporic scattering. Both works feature time-travellers who serve as links between the different time-frames.

*The Last Angel of History* traces the journey of a data thief as he travels into the past in search of fragments of black history and memory. To do so, he relies on the insights of science fiction writers, scholars, and musicians. I will analyse the work through ideas such as liquid blackness (Raengo 2014), a project which explores the intersection between blackness, media and aesthetics; fluid radicalism (Raengo 2014), an idea which shows the progressive engagement with radical ideas about blackness; the notion of the Black Aquatic, explaining how black subjectivities die and begin with a connection to water (Walcott 2021); the concept of the cyborg (Haraway 1985), which unites technology, society and biology, prompting a new way of thinking about the future; rhizomatic memory, which is non-linear memory; science fiction, and Afrofuturism.

---

<sup>108</sup> The title is a reference to the exhibition “The Black Fantastic: There are Black People in the Future” (Hayward Gallery 2022), curated by Ekow Eshun.

*Memory Room 451* unfolds in a dystopian society where memories have been erased but are needed to guarantee the preservation of blackness in the future. A time-traveller visits the dreams of prisoners locked in memory rooms to decode their stories and recollections. These prisoners examine distinct black political positions through various hairstyles. I will read the production through the notions of future anterior (Lacan 1981), where Jacques Lacan signals how the feeling of completeness in the future is never fulfilled and how desires are always pushed into the future and never really achieved. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (1791), leading to surveillance and control for the inmates in the memory rooms. Bhabha's double time (1994), which explains the interplay of several temporalities for postcolonial societies; lucid dreaming or reverie (Walsh 2017), where the person dreaming is aware of it; my own concept, Afroneiric creation, which reflects the imaginative powers of the Black Diaspora through dreams, and futuralgia, which denotes a nostalgia for the African presence in the future, fostering why characters strive to keep it so that it does not become a reality in the future.

The chapter will conclude by examining the trajectories pursued by members of the collectives after their dissolution. By doing so, I highlight the contribution of Black Audio, Ceddo, and Sankofa to black British cinema, which is still visible and alive.

### 9.1. Flying into the Future with *The Last Angel of History*

*The Last Angel of History* is a non-linear fiction that follows the adventures of "the data thief," a time traveller in search of the key to the future. He achieves this by delving into the past and interpreting the fragments he uncovers. Musicians, writers, and scholars, who are interviewed, discuss the cultural politics of the future, and how black cultures offer insights for it. The data thief, acting as an angel of history, possesses more agency than Klee's angel because he is also a benjaminian historian (Hernández-Navarro 2012). This is a historian who is inspired by and follows Benjamin's theoretical approaches when it comes to handling the experience of the past. *The Last Angel of History* is an essay film characterised by its use of archival and documentary footage, which are the talking-head interviews included and which the data thief finds on the internet. There are also re-enactments and tableaux with the data thief as the protagonist. The work also includes visual effects created through the constant alteration of the used filters. Additionally, its soundtrack includes some of the songs of the musicians who are mentioned giving cohesion to the film.

The work resembles a research project on blackness and futurity (Akomfrah and Eshun 2007; Eshun 2019). Akomfrah underlines to Eshun how the term Afrofuturism is only mentioned twice since Akomfrah believes it implies division between “[w]e” and “them” (2019, 369). Despite this, the production’s Afrofuturistic aesthetic generated attention from critics. Some describe it as a journey across black culture and postcolonial and post humanist theories (Skoller 1997; Marks 2015). Edward George suggests that Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* inspired the script, evident in its title (2021). *The Last Angel of History* also highlights the concept of a black cyberspace, as depicted by the overwhelming presence of computers, which create a virtual platform to travel to other times (George 2021; Malik 2021). For George, *The Last Angel of History* serves as a realm of African memory, where the living and the dead coexist (2021).

By blending Afrofuturism with elements of black avant-garde and popular culture, Akomfrah creates in the work what he terms a digitised race memory (Skoller 1997). By digitised race memory Akomfrah refers to how he feels about how members of his generation:

[R]eceived most of [their] understandings of the politics of identity and race as a digital sign, as an upload, if you like, of an always-already marked set of structured absences: Fanon, The Panthers, Black Power and so on. So, there is a sense in which the founding regime, the narrative regime that overdetermined everything [they] did, came to [them] as a set of digital simulacra; as traces of moments forever fixed as virtual references, but always deferred and always already there as a signal, a noise, a kind of utopian possibility. (Akomfrah and Eshun 2019, 1)

For Ashley Clark, *The Last Angel of History* intertwines various worlds through music (2015). In fact, Alessandra Raengo emphasises how the use of music makes the work fluid alongside its intellectual component (2014). Its Afrofuturistic form challenges Eurocentric theories by emphasising a narrative of survival and oral history, fundamental to Afrofuturist identities, while also reconstructing a lost part of history (Petty 2008; Marks 2015). Jean Fisher found interest in its alternative temporality and in Akomfrah’s commentary on Britain’s fear about having generated a mutant, rootless, displaced population (2007). For me, the work is an example of the Black Diaspora’s creativity. It summarises their literary, musical, and historical contributions while also creating a visual repository of memory for future generations, indicating the many areas to which the Black Diaspora globally contributes.

An establishing shot with a yellow filter, reveals an isolated house surrounded by water. Adjacent to the house, the narrator stands at a crossroads, symbolically echoing the story of Robert Johnson, an American blues singer, who “[s]old his soul to the devil at the crossroads in the deep south.” This pact granted Johnson access to “[t]he secrets of a black technology that we’ve come to know now as the blues.” The narrator states that blues begat jazz, soul, hip-hop and R&B, highlighting the influence of black cultures on music and the artistic expression of the Black Diaspora, which is present at the root of several music genres. As Joe Buttram wrote, “of all the precursors of jazz and other forms of popular music of this century, the blues is in many ways the most important and unique” (1993, 5).

Continuing, the narrator underlines the connection between water and music in the location he is at, asserting that “the first touch with science fiction came when Africans began playing drums to cover distance. Water carried the sound of the drums, and sound covered the distance between the Old and the New World.” The drum as a technology at the foundation of black cultures (Alkalimat 2021). In *Testament* (chapter seven), I indicated how rivers were gods and goddess of memory, and idea related to Miss T. in *Dreaming Rivers*, chapter five, who also had memories linked to water. This underlines how memory has an important correlation to water and music for black cultures. Rinaldo Walcott unties memory and water through the concept of the Black Aquatic, derived from liquid blackness—which I explain in this section. For Walcott, “the black aquatic pursues the relationship black people have to bodies of water as foundationally formative of blackness, and it seeks to provide an aesthetic narratology and hauntology of contemporary claims of black subjectivity. Therefore, if the sea has been death, it has also been birth” (2021, 65). In the productions I have explored in this thesis, water means death and beginning. Water, following the view of the data thief covers “the distance between the old and the New World.” This new world is the future which black cultures dominate. In fact, in *Memory Room 451*, water is also an important element.

Transitioning into the future, the narrator fast-forwards two hundred years and introduces the figure of the data thief. Through a montage depicting diverse moments of black civilisation, the narrator shares what the data thief witnesses. The fast montage before inserting the data thief simulates his time-travelling ability. The visual elements in the montage present an Afrofuturistic future and contribute to a “[b]lack futurist imagination in relation to black cultural production, technology, cyberculture, speculative fiction, the digital divide and science fiction” (Nama 2008, 160).

The data-thief appears in a room with computers, processing the information he has gathered. This room serves a similar role to the mourning room in *Mysteries of July* (chapter

six) or the photographic gallery in *Handsworth Song* (chapter six): it a space for reflection and, quite literally, processing. In *The Last Angel of History*, this room also functions as a foyer, with each computer operating as a doorway to diverse worlds—the various moments of black history. Through these portals, the data thief travels to the different worlds or moments to comprehend the history and memory of the Black Diaspora across the past, present, and future.



**Figure 60. The Data Thief in the Computers' Room in *The Last Angel of History***

As Nettrice R. Gaskins, referencing Mark Dery, highlights, “Afrofuturism fosters the artistic practice of navigating the past, present, and future simultaneously” (2017, 27). The data thief, embodying the characteristics of Afrofuturism as a time-traveller, transcends temporal constraints, providing viewers with new “ways to map, view, encode, or decode traditional cultural systems and symbols with dynamically changing information” (Gaskins 2017, 29), contributing to the creation of a digitised race memory. The narrator affirms that “our thief from the future gives up the right to belong in his time in order to come to our time.” By defying the storm of progress (Benjamin [1939] 1968b), the thief transforms into an angel of history. However, he also possesses insight into the future since he can “visit the old world and the new, but he cannot be a part of either.”

Similar to Johnson selling his soul to discover a secret black technology, the data thief has done a comparable pact to illuminate the possibilities of the future for the Black Diaspora. He achieves this through archaeological excavation, discovering “[f]ragments, techno fossils” that he must decipher to unlock a code and gain access to the future’s potential. His methodology shows how “[A]frofuturism advocates for the revision of accepted, long-standing views, theories, historical events, and movements. It retells history, altering characters and/or the environment by re-using existing artifacts, themes, and concepts” (Gaskins 2017, 30).

The data thief’s archaeological work considers that “[n]othing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history” (Benjamin [1942] 1968b). This motivates him to navigate “[a]cross the internet of black culture breaking into the vaults, into the rooms and

stealing fragments, fragments from cyber culture, techno culture, narrative culture.” The data thief endeavours to “[m]ake whole what has been smashed” (Benjamin 1968b), mediating between the past and the future. In doing so, he engages in reconstructing and rewriting the memory of the African diaspora (Mayer 2000). The fragments he discovers are talking-head interviews featuring musicians, writers, scholars, and activists from all over the Black Diaspora, akin to those in *Twilight City* (chapter seven). They lay the sonic and intellectual background for the data thief’s decryption.

The clue he has uncovered, uniting the different interviews, is the concept of “Mothership Connection.” Mothership, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a larger craft controlling and launching smaller one, symbolises the interconnected fragments uniting the Black Diaspora and past Black Audio productions. As the data thief reconstructs the past, he identifies the mothership as a chronotope of the Black Diaspora, echoing Gilroy’s idea of the Black Atlantic. An example is how during a visit to Ghana, a woman remarks, “it’s the end of the world, don’t you know that yet?” Confused by the marches with banners stating, “long live liberation council” “away with dictatorship,” the data thief encounters references to the events depicted in *Testament* (chapter seven) and the failure of Nkrumah’s socialist experiment.

As Eshun elucidates, Mothership Connection was also George Clinton’s 1974 album, signalling “the link between Africa as a lost continent in the past and between Africa as an alien future.” On the album cover, Clinton is either exiting or re-entering a spaceship, underscoring the ambiguous timeframe of the Mothership Connection and how the Black Diaspora transcends temporal boundaries. As Ruth Mayer wrote, “we must not forget that the futuristic fantasy spaces in black culture are always also spaces of retreat from very real pressures, testifying—if often only indirectly—to these pressures and their traumatic effects” (2000, 561). The relations of the several past, present, and future pressures are seen in different geographical points. Eshun outlines the routes and re-routes of the black Atlantic, connecting “[t]he UK to the US, the Caribbean to Europe to Africa” (1998, 4).

For Gilroy, the Black Atlantic is a rhizomorphic, fragmented, and transcultural formation (1993b). Rhizomatic memory, inherently non-linear, mirrors the scattered relationship of the Black Diaspora. Their memory is rhizomatic given its history of routing, rerouting, placement, and displacement. Kevin Birth suggests that the Black Diaspora has a “[r]adical temporal reorientation of knowledge to the future” (2017, 95) since their temporality pushes them “[a]gainst the present prefiguring the future” (Birth 2017, 111). This orientation better equips the Black Diaspora for the dystopic technological and chemical

future envisioned in *Memory Room 451*. The importance of understanding and revisiting the past to secure a future is underlined by Jean Kayira, “[w]e should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward. Whatever we have lost, forgotten, forgone, or been stripped of can be reclaimed, revived, preserved, and perpetuated” (2015, 114).



**Figure 61. The Data Thief Visits Ghana in *The Last Angel of History***

The data thief continues his travels and fragment-assembling process by questioning musicians like Lee Perry and Sun Ra about Mothership Connection in relation to their music and the Black Diaspora. They argue that their “[m]usic is a mirror of the universe” since they explore the future through music. Their music, acting as a black technology code, and the identities they reveal are fluid or liquid, evoking Raengo’s concept of liquid blackness. First articulated in 2014, the liquid blackness manifesto, based on Harry Elam’s assertion that blackness travels on its own (2005) celebrates mobility, placing it at the forefront and shifting focus from seeking a black aesthetic to conceiving blackness as an aesthetic. One of the proposed routes is liquid blackness as a channel, vehicle, or medium that facilitates contact among the Black Diaspora. In *The Last Angel of History*, these mediums include the spaceship, water, music, and interviewees’ knowledge.

Raengo further devised the theory of fluid radicalism, linked to liquid blackness. It involves the intersection of experimentation and political radicalism. It inquires how black diasporic communities navigate liquid mobility despite marginalisation and how their ideas permeate (2014). In *The Last Angel of History*, fluid radicalism is exemplified through the data thief’s time-travelling, connecting distinct time-spaces, and demonstrating the influence of blackness across different eras. This concept is underscored by Clinton who contends that space “for black people, is not something new. I believe we’ve been there. That we’re returning to that and that the consciousness of black people [...] is striving to return to where the essence of where the roots come from.” Through the interviewees’ interventions, alongside the notions of liquid blackness and fluid radicalism, the data thief establishes a relationship between “music, space and the future.” The data thief finds astronaut Bernard



Harris. He admits Clinton's album inspired his career choice since it shows human beings and "more importantly, a black man exploring space." During his first mission, he flew a flag representing all African countries, reflecting his heritage. For Harris, black people were the first astronomers and mathematicians, signalling how it is natural for them to return from space and make a claim to the future.

The data thief travels to the past and "[w]anders through the ruins, the detritus, the wastelands of our late twentieth century, and he comes across a little piece of stone—a fragment. Written on it is a strange phrase: the line between social reality and science fiction is an optical illusion." This sentence is from Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1985), where she writes about the cyborg to elucidate the fluidity of identities and their limitations. For Eshun, "[t]oday's cyborgs are too busy manufacturing themselves across time space [...] with all the tests for transatlantic, transeuropean and transafrican consciousness" (1998, 1). The cyborg is connected to liquid blackness and offers an alternative consciousness, making cyborgs the main actors in the creation of culture (Cubitt 2007). The data thief embodies this.

Haraway defines a cyborg as "[a] creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction" (1985, 65). In *The Last Angel of History*, the juxtaposition of the Black Diaspora's reality with fiction conveys this notion. Through the world-changing fiction crafted by the data thief, he fights for the existence of black in the future, echoing Hall's idea in "What is the Black in Black Popular Culture?" (1993), where "black popular culture is a contradictory space. . . a site of strategic contestation" (1993, 107). Afrofuturism and the black future also look contradictory. However, if the data thief unlocks the key to the future, it may not be a site of contestation, as he is assembling the past to produce a "black counternarrative" (Hall 1993, 109), a characteristic of Afrofuturism. As Eshun wrote, "Afrofuturism may be characterised as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures" (2003, 288). Afrofuturism does not "[d]eny the tradition of counter-memory. Rather, it aims to extend that tradition by reorienting the intercultural vectors of Black Atlantic temporality towards the proleptic as much as the retrospective" (Eshun 2003, 289). To illustrate this, Eshun uses musicians as examples of counter-memory through music. He mentions Sun Ra (1914-1993), Lee Perry (1936-2021), and Clinton (1941-), who are for Eshun pioneer Afrofuturist musicians and Juan Atkins' music (1962-).

For Atkins, musicians "perpetuate the technological revolution through music" and it needs to be listened to if the Black Diaspora wants to be ready for a technological future. In a

way, musicians—as was indicated in Ceddo’s *Time and Judgement* (chapter two)—are the griots of the Black Diaspora and music a weapon for the future, as highlighted in *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (chapter eight). For Atkins, the synthesiser was a breakthrough in electronic music. It allowed him to be a cyborg attached to the imagination of the black musician which represented “the ability to make these futuristic sounds, space sounds, and UFO sounds, and implement that in the music.” Afrofuturist musicians challenged the notion of black music belonging to the streets, as their music is imaginary studio music and “because they are imaginary, they are even more powerful because they suggest the future.” Music reflects how, as DJ Spooky claims, “everything is flux.” (*The Last Angel of History* 1996).

Science-fiction is another lens to understand the black experience. As critic Greg Tate argues, “the black existence and science fiction are one and the same.” For him, the characters in sci-fi novels are at “odds with the apparatus of power in the society and .... [their] experience is one of cultural dislocation, alienation, estrangement.” This thesis has shown in previous chapters how dislocation, alienation, and estrangement are adjectives that describe black experiences. As Ishmael Reed confirms, “we’re like aliens trying to tell our experience to earthlings. People don’t believe us. . . . Living in this country, for African Americans is a far-out experience.” For him, blacks are considered outsiders and not part of the American experience. Mainstream’s society rhetoric suggesting that black people return to their “planet of origin” adds to this sci-fi analogy.

Samuel R. Delany proposes that the “[s]ignificant distortion of the present” offered by science fiction resonates with the distorted experiences of the Black Diaspora. Under this premise, Octavia Butler, as she claims, wrote her novels. Eshun contends that writers like Butler or Delany are re-casting African American history through science fiction, exploring themes such as genetic transformation or alien abduction because “[h]ow much more alien do you think it gets than slavery? entire mass populations moved and genetically altered, entire statues moved, forcibly dematerialised? It doesn’t really get more alien than that.” So much so that for Dery, it is hard to decipher “[w]here sci-fiction ends, and black existence begin” (1994, 210), underlining the challenges the data thief faces in assorting the information he finds given the Black Diaspora’s rhizomatic experience.

The work emphasises how the Black Diaspora has lived situations akin to sci-fi in the present, rendering them well-equipped to navigate the uncertainties of the future and enjoy the mothership experience (Gipson 2019). The technological revolution is closer to them—as is evident in how musicians and writers were using it, who build bridges between different black communities across the Black Diaspora. Musician Goldie indicates that black

musicians are making something “that you can’t hear” unless you are receptive to the black future. The black technological revolution is highlighted by how computers—built for military purposes in the second world war—are used by black youth to gain musical expression and liberation. This technological revolution has facilitated the creation of “sonic worlds which will secede from mainstream worlds and some of it will be antagonistic towards it.” In the seceded worlds, art forms such music will lead to the “[p]roliferation and mutation of the African-derived rhythms,” which—as I indicated at the beginning of this analysis—music is a connection between old and new worlds across different times and spaces.

The digitised Black Diaspora is ready to lead the future. Eshun suggests that the technological revolution will enable them to transcend the constraints of time and space, habiting the seceded worlds created through the data thief’s assembled fragments of technology and their creativity. The data thief cruises the “[z]one of optical illusions”, blurring the boundaries between science fiction and social reality to make sure that the Black Diaspora in the present understands that “technology has broken time down”, and they represent the future. This film has shown how the Black Diaspora’s narratives of displacement and rootlessness together with their creativity equip black communities with the knowledge necessary to face the future. The realm of dreams and hair are two further supports where the African diaspora fights for liberation and the future. The dystopic world of *Memory Room 451* examines this.

## 9.2. Unbounding the Future: *Memory Room 451*

*Memory Room 451* presents a dystopian world where a time-traveller or messenger from the twenty-third century asks individuals of the past, confined in memory rooms, about their memories attached to hair. By exploring the cultural and historical significance of various black hairstyles like the conk, Afro, or dreadlocks, the time-traveller unveils the memory and history of the Black Diaspora. Retrieving these memories is imperative to secure a future given that inhabitants of the future have forgotten their memories and how to dream. The time-traveller signals how dreams and water serve as mediums for travelling and bridging the past, present, and future. *Memory Room 451* is an essay film characterised by the use of archival footage, found footage, and computer-generated visual effects creating the futuristic environment the time-traveller occupies. It also includes tableaux and reconstructions. Additionally, its sound effects create a futuristic atmosphere, enhance the realism of the ideas conveyed and, specially, guide and immerse the audience in the built space. Since the

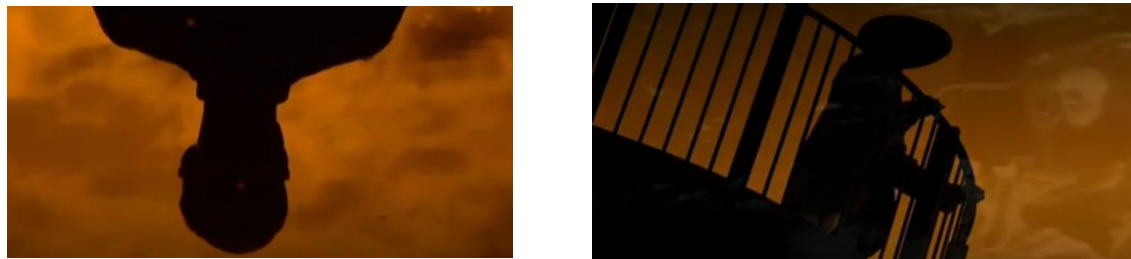
work is an example of Afrofuturism and, as such, a product of the imagination, sound is especially important to engage the viewer's attention and make them suspend their disbelief.

For Jean Fisher, the work continues the Afrofuturistic theme of *The Last Angel of History* while addressing questions of memory and remembrance through the interpretation of changes in hair across different temporalities (2007). Eshun aligns with Fisher's viewpoint and asserts that it also reflects the technophilic impulse of its time (2007). This work has not received as much attention as the former, probably because of its difficult access. For me, it continues the Afrofuturistic path inaugurated by *The Last Angel of History* while also indicating the direction that Black Audio follows with their upcoming productions through Smoking Dogs, the production company established by some of Black Audio's members after their dissolution, like *Digitopia* (1998c) and *Mnemosyne* (2010). The time-traveller resembles, Guy Montag, the fireman in *Fahrenheit 451* ([1953] 1999), who gathers information from the books he is supposed to be burning. *Memory Room 451*'s titles mirror the title of *Fahrenheit 451*, advancing the sci-fi connection to the book. 451 is the temperature at which paper burns and in *Memory Room 451*, 451 refers to the building where the inmates are locked and whose memories need to urgently be kept as was the case of books in *Fahrenheit 451*. In both films there is a connection between memory and dystopia.

Similar to the data thief in *The Last Angel of History*, if the time-traveller manages to assemble the memories of the past, there is a chance of becoming in the future. This idea resonates with Jacques Lacan's concept of the future anterior. As he articulated, "what is realised in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming" (1981, 63). Jürgen Straub investigated the future past, similar to Lacan's future anterior. For him, the past operates as a way of retaining and protecting the future (2010). As he wrote, "the ever-improving knowledge of the past should throw light upon the chances for future development. At the very least, it should guarantee a retrieval of lost possibilities" (2010, 217). The notion of retrieving lost possibilities and illuminating the future parallels the actions of the time-traveller in *Memory Room 451*. As Straub maintains, telling the past and history is the basis of the present and the future (2010). By assembling the fragments of the past, the time-traveller unveils the process of becoming of the Black Diaspora in the future. As *Memory Room 451* underlines, The Black Diaspora is needed in the future where "chemical warfare was destroying much of Earth's surface." They understand how the interaction with new realities can be waved as

their experience of migration and hybrid identities explain. Some of the hairstyles mentioned like the conk and the perm are examples of this interaction.

The film opens with a polarised orange filter framing a deserted lake, accompanied by the distorted sound of water. The figure of a man—the time-traveller—observes the lake surrounded by dead trees. The time-traveller moves “through time by turning into water and connecting to people through their dreams,” invigilating them. The narrator recalls encountering the time-traveller while daydreaming near the lake. Dreams and water symbolise mobility and fluidity in the narrative and birth, as I indicated in the previous section. Daydreaming serves as a chronotope. Different characters, prisoners of the memory rooms, intervene from diverse cells, enabling the time-traveller to assemble information by listening to their dreams. The time-traveller and the viewer observe the inmates nestled in a structure akin to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon (1791). The memory rooms are similar to Noah’s Ark. The prisoners, with no names, are archetypes, who are contained or saved by the time-traveller (akin to Noah) to guarantee the survival of the Black Diaspora obeying a bigger and unknown God who may be technology. Within the memory rooms the inmates—the zoot prisoner, the preacher, a mother, and a daughter—are “neither dead nor alive,” they are in a state of lucid dreaming and invigilated by the time-traveller.



**Figure 62. The Time-Traveller in *Memory Room 451***

For Linda Walsh, lucid dreaming is “a conscious engagement with the inner self [...] through the act of reverie, the imagination is freed from reality, and able to access intense and dynamic internal powers that activate memories and experiences” (2017, 63). This activation is crucial for the time-traveller who invades dreams. Walsh emphasises that lucid dreaming is “[c]entral to creative imagination” (2017, 62), an idea echoed by the narrator, who suggests that within the memory rooms, “we can read ambition.” Gaston Bachelard discusses poetic reveries, noting how these were written while [f]acing the great universe of the blank page” (1971,6). The reveries in *Memory Room 451* are visual. The work functions as a space of what I would call Afroneiric creation, denoting how an unbounded future and recalled past are envisioned through dreams that can be translated into moving images. Jacqueline Carroy

indicates that “[r]emembering dreams involves systematically identifying them—not only those that are recalled spontaneously, but also those that would be lost without giving oneself the specific task, not to forget.” (2019, 23). The time-traveller ensures the inmates recall their dreams, which are needed for the survival of the Black Diaspora.

Similar to patients under hypnosis remembering traumatic events, the inmates through their lucid dreams contribute to the reconstruction of the autobiographical memory of the Black Diaspora (White 2019), a process navigated and mediated by the time-traveller. This dynamic is highlighted by the prisoners’ interventions and the repetition of a tableau, where the time-traveller, portrayed with a big white brain and a green suit, moves through water simulating how he travels from the future to the past accessible in the memory rooms. The enormous brain represents the repository where he stores the retrieved memories. As the narrator maintains, the time-traveller, “channels surfing the souls of ordinary black folk picking out the secrets to keep.” Nevertheless, the time-traveller does not inhabit a post-panopticon space; he is not free either. He is a casual worker “doing shift work. Dangerous and badly paid” with time-travelling being “no different to wandering through an endless graveyard listening for the dead” for the sake of the future.



**Figure 63. The Time-Traveller Moving through Water in *Memory Room 451***

Homi Bhabha’s concept of double time elucidates the fear time-travellers have regarding the potential loss of black identities in the future since they have witnessed its consequences. Bhabha describes double time as a “[m]ythical view of the past used to imagine a great future” (1994, 144-145). The alternative temporalities the time-traveller navigates resist dominant ideologies and temporalities, showing the power of the imagination in addressing a crisis (Birth 2017, 72) such as the loss of black memory. The time-traveller, as Kevin Birth states, “links the future to the multiple temporalities in the present and the multiple chronotopes and narrative structures that unite the past, the present, and the future. The future is enriched by narrative, and narrative depends on referencing the past” (2017, 69).

In the memory rooms, the prisoners reminiscence about different black ideological positions manifested through their hairstyles. As Jasmine Nichole Cobb wrote, there are political, economic, and social circumstances behind hairstyling, underscoring its role as a cultural activity and practice, containing a historical perspective, and loaded with questions of identity (2022). It includes the DNA of the Black Diaspora. As Cobb highlights, “the way we shape and style hair may be seen as both individual expressions of the self and as embodiments of society’s norms, conventions, and expectations” (2022, 34).



**Figure 64. Some of the Prisoners in *Memory Room 451***

The Afro and dreadlocks mark a “[l]iberating rupture with the dominance of white bias” (Cobb 2022, 37) symbolising black supremacy since they are “counter-hegemonic hairstyles of resistance” (Cobb 2022, 87). In the sixties, natural hair was connected to radical black consciousness and activism (Cobb 2022). However, the forties’ conk and the eighties’ perm are “[p]roducts of New World stylisation. Refracting elements from both black and white cultures through this framework of exchange and appropriation, imitation and incorporation, such styles are characterised by the ambivalence of their ‘meaning’” (Cobb 2022, 45), which indicates the influences of black cultures in Anglo-European ones as it was the case of music in *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (chapter eight). However, black people wearing conks are taken by some inmates who embrace their blackness and reject Anglo-American influences as “run-aways,” since they escaped their roots. The various hairstyles and diverse perspectives on them underline how hairstyle encodes diverse political ideologies, reflecting multifaceted perspectives of black communities across time.

Among the inmates, the daughter aspired to having an Afro like the singers of The Three Degrees. Her mother discouraged her because, as a reconstruction of her mum playing at school reveals, her classmates considered her too African because of her Afro. As she claims, “that was before black is beautiful and even then, you could not be beautiful if you could not grow an Afro.” Her husband was disappointed their daughter did not have an Afro. As Bell hooks explains, hair “[a]ffirms contemporary notions of female body and desirability” (1992, 72). Their daughter tried to get an Afro, but her mum argued that there

was nothing wrong with her hair even if she never accepted her own. The lack of self-acceptance of the mother's hair derives from her husband not desiring her because of her hair. Seeing how this had troubled her daughter's upbringing, she empowered herself and left her husband. This narrative underscores the power of hair within black cultures. As Kobena Mercer contends, after the afro emerged as a symbol of Black pride and power, one's hairstyle was seen "as directly 'expressive' of one's political awareness" (1994, 102). The importance of this argument lies in the historical devaluation of hair "as the most visible stigma of blackness, second only to skin" (Mercer 1994, 101).

For Kobena Mercer, "by reiterating the sixties slogan—black is beautiful—it is implied that hairstyles which avoid artifice and look 'natural', such as the Afro or dreadlocks, are the more authentically black hairstyles and thus more ideologically 'right on'" (1994, 98). The preacher in *Memory Room* 451 wears his natural hair because he believes that they "came into the white world as slaves, the way I wear my hair right now is the way we wore our hair back then, natural, plane." Similarly, the preacher asserts that he has maintained his natural hair, resembling his grandfather's style as a slave, "the Lord touched the hair of our head and I keep it the way it was blessed [...] in Africa!"

The narrator clarifies the significance of hairstyles and why the inmates' perspectives seem to contradict each other, noting that "the plague attacked the bodied dead material: we lost your hair. Then, the plague attacked the central nervous system: we lost your memory. As the plague worsened, decoding dreams became problematic, and time-travellers were urged to "keep recording stories." The attack on hairstyles is equal to an attack on identity. As one of the inmates' claims, "I can be told what to do except with my hair." They have to fight the virus of amnesia. As the narrator reveals, "some of the dream riders contracted the amnesia virus"; they are lost in time "not knowing who they were or where they were. They were now collecting dreams for a world which had forgotten how to dream. Memories for a future plagued by amnesia."

The time-traveller has to develop a mnemonic strategy to enforce remembrance. He needs to counter the fixated amnesia in their memories and escape it by encoding multiple and palimpsestic memories which contemplate the different positions of the Black Diaspora (Eckstein 2006). In fact, following Lars Eckstein, the inmates are in a state of creative amnesia. This entails "[c]omplete forgetfulness—a condition oblivious to all historical, ethical or political discourses of memory" (2006, 163). The time-traveller is aware of the past and fights to retrieve the inmates' memories. For Eckstein creative amnesia can be countered



through creative writing (2006). In *Memory Room 451*, the inmates' amnesia is countered through creative filmmaking.

Another reason for the emphasis on hairstyle is the depoliticisation that occurred as the Afro and dreadlocks became assimilated into mainstream culture (Cobb 2022). However, *Memory Room 451* remembers its roots, displaying the influence of the Black Diaspora. As Dennis Walder wrote, memory exists in the present and struggles to "reclaim the past: this means that it constantly acts as a drain on the future, which cannot be imagined without reference to the past" (2011, 139). By acknowledging this dynamic, as the narrator argues, "in the future our stories will make us stars." In the past, the political contribution of the Black Diaspora implies the potential they have to shape the future if they can recollect their ancestral roots. The production does not confirm whether this is achieved in the future, explaining the work's nostalgic or rather, "futuralgic" aura, where there is a nostalgia for a potential leadership of the African diaspora in the future if the code of the past is cracked.

For Walder, a nostalgia for the future symbolises "a future in which the continent of Africa becomes the centre of the world, a place where new life may spring after the catastrophes anticipated in so much" (2010, 78). In this context, futuralgia represents a continuation of the Afrofuturist and Pan-African project, highlighting the important job of time-travellers. As Oona Frawley wrote, "nostalgia has a political impulse in the new world as the goal of mitigating otherness is placed front and centre" (2012, 7). The works I have explored, had introduced instances of black Britons overcoming nostalgia. As such, *Memory Room 451* indicates how black communities—because of their past experiences—have developed skills to confront and overcome the future's nostalgia.

Those in the memory rooms and the time-travellers have sacrificed their present for the sake of the future. As *Handsworth Songs* (chapter six) advanced, "in time, let them bear witness to the process by which the living transforms the dead into partners in struggle" (*Handsworth Songs* 1986). This time has arrived, as the narrator asserts in *Memory Room 451*: "we should have been afraid, but we were now ghosts dreaming for the pleasures of the unborn." The inmates' memories are the "guarded relics from the twilight world" of dreams. Their narratives are essential for the Black Diaspora and for anyone aspiring to inhabit the future. As depicted in *The Last Angel of History*, the Black Diaspora has experienced a dystopic reality in the present. As the narrator reflects, "I remember the day everything changed. News from the future. Chemical warfare was destroying much of the earth surface. They need our stories." Mercer elucidated that the Black Diaspora has gone through "[t]he

material and spiritual worlds, and journeys from the lost African past towards the uncertain future of the West” (2010, 45), which emphasises the importance of the time-traveller’s job.

The time-travellers serve as flash drives storing information about the past and acting as the bridge between diverse temporalities. As the time-traveller argues, “now our stories and memories were their salvation. In a land where dreaming was now a sacred art, we became gods.” *Memory Room 451* does not offer a resolution but its emphasis on remembrance and the past suggests a hopeful path for the future. The work illustrates the timeless unity of the Black Diaspora, indicating how “[t]here is always a connection between past events, the present, and the future” (Birth 2017, 112). The subsequent section delineates the connection of the past and present of the different members of the collectives after their dissolution together with further lines of research.

### 9.3. What Comes Next?

The chapter concludes with an overview of the paths taken by members of Ceddo, Black Audio, and Sankofa after their progressive dissolution in the nineties. Initially, there was “the sense of urgency to say it all” (Mercer and Julien 1996, 196). At the end of the century, there was a shift in concerns in their productions, with blackness sometimes placed allegorically in the background, highlighting post-race intersectional issues. This shift is exemplified by Black Audio’s last production, *The Call of Mist* (1998b), which centres on a post-human world dealing with the issues of cloning, death, and memory. In the mid-nineties, new members joined Sankofa, expanding the scope of the stories they portrayed. An illustration is British Chinese stories such as Raymond Yeung’s *Yellow Fever* (1998) and productions where blackness was allegorically placed but not the central issue such as Mina Courtauld’s *Dusty’s Story* or Tessa Sheridan’s *Is it the Design of the Wrapper?* (1997). An exception was Danny Thompsons’s *Fathers, Sons, and Unholy Ghosts* (1994) where the transgenerational trauma of a black British family is explored.

As I indicated in the first chapter, Black Audio and Sankofa dissolved in 1998, while Ceddo disbanded in 1994. Black Audio’s members John Akomfrah, Lina Gopaul and David Lawson established the production company Smoking Dogs (1998-present). Smoking Dogs’s productions expands and continue the work initiated by Black Audio. Additionally, John Akomfrah has been commissioned to represent Great Britain at the sixtieth Biennale in Venezia (2024). Reece Auguiste transitioned into academia and teaching. Edward George remained engaged in music, as the event *The Strangeness of Dub* (Barbican Centre 2021)

displaying the history and memory of black Britain through music shows. He collaborates with Smoking Dogs and other artists in exhibitions.



**Figure 65. Edward George in *The Strangeness of Dub* (Barbican Centre 2021), my Picture**

As for Sankofa, Sir Isaac Julien has received national and international recognition. His retrospective *What Freedom Is to Me?* (Tate 2023) is an example. After *Young Soul Rebels* (1991), he started producing independently and moved gradually to the gallery space. Martina (Judah) Attille has explored problems faced by black British women through articles and installations, such as *The Place is Here* (South London Gallery 2017). Maureen Blackwood has remained active in writing. Nadine Marsh-Edwards enjoyed commercial success as the producer of *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993). She founded Greenacre Films with Amanda Jenks and has produced titles such as *Been So Long* (2018). In 2020, she produced *Unsaid Stories* for ICT and collaborated in a biopic about Claudia Jones. Presently, she continues to produce commercially successful media focusing on blackness for streaming platforms such as Netflix or Amazon.



**Figure 66. *What Freedom is to Me?* (Tate Britain 2023), my Picture**

Following the dissolution of Ceddo in 1994, the collective attempted to incorporate their work into production courses for future generations at places such as Middlesex

University. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Active members included Menelik Shabazz (1954-2021), who established SunRa Pictures (2010-present). Some of the most relevant productions were *The Story of Lover's Rock* (2011), *Looking for Love* (2015), *Pharaohs Unveiled* (2019), *the Hand of Ken* (2020) and *The Path* (2020). Imruh Bakari Caesar served as the director of the Zanzibar International Film Festival and remains involved in media as a director, writer, professor at the University of Winchester and organising screenings and conversations in Britain around black British filmmaking. Glenn Ujebe Masokoane became director of cultural development at the department of Arts Culture in Johannesburg. Imruh Bakari noted that Valerie Thomas relocated to North America, where she has worked as a television producer and director (2024, n.p). Lazell Daley continued being a filmmaker and June Reid has actively been engaged in the black arts and culture sectors. Reid is a member of Nzinga Soundz, a sound system collective operating from the eighties to the present.



**Figure 67. Bakari in Conversation with LK Johnson (198 Contemporary Arts 2022), my Picture**

The continuous engagement of the past members of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa, whether collectively or individually, indicates how, as black British intellectuals and artists who produced in the eighties, there are still questions to be addressed about black British representation in cinema and how they are still eager to contribute to those conversations.

#### 9.4. Conclusion

The films in this chapter explore the futuristic side of the Black Diaspora, which involves a transcultural, transnational and transtemporal impulse. They demonstrate how the past narratives of black communities in different parts of the world, following the idea of the black Atlantic, have a connection that transcends boundaries and are linked by their stories of

displacement and rootlessness. Given these experiences, black communities are prepared to confront the uncertainties of a technological and posthuman dystopian future.

Black cultural products, as seen in musicians and writers, have a future orientation which mirrors past narratives embodied by members of the Black Diaspora and sci-fi events such as slavery. In both, *The Last Angel of History* and *Memory Room 451*, a time-traveller is in charge of connecting the fragmented memories within the Black Diaspora and highlight how music, literature and hairstyles encode the different subjective positions members of the Black Diaspora occupy in society.

I have demonstrated the presence of black British artists in the future by examining how the members of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa continue their engagement and commitment to black political issues. Through their productions and their involvement in the conversation, they demonstrate how they are still prominent thanks to how they opened the arena of representation of black British experiences in cinema. In the next section, I conclude this thesis by focusing on the specific objectives that I have achieved. I also emphasise the importance of my research in the wider context of black British cultural studies, postcolonial studies, memory studies and cinema studies, and further areas of research that could emanate from this thesis.



## CONCLUSIONS

Studying the productions of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa offers a detailed insight of what it meant to be black and British under Thatcherism, together with its cultural, political, and social implications. Through their creative works, not only did they demonstrate the creative expression of black cultures in Britain but also how their contributions illustrate black British experiences and narratives, which mainstream media and official history had neglected.

The collectives are the result of the opportunity presented by the eighties' institutional response to the riots of 1981 combined with their position as black Britons who, in the majority of the cases, had access to higher education. Their existence occurred in spite of and because of Thatcherism, which makes them important cultural activists countering Thatcher's vision through their counter-media and militant films. Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa were inheritors of different cultural backgrounds where there was a combination of Anglo-European traditions with others deriving from the Black Diaspora, specially Africa and the Caribbean. As such, their works reflect British experiences using their own lens and highlighting Britain's present tense in the eighties with a connection to the past and a view towards the future.

I have shown how their works are examples of black British experimental filmmaking, considering their innovations in form and content, proposing themes which previous filmmakers did not engage with, given the lack of access to filmmaking structures. By exploring Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa in dialogue with each other and not in opposition, as had traditionally been the case, it is possible to get a bigger picture of the black experiences and aesthetics in British cinema. The films of the workshops emphasise how there is not one authentic black subjectivity or a single genuine black aesthetic. Their productions follow global theories rooted in cultural memory studies where "cultural" refers to the objects they produced and the intersection between power and society with an emphasis on the collective and social. Memory underlines the various modes of remembering and time-frames they propose, as I have indicated in each analysis. These collectives gave visual form to several issues being debated in the evolving field of cultural studies at the time.

The return to the archive to excavate the past and reconstruct black British subjectivities away from stereotypes has been a running motif in this thesis. As such, the collectives have introduced characters with intersectional identities as well as representations

of black Britons previously unseen, such as gay black Britons, Rastafari women or disabled black Britons. The works have highlighted the importance of different memory frameworks such as familial, individual, or collective recollection in histories of migration, while always emphasising the social dimension of memory. The emphasis on collective and social memory is a theme in their works as members of the Black Diaspora with a colonial past.

Their productions went beyond and transcended Britain, engaging other parts of the world such as South Africa and recalling the influence of the civil rights struggles in the United States. They even surpassed the time-framework of the present by including the significance of Afrofuturism for black Britons. The hardships they experienced as black Britons prepared them for a post-humanist future. By doing so, they indicated how there was no going back for black Britons who had suffered the consequences of oppression, but they could only move forward. This underscores how there is not a victimisation of suffering in any of the works explored.

In light of this, this research has achieved its main objectives: to explore at length the films of the three collectives and to rescue, in the process, Ceddo's legacy in discussions about the black British workshops of the eighties. In doing so, and through extensive archival research, I have created a work where the scattered information on Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa and their films is unified.

Considering these three collectives and the archival work behind their excavation provides a framework for the study of further collectives which remain understudied and would provide equally important insights into (black) British experiences and art. Examples are the several groups which were founded by the GLC at the same time or the numerous film and workshops which were born throughout the UK at the same time, and which were not part of this research, even if I had taken notice of them. This thesis prompts consideration of other black British collectives, whether in cinema, photography, painting, or music, that existed outside of a London-centric perspective. Studying these collectives and contributions will offer a broader knowledge of the foundational elements of the present and how they expand the understanding of multifaceted black British experiences. These potential areas of research would illustrate the multiple spaces of intervention of the Black Diaspora, spanning diverse temporal and conceptual frameworks that are still pertinent and available for future examination and would underscore the (artistic) legacies of black Britons.

Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa's output has implications for future research agendas. As outlined in chapter one, the recent resurgence of these works underlines their significance still today. For Imruh Bakari, this revival results from three factors: the growing



importance of archives, the realisation of how much has been overlooked, and the curiosity of young filmmakers and audiences to discover the connections between past works and their present interests. Through their rediscovery, the crisis in knowledge in black cultures can be addressed, guiding generations towards a more promising future (2024, n.p). Continuing the exploration of these films, together with those produced by members of these collectives after the workshops disappeared, would further considerably our knowledge of black British experimental cinema. In fact, some of their productions display ideas already disseminated in the workshops. Comparing the post-workshop and the workshops films could reveal their artistic and thematic transformation or continuations through similar or different mediums such as the gallery context.

Another proposal would be exploring film collectives and filmmakers who were indebted to Black Audio, Ceddo, and Sankofa for their ground-breaking contributions to black British cinema. For example, The Otolith group (2020), which includes Kodwo Eshun, who collaborated with Black Audio in *The Last Angel of History* as researcher and who has written about the collective. Another, better known, instance is contemporary filmmaker Steve McQueen famous for *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and the BBC miniseries *Small Axe* (2020), narrating several episodes in recent black British history.

Investigating the present situation and output of black British filmmakers using Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa as a reference would prove whether their continued presence in contemporary contexts validates the necessity Black Audio advocated for in their Ethnic Art Sub-Committee application: “[t]here is a need for a workplace where black people already working in cinema can try and launch projects and workshops which would be of crucial interest and relevance for other black people who have not found themselves in so fortunate a position” (1984, n.p). This would facilitate an analysis of the current landscape of black British cinema and confirms the importance of this thesis underlying motivation. considering the importance of the past in shaping present and future trajectories.

A further area of research which could derive from the investigation of these collectives is the study of audiences’ responses. Throughout this research, I have emphasised the role audiences played in the reception of the works, but this has not been my focus. Future research could consider the memories of people who may have watched these works as they aired on television and compare their interpretation of the films then and now. Additionally, exploring how different generations interpret these works in the present would also contribute to both the circulation of these works and to revealing important information about generational differences and experiences. Moreover, trying to collaborate with the

collectives and including the productions of Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa in exhibitions and curricula in diverse parts of the world would also be of interest. Their output contains a wealth of ideas that can contribute to the advancement of several disciplines in higher education.

In short, this thesis stresses the importance of the past, memory and culture and identity formation through the British film and video workshops Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa. Their works challenged distorted misconceptions of black British subjectivities and Black British film aesthetics. This thesis praises and commemorates their output as well as their ongoing commitment to black British art and culture, which their work decisively shaped. Their legacy remains, and as the off-voice of *Handsworth Songs* announced, “the living [Ceddo, Black Audio and Sankofa] transforms the dead [previous generations of black Britons] in partners in struggle [the future]” (1986).



## REFERENCES<sup>109</sup>

- Adewale, Ebine Simon. "The Roles of Griots in African Oral Tradition among the Manding." *International Journal of Research Development* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1-10.
- ACTT. ACTT Workshop Declaration. London: Four Corners, 1984. <https://www.fourcornersarchive.org/archive/view/0002692>. Accessed 29 December, 2023.
- Ahmed, Sarah. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Aikens, Nick. "Introduction." In *The Long 1980s: Constellations of Art, Politics, and Identity*, edited by Nick Aikens, Teresa Grandes, Nav Haq, Beatriz Herráez and Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, 1-15. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2018.
- Akomfrah, John. "Black Independent Film-Making: A Statement by the Black Audio Film Collective." *Artrage: Intercultural Arts Magazine*, no. ¾ (1983): 29
- . "Sneaking Ghosts through the Back Door." *Black Film Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1993): 3.
- . "Colour Symbolism in Ghanaian Society." In *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 170-175. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007a.
- . "On Writing Who Needs a Heart?" In *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 181-182. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007b.
- Akomfrah, John and Kodwo Eshun. "An Absence of Ruins." In *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 130-139. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- Akomfrah, John and Kodwo Eshun. "The Seccessionist Manifestos of Certain Received Wisdoms." In *We Travel the Space Ways: Black Imaginations, Fragments, and Diffractions*, edited by Henriette Gunkel and Kara Lynch, 363-370. North Dakota: Transcript Publishing, 2019.
- Akomfrah, John and Pervaiz Khan. "Black and White. Michael X, the Enigmatic Black Figure of the 60s, is at the Centre of Who Needs a Heart? John Akomfrah's New Film. The Director Talks to Pervaiz Khan." *Sight and Sound* (1992):30-33
- Akomfrah, John and Tim Adams. "Another Layer of Pigment Needed Adding to the Canvas: Artist John Akomfrah on Changing the Narrative, from Windrush to Colonialism." *The Guardian*, April 7, 2024.

<sup>109</sup> If a reference is incomplete, it is because the full information was not available at the archive where it is held.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2024/apr/07/artist-john-akomfrah-venice-biennale-listening-all-night-to-the-rain-interview>.

- Alkalimat, Abdul. "The Sankofa Principle from the Drum to the Digital." In *The Digital Black Atlantic*, edited by Kelly Baker Josephs and Roopika Risam, 3-18. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press., 2021.
- Alphen, Erns Van. "Visual Archives as Preposterous History." *Art History* 30, no 3 (2007): 364-382, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2007.00550>.
- Alter, Nora. *The Essay Film after Fact and Fiction*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster. London: Verso, 1984.
- Altman, Rick. "General Introduction: Cinema as Event" In *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, edited by Rick Altman, 1-14. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Andersen, Wayne. "Mieke Bal's preposterous art history." *The European Legacy* 6 (2001): 353-362, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770120051358>
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Andreoni, Maura. "Vultures: exegesis of a symbol." *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 3, no. 4 (2014): 5-9.
- Anonymous caller. "Handsworth Songs." London: Channel 4, 1987.
- Anwar, Farrah. "Twilight City." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 56, no. 671 (1989): 375-6
- Appouh, Michael. "Film Features Communities in Time: Jazz on Film." *London Jazz Festival*, 2018.
- Araeen, Rasheed. "Paint it Black." *City Limits* (1982): 46-47.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York City, NY: Meridian Books, 1962.
- Arnold-de Simine, Silke. *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2013.
- Arts and Recreation Committee. "Sankofa." London: GLC, 1984.
- Assmann, Aleida. "Canon and Archive". In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 97-108. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.

- Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- . *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 123-133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.
- Attille, Martina. "Black Women and Representation." *Undercut* 14-15 (1985): 60.
- . "The Passion of Remembrance: Background." In *Black Film, British Cinema*. edited by Kobena Mercer, 53-54. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- Attille, Martina, Reece Auguiste, Peter Gidal, Isaac Julien and Mandy Merch. "Aesthetics and Politics working on two fronts?" In *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*, edited by Nina Danino and Michael Maizière. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1971.
- Bacque, Antoine de and Thierry Jousse "Cinema and Its Ghosts: an Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Discourse* 37, no. ½ (Winter/Spring 2015): 22-39.
- Bailey, David A., and Allison Thompson (eds). *Liberation Begins in the Imagination*. London: Tate Enterprises, 2021.
- Bakari, Imruh. "Culture of Resistance: Reflecting a True Image." *Black Film Review* (1986): 14-15.
- . Letter to Alan Fountain. "Screen Writers Development Programme." February 4, 1993.
- . "An eye for the Angry Eighties, Elmina Davis." *The Guardian*, January 17, 1995: n.p.
- . *Without Passport or Apology*. Grewelthorpe: Smokestack Books, 2017.
- . "Introduction." In *Per-Ankh: The June Givanni PanAfrican Archive*, edited by June Givanni and Awa Konaté, 3-4. London: Raven Row, 2023.
- . Interview by Maria Piqueras-Pérez. February 14, 2024. Unpublished.
- Bakari, Imruh and Linton Kwesi Johnson. "Chronicles of a Black Filmmaker. In Conversation with Linton Kewsi Johnson." London: 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning, 26 October 2022.
- Bakker, Nienke, and Christopher Riopelle. "The Sunflowers in Perspective". In *Van Gogh's Sunflower Illuminated: Art Meets Science*, edited by Marije Vallekoop. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019

- Bal, Mieke. *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Balgun, Bin. "The Passion of Remembrance". *The Journal*, September 27, 1989: 29.
- Banks, Ingrid. *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and Black Women's Consciousness*. New York City, NYU: NYU Press, 2000.
- Banks, Mark, and Jason Toynbee, "Race, Consecration and the 'Music Outside'? The Making of the British Jazz Avant-Garde 1968-1973." In *Black British Jazz: Routes, Ownership and Performance*, edited by Jason Toynbee, Catherine Tackley and Mark Doffman. 91-110 London: Routledge, 2014
- Barthes, Roland. *Empire of Signs*. Translated by Richard Howard. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 1970.
- . *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York City: Hill and Wang, 1982.
- Belchem, John. *Before Windrush: Race Relations in 20th Century Liverpool*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.
- Bell, Duncan. "Mythscape: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity". *British Journal of Sociology* 20 (2003). 353-68
- Benjamin, Walter. [1939] "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn, 155-200. New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1968a.
- . [1942] "Thesis on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, 253-264. New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1968b.
- Benjamin, Richard and David Fleming, *Transatlantic Slavery: An Introduction*. National Museums Liverpool Press: Liverpool, 2010.
- Bennett-Coverley, Louis. "Colonisation in Reverse" (1966).
- Bentham, Jeremy. *Panopticon; Or, The Inspection House*. London: T Payn, 1791.
- Bergson, Phillip. "Black Experience: The Passion of Remembrance." *What's On*, December 4, 1987: 6
- . "The Passion of Remembrance." *What's On London*, January 15, 1987: 20.
- Bennett, Lorna. "The Flame of the Soul: We Welcome Ceddo's initiative" *Spare Rib*, no. 215(1990): 58.
- Bethlehem, Louise. "Restless Itineraries: Apartheid Expressive Culture and Transnational Historiography." *Social Text* 3, no. 135 (2018): 47-69.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-6917766>

- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . “The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism.” In *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, edited by Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 163-172. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Bhabha, Homi; Forrester, John; Gregory, Richard L.; Lingwood, James; Byatt, A.s.; Rawlence, Chris; Rose, Jaqueline; Edelman, Bernard; Castoriadis, Cornelius; Hall, Stuart; Eagleton, Terry; Cousins, Mark. *Identity: The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987.
- Bidnall, Amanda. *The West Indian Generation: Remaking British Culture in London, 1945-1965*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017.
- Biko, Steve. *The Testimony of Steve Biko*. Isleworth: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1978.
- Binard, Florence. “The British Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1970s: Redefining the Personal and the Political.” *French Journal of British Studies* XXII (2017): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1688>
- Birdsall, Carolyn. “Sound Bites! Dissonant Audiovisuons as Historiophony in Hitler’s Hit Paradise”. In *Sonic Mediations: Body, Sound, Technology*, edited by Carolyn Birdsall and Anthony Enns, 259-274. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.
- Birth, Kevin. *Time Blind: Problems in Perceiving Other Temporalities*. New York City, NY: Springer Link, 2017.
- Black Audio Film Collective, GLC Ethnic Art Sub-Committee Application. London: GLC 1984.
- . *GLC Ethnic Minorities’ Committee*. London: GLC 1986.
- . “Twilight City.” *Black Audio Film Collective’s Profile*. London: Channel 4, 1989.
- Blackwood, Maureen. “Home away from Home.” *Black Film Bulletin* 1, no. 3-4 (1993): 26.
- Blunt, Alison. “Collective Memory and Productive Nostalgia: Anglo-Indian Homemaking at McCluskieganj.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21 (2003): 717-738
- Bode, Steven. “Territories”. *New Musical Express*, (1987): 5.
- Bogle, Donald. *Tooms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1997.
- Bolter, David J., and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understating New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.



- Bond, Lucy, and Jessica Rapson. "Introduction." In *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders*, edited by Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, 1-28. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Bond, Lucy, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen. "Introduction: Memory on the Move." In *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, 1-28. Oxford, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017.
- Bourland, Ian. "John Akomfrah: Multichannel Prehension." *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Representations* 45, no. 1 (2019): 128-136.
- Bourne, Stephen. "Testament." *Variety*, May 25, 1989:50.
- Bourne, Stephen. [1998] *Black In the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York City, NY: Basic Books, 2001
- Bradbury, Jill. "Narrative possibilities of the past for the future: Nostalgia and Hope." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3(2012): 341–350.
- Bradbury, Ray. [1953] *Fahrenheit 451*. New York City, NY: Harper Voyager, 1999.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identity*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Broderick, Mick and Antonio Traverso. *Trauma, Media, Art: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
- Brown, Geuff. "The Passion of Remembrance". *Times*, December 5, 1986: 14.
- Brunow, Dagmar. *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2015.
- Buelens, Gert, Samuel Durrant and Robert Eagelston. *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Bull, Anna, and Hans Hansen. "On Agonistic Memory." *Politics, Languages & International Studies* 9, no. 4 (2015): 390-404.
- Burnham, Douglas, and Martin Jesinghausen. *Nietzsche's the Birth of Tragedy: A Reader*. London: Continuum, 2010.
- Butler, Toby. "'Memoryscape': Integrating Oral History, Memory and Landscape on the River Thames." In *People and their Pasts*, edited by Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean, 223-239. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.
- Buttram, Joe B. "The Blues: Roots of a Musical Legacy." *Soundings* 6, no. 2 (1993): 5-10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/104837139300600203>.

- Cammock, Helen. "The Edge is Never Still." *London Underground Art*, 2021.
- Carby, Hazel V. "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 61-86. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Carles, Phillippe, and Jean-Louis Comolli. *Free Jazz/ Black Power. Mississippi*, MN: University of Mississippi Press, 2015
- Carrier, Peter and Kabalek Kobi. "Cultural Memory and Transcultural Memory—A Conceptual Analysis." In *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders*, edited by Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, 39-60. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Carrington, Patricia. "Dreaming Rivers" *Spare Rib* (1989): 31.
- Carroy, Jacqueline. "A History of Dreams and the Science of Dreams: Historiographical Questions." In *Histories of Dreams and Dreaming: AN Interdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Giorgia Morgese, Giovanni Pietro Lombardo and Hendrika Vande Kemp, 17-32. New York City, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2019.
- Ceddo. *Ceddo's Films Profile*. London: Channel 4, 1986.
- . "The People's Account." *Ceddo's Profile*. London: Channel 4, 1987
- . "Omega Rising." *Ceddo's Profile*. London: Channel 4: 1988a.
- [1987]. "Open Letter to Mr Glencross." In *Storms of the Heart: An Anthology of Black Arts & Culture*, edited by Owusu Kwesi, 95-99. London: Camden Press, 1988b.
- Certau, Michael de. *Heterologies Discourse on the Other*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Chambers, Eddie. "Donald Rodney". *Art Monthly Archive*, no. 200 (1996): 69-70.
- . *World is Africa: Writings on Diaspora Art*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021.
- Chambers, Ian. *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*. London: Routledge, 1986.
- Charity, Tom. "Twilight City." *Time Out* 1000 (1989): 36.
- Cheah, Pheng. *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Chevannes, Barry. "Rastafari: Towards a New Approach." *New West Indian Guide* 64, no. 3/4 (1990): 127-148. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027221>.
- Christensen, Jeanne. *Rastafari Reasoning and the Rasta Woman: Gender Constructions in the Shaping of Rastafari Livivity*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014.
- Christian, Mark. "Empowerment and Black Communities in the UK: With Special Reference to Liverpool." *Community Development Journal* 33, no. 1 (1998): 18-31.

- City Limits. "The People's Account." *City Limits*, April 23-30, 1987: 3-4.
- Clark, Anna, and Carla L. Peck. "Introduction: Historical Consciousness: Theory and Practice". In *Contemplating Historical Consciousness: Notes from the Field*, edited by Anna Clark and Carla Peck, 1-16. Berlin: Berghahn Books, 2019.
- Clark, Ashley. "Soundings: Ashley Clark on the work of Trevor Mathison, from the Black Audio Film Collective." *Sight and Sound* 24, no. 6 (2015): 52-53.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Transition in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Close, Rebecca. "Videos for Post-truth Times: Revisiting AIDS." *Artasiapacific*, no. 105 (2017): 65-66.
- Cobb, Jasmine Nichole. *New Growth: The Art and Texture of Black Hair (The Visual Arts of Africa and its Diasporas)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022.
- Cole, Anna. "The History that Has Made You. Ego-historie, Autobiography and Postcolonial History." *Life Writing* 16, no. 4 (2019): 527-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2019.1633249>.
- Cohen, Stanley. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. London: Routledge, 1972.
- Conley, Katherine. "The Myth of 'Demier poème': Robert Desnos and Frech Cultural Memroy." In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, 134-147: Hannover, NH: Dartmouth College Pres, 1999.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: CUP, 1989.
- Cooper, David (ed.). *The Dialectics of Liberation: Stokely Carmichael, David Cooper, R.D Laing, Herbert Marcuse*. London: Verso, 2015.
- Cooper, Scott. "Conference Report Third Cinema. 40th Edinburgh International Film Festival." *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 11 (1989): 109-112.
- Corner, John. *The Art of Record: A Critical Introduction to Documentary*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.
- Costello, Ray. *Liverpool Black Pioneers*. Liverpool: The Bluecoat Press, 2007.
- Craps, Stef. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Crossgrove, Stuart. *Young Soul Rebels*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2016.
- Crownshaw, Richard. *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

- Cubitt, Sean. "Catching the History of the Media Arts." *Leonardo* 40, no. 5: 460-462.  
<https://doi.org/10.1162/leon.2007.40.5.460>.
- Curtis, David. "*Expeditions I and Expeditions II*". *London Film Festival Pamphlet*. London: London Film Festival, 1984.
- . *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*. London: British Film Institute, 2007.
- Dalamba, Lindelwa. "The Blue Notes: South African Jazz and the Limits of Avant-garde Solidarities in late 1960s." *Safundi* 20, no. 2 (2019): 213-238.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2019.1576955>
- Darvell, Michael. "Time and Judgement". *What's on London* (1989):66
- Das, Jareh. "Illness as Metaphor: Donald Rodney's X-Ray Photographs." *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 45 (2019): 88-98.
- Debuysere, Stoffel. "Between the Fire and the Voice: a Conversation with John Akomfrah." *Sabzian*, September 19, 2013, <https://www.sabzian.be/index.php/text/between-the-fire-and-the-voice>. Accessed September 18, 2023.
- . "Signs of Struggle, Songs of Sorrow: Notes on the Politics of Uncertainty in the Films of John Akomfrah." *Black Camera* 6, no. 2 (2015): 61-78.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/blackcamera.6.2.61>.
- . *Figures of Dissent: Cinema Politics/Politics of Cinema*. New York City, NY: MER.Paper Kunsthalle, 2016.
- Defina, Robert and Lance Hannon. "Diversity, Racial Threat and Metropolitan Housing Segregation." *Social Forces* 88, no. 1 (2009): 373-394.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0234>
- De Groof, Matthias and Stéphane Symons. "Close-up with John Akomfrah and the Black Audio Film Collective. The Muses of the Black Audio Film Collective and Smoking Dogs." *Black Camera* 6, no. 2 (2015): 52-57.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema II: Time. Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- . *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Susan Hanson. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. "An Introduction." In *The Derrick Bell Reader*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. New York City, NY: NYU, 2005. [Ebook]

- Demir, Doğaç and Şefik Görkey. "Van Gogh and the Obsession of Yellow: Style or side effect." In *Eye Magazine* 33 (2019): 165-166.
- Demos, T. J. "From the Postcolonial to the Posthumanist: Moving Image Practice in Britain and Beyond." In *Artists' Moving Image in Britain since 1989*, edited by Erika Balsom, Lucy Reynolds, and Sarah Perks, 31-50. London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2019.
- Denning, Michael. *The End of Mass Culture. International Labour and Working-Class History*, no. 37 (1990): 4-18.
- Dennis, Ferdinand. "Testament." *Independent*, August 31, 1989: 13.
- Denton, Nadia. "The BFM Empire: A Showcase of Black World Cinema." *Sight and Sound* 32, no. 2 (2022): 30.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1967.
- . [1993] *Spectres of Marx: The state of the Debt, The Works of Mourning and the New International*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Dery, Mark. "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose." In *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, edited by Mark Dery, 179-222. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Diawara, Manthia. "The Nature of Mother in Dreaming Rivers" in *Third Text* 13 (1991): 73-84.
- . "Power and Territory: The Emergence of Black British Film Collectives." In *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, edited by Lester Friedman, 147-160. London: UCL Press, 1993.
- . "Black British Cinema: Spectatorship and Identity Formation in Territories." In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 293-305. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Diawara, Manthia and Sonia Boyce. "The Art of Identity." In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 306-313. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Dickinson, Margaret. *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-1990*. London: BFI, 1999.
- Dignam, Virginia. "The Passion of Remembrance." *The Morning Star*, November 18, 1986: 8
- Dixon, Wheeler Winston. *The Transparency of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image*. Albany, NY: New York University Press, 1998.

- Dor, Goerge Worlasi Kwasi. *West African Drumming and Dance in North American Universities: An Ethnomusicological Perspective*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014.
- Doy, Gen. *Black Visual Cutlure: Modernity and Postmodernity*. London: I.B Tauris. 2020.
- Drozdzewski, Danielle, Emma Waterton, and Shanti Sumartoj. "Cultural Mememory and Identity in the Context of War: Experiential Place-based and Political Concerns." In *International Review of the Red Cross: Memory and War*, edited by Vincent Bernard. 251-272. Geneva: International Review of the Ress Cross, 2019.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. [1903] *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007
- Dunning, Eric. *Sport Matters: Sociological Studies of Sport, Violence, and Civilisation*. London: Routledge, 1999
- Dyer, Richard. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- . *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Dyson, Henderson. "Songs of Death." *The Voice*, December 13, 1986: 6.
- Eckstein, Lars. *Re-membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
- Edmonds, Ennis. *Rastafari: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP 2012
- Eisenstein, Sergei. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. New York City, NY: Brance & World, 1949.
- Elam, Harry Jr. "Change Clothes and Go: A Proscript to Postblackness." In *Black Cultural Traffic. Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, edited by Harry Jr Elam and Jackson Kennell, 346-362. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Elley, Dereck. "Who Needs a Heart." *Variety*, November 18, 1991: 41
- Elliot, Paul. "The Third Avant-Garde: Black Audio Film Collective and Latin America." In *British Art Cinema: Creativity, Experimentation, and Innovation*, edited by Paul Newland and Brian Hoyle, 173-181. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Myth as the Phantasmagonia of History." *New German Critique*, no 24/25 (1981): 108-154.
- . "Images for Sale: The 'New' British Cinema." In *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, edited by Lester Friedman, 52-69. London: UCL, 1993.
- . *European Cinema and Continental Philosophy: Film as Thought Experiment*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

- Erll, Astrid. "An Introduction". In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 1-18. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2008.
- . "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no 3, (2011a): 303-318
- . "Travelling Memory." *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011b): 4-18.
- . *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013.
- Erll, Astrid and Ann Rigney "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its dynamics." In *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, 1-14. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2009.
- Eshun, Kodwo. *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*. London: Quiet Books Limited, 1998.
- . "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no.2 (2003): 287-302.
- . "Untimely Mediations: Reflections on the Black Audio Film Collective." *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 19 (2004): 38-45.
- . "The Condition of Opacity in Black Audio Film Collective's Who Needs a Heart?" In *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.*, edited by Angelika Nouert and Irit Rogoff, 198-207. Berlin: Revolver, 2006.
- . "Drawing the Forms of Things Unknown." *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 74-105. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- Eshun, Kodwo and Anjalika Sagar (eds). *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007a.
- . "Preface." In *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 12-15. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007b.
- . "Selected Filmography." *Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 216-227. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007c.
- Enwezor, Okwui. "Coalition Building: Black Audio Film Collective and Transnational Postcolonialism." In *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film*

- Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 106-123. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee. "Sankofa." London: GLC, 1986.
- Ezra, Elizabeth. *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- FC, "Home Away From Home Caller." London: Channel 4, 1993.
- Fan, Dennis. "No Idea What the Future Holds: The Retrospective Evidence Dilemma." *Columbia Law Review* 114, no 6 (2014): 1503-1547.
- Fanon, Frantz. [1952] *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York City, NY: Grove Press, 2008.
- . [1961]. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. London: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Fedorowich, Kent. "The British Empire on the Move: 1760-1914." In *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, edited by Sarah Stockwell, 63-100. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012.
- Fisher, Jean. "in Living Memory... Archive and Testimony in the Films of the Black Audio Film Collective" in *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 16-30. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- . "Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance". In *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers*, edited by Kobena Mercer. 190-212. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008
- Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. *Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora: Decolonising the Gaze, Locating Subjectivity*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- Foucault, Michael. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. London: Vintage Books, 1977.
- Fountain, Alain. Letter to Ceddo. "Street Warriors." June 23, 1986.
- . "Channel 4 and Black Independents." In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 42-43. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- Fowler, William. "The Occult Roots of MTV: British Music Video and Underground Film-Making in the 1920s." *Music Sound and the Moving Image* 11, no. 1 (2017): 63-77. [10.3828/msmi.2017.4](https://doi.org/10.3828/msmi.2017.4).



- Frank, Chandra. "On Dreaming Rivers: The Possibilities of Becoming". *The Place is Here. The Work of Black Artists in 1980s Britain*, edited by Nick Aikens and Elizabeth Robles, 8-13. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019.
- Fraser, Gerald. "Dreaming Rivers: New British Films made". *New York Times* (1988): 54.
- Frawley, Oona. *Memory Ireland: Diaspora and Memory Practices*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012
- Frazier, Leslie Jo. "Subverted memories: countermourning as political action in chile." In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, edited by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, 105-119. Hannover: NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1999
- Freud, Sigmund. [1924] "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 17*. Translated by James Strachey, 256-268. London: The Hogarth Press, 1925.
- . [1893] "Bauer J. Fräulein Anna O." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 2*. Translated by James Strachey, 256-268. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955a
- . [1889] "Screen Memories". In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud 2*. Translated by James Strachey, 299-322. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955b
- Freud Museum London. "Gradiva: The Cure Through Love," London: Freud Museum, <https://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/gradiva/>. Accessed 24 October, 2023.
- Friedman, Lester. "The Empire Strikes Out: An American Perspective on the British Film Industry" in *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, edited by Lester Friedman, 1-14. London: UCL Press, 1993.
- French, Philip. "Testament." *The Observer*, September 3, 1989: 43
- Frost, Diane. "Ambiguous Identities Constructing and Deconstructing Black and White 'Scouse' Identities in Twentieth Century Liverpool." In *Northern Identities; Historical Interpretations of 'The North' and 'Northernness,'* edited by Kirck Neville, 195-219. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.
- Fulani, Ifeona. "Celluloid Documents: Migrant Women in Black Audio Film Collective's Handsworth Songs and Twilight City, and Sankofa Film and Video Collective's Dreaming Rivers". *Atlantic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 1-15.
- Fusco, Coco. *Young, British, and Black: The Works of Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective*. Buffalo, NY: Hallwalls/Contemporary Arts Centre, 1988.

- Fusco, Coco, and Martina Attille. "Young Black British and Black: The Sankofa Film and Video Collective. Martina Attille interview with Coco Fusco." *Black Film Review* 3, no. 1 (1986-7): 12-13.
- Gallone, Annamaria, "Home Away from Home." *Écrans d'Afrique* 12, no. 7 (1994): 23.
- Gaskins, Nettrice R. *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.
- George, Edward. "Last Angel of History." *Third Text* 35, no. 2 (2021): 205-226.
- George Padmore Institute. "Coroner's Cross-Examination. Apr 1981." In *New Cross Massacre Campaign*. <https://catalogue.georgepadmoreinstitute.org/records/NCM/2/2>. Accessed 12 January, 2024.
- Gessesse, Naomi. "Dreaming a Black Scottish Archive" in *Dowser: Notes on Artists' Moving Image in Scotland*, edited by Marcus Jack. Glasgow: Transit Arts, 2022.
- Gibson-Hudson, Gloria J. "The Ties That Bind: Cinematic Representations by Black Women Filmmakers". In *Black Woman Film and Video Artists*, edited by Jacqueline Bobo, 43-66. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Gilbert, Edmund W. "The Growth of Brighton". In *The Geographical Journal* 114, no. 1/3 (1949): 30-52.
- Gilroy, Paul. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Routledge, 1987.
- . "The End of Anti-Racism." *New Community* 17, no. 1 (1990): 71-83.
- . "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a 'Changing' Same." *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 11-136.
- . *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1993a.
- . *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993b.
- . *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York City, NY : Columbia University Press, 2004
- . "Re-introduction to Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective and Art of Darkness: Black Art and the Problem of Belonging to England." In *Liberation Begins in the Imagination*, edited by David .A Bailey and Allison Thompson, 34-37. London: Tate Enterprises, 2021.
- Gilroy, Paul, and Jim Pines. "Handsworth Songs: Audiences/Aesthetics/independence. Interview with the Black Audio Film Collective. " *Framework*, no. 35 (1988): 9-17.
- Gipson, Grace. "Creating and Imagining Black Futures through Afrofuturism." In *#identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation*, edited by Abigail De Kosnik and Keith P. Feldman, 84-103, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvndv9md.9>

- Givanni, June. *Black and Asian Film & Video List*. London: BFI, 1988.
- . “In Circulation: Black Films in Britain.” In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 39-41. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- . “Perfect Image?” In *Monthly Film Bulletin* 59, no. 669 (1989a): 316-317.
- . “Tell it Like it is...” London: Brixton Village Film Club, 1989b
- Glaessner, Verina. “The Passion of Remembrance.” *Monthly Film Bulletin* 53, n. 635 (1986): 362-363.
- Glissant, Édouard. [1990]. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Gonzalez-Ruibal, Alfredo. “Returning to where we Have never Been: Excavating the Ruins of Modernity.” In *Ruin Memories: Materiality, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past*, edited by Olsen Bjørnar and Þóra Pétursdótt, 367-389. London: Routledge, 2014
- Gopaul, Lina, Enahoro Carole, Gillian Swanson and Frank Abbott. “Questions of Language” *Undercut* 17 (1998): 11-18.
- Griffiths, Peter. “If You Want a Nigger as your Neighbour, Vote Labour.” Conservative Party Campaign, 1964.
- Guibernau, Montserrat. *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Polity Books, 1996.
- Gurvitch, Georges. *The Spectrum of Social Time*. Netherlands: Springer Dordrech, 1964.
- Hall, Stuart “Racism and Reaction.” In *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*, edited by Commission for Racial Equality, 23-35. London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1978.
- . “The Great Moving Right Show.” *Marxism Today* (1979a): 14-20.
- . “Songs of Handsworth Praise.” *The Guardian*, 15 January 1987: 12.
- . “New Ethnicities.” In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 27-30. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- . “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.
- . “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities.” In *Culture, Globalisation and World System*, edited by Anthony D. King, 41-68. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- . “What is the Black in Black Popular Culture.” *Social Justice* 20, no. ½ (Spring-Summer 1993): 104-114.

- . “The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media.” In *Gender, Race and Calss in Media*, edited by Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, 89-97. London: Sage, 1995.
- . “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation.” In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 210-222. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996a
- . “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?” In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 1-17. London: Sage Publications, 1996b.
- . “Minimal Selves.” In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 163-172. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996c.
- . “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance.” In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 16-60. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996c.
- . *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications, 1997.
- . “From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence.” *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999): 187–97.
- . “Constituting an Archive.” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 89-92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820108576903>.
- . “Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three ‘Moments’ in Post-War History.” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 61 (2006): 1-24.
- Hall, Stuart, Lynne Segal, and Peter Osborne, “Stuart Hall: Culture and Power” *Radical Philosophy* 86, (1997): 24–41.
- Hall, Stuart, and Les Black. “In Conversation: at Home and not at Home.” *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 658-687. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380902950963>
- Hall, Stuart, and David A. Bailey. [2009]. “Black Diaspora Visual Arts Symposium: A Conversation about Three Moments.” In *Liberation Begins in the Imagination*, edited by D.A Bailey and A. Thompson, 64-77. London: Tate Enterprises, 2021.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. [1925] *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Hambling, Maggi. *Portrait of Charlie Abrew*. 141x113,6. The Hempworth Gallery, West
- Hamner, Gail. *Imagining Religion in Film: The Politics of Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave McMillan, 2011.

- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review*, no. 80 (1985): 65-108.
- Harris, Thomas. "Testament." *Village Voice*, November 19, 1991: 66.
- Harris, Toby. "Letter to Dorman Long Leader of London Borough of Brent," 1988.
- Harrison, Juliette. *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire: Cultural Memory and Imagination*. Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2013.
- Harrison, Mark. "Row Over Tv Riot Film." *The Voice*, April 22, 1987: 5
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.
- . *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Harvey, James. *John Akomfrah*. London: BFI Publishing, 2023.
- Hasan, Fatima. "Film: Testament." *The Voice*, August 29, 1989: 34.
- Headon, Jane. "Testament." *City Limits*, no. 413: 20
- Hebdige, Dick. "Digging for Britain: An Excavation in Seven Parts." In *Black British Cultural Studies*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 120-162. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Heaton, Louis. "The Passion of Remembrance." *The Voice*, December 13, 1986: 25.
- Henderson, Dyson. "Songs of Death." *The Voice*, December 13, 1986: 6
- Henry, Lenny. "Britain's Ethnic Minorities Need Better Access to the TV and Film Industry." *The Guardian*, January 24, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/24/britain-ethnic-minorities-access-tv-film>.
- Hernández-Navarro, Miguel Ángel. *Materializar el Pasado: el Artista como Historiador Benjaminiano*. Murcia: Micromegas, 2012.
- Hill Collins, Patricia [1990] *Black Feminist Thought*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Hill, Shannen L. *Biko's Ghost: The Iconography of Black Consciousness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Hiller, Susan. *The Myth of Primitivism*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Himid, Lubaina. "Fragments: An Exploration of Everyday Black Creativity and its Relationship to Political Change." *Feminist Art News* 2, no. 8 (1988): 8.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "The Generation of Postmemory". *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103-128.
- . *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012.

- Hirsch, Marianne and Spitzer, Leo. "Small Acts of Repair". In *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, 83-108. New York City, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017.
- Hobson, Dorothy. *Channel 4: The Early Years and the Jeremy Isaacs Legacy*. London: I.B Tauris & Co, 2007.
- Hoffman, Eva. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*. New York City, NY: PublicAffairs Books, 2004.
- Holdsworth, Claire M. "The Workshop Declaration: Independents and Organised Labour." In *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s*, edited by Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey, 307-312. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Horvat, Anamarija. *Screening Queer Mermys: LGBTQ Pasts in Contemporary Film and Television*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- Hoskins, Andrew. "Digital Network Memory." In *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, 91-108. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2009.
- Howe, Darcus, "The Language of Black Culture." *The Guardian*, 19 January 1987: 16.
- hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992
- . *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . [1984] *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Redwood City, Ca: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- . "Memory and Arts WG Workshop with Andreas Huyssen." 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Memory Studies, 3-7 July, 2023.
- Issue, Marc. "The Passion of Remembrance." *Blitz*, no. 47 (1986): n.p.
- Jackson, Lynne, and Jean Rasenberg. "The Passion of Remembrance. An Interview with Martina Attille and Isaac Julien." *Cineaste* XVI n. 4 (1988):2.
- James, Clive. *Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts*. London: W. Norton & Company, 2008.
- James, C. L. R. *The Future in The Present: Selected Writings*. Westport, Lawrence Hill & Co, 1977.
- . "Africans and Afro-Caribbeans: A Personal View." *Ten* 8, no 16 (1984): 54-55.

- . [1986] *Beyond a Boundary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Jantjes, Gavin and Tam Joseph. "The Dream, The Rumour, and the Poet's Song. London: Brixton, 1984.
- Jensen, Wilhem. [1907] *Gradiva: A Pompeian Fancy*. Somerset: Hayne Press, 2014.
- Johnstone, Ian. "Testament." *Sunday Times*, September 3, 1989: n.p.
- Julien, Isaac. "The Black Independent Sector. Towards a Pluralistic Approach." In *Third Eye: Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema*, edited by GLC Race Equality Unit, 60-61. London: GLC Race Equality Unit, 1986.
- . "Artist Isaac Julien: 'I didn't Know if I'd Live on until the 90s. A lot of my Friends didn't.'" *The Guardian*, April 24, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/apr/24/artist-isaac-julien-tate-britain-what-freedom-is-to-me>.
- Julien, Isaac, Mari-Carmen de Lara, Linda Mabalot, Jacquie Jones." Exclusionary Practices: Political Expediency and/or Social Necessity?" *Motion Picture III*, no. ¾ (1990): 19-33.
- Julien, Isaac, Martina Attille, Reece Auguiste, Peter Gidal and Mandy Meck. "Aesthetics and Politics: Working on Two Fronts?" *Undercut* 17 (1988): 32-39.
- Julien, Isaac, and Pratibha Parmar. "In Conversation." In *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*, edited by Tessa Boffin and Sunil Gupta, 96-102. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1990.
- Kaba, Lansiné. *Kwame Nkrumah and the Dream of African Unity*, Brooklyn, NY: Diasporic Africa Press, 2017.
- Kahn, Pervaiz. "Black and White." *Sight and Sound*, no. May (1992): 30
- Kamba, Mark. "Censored! IBA Wants Black Video Cut." *Caribbean Times*, April 34, 1987: 1-2.
- Katz, David. "Menelik Shabazz Obituary." *The Guardian*, July 13, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jul/13/menelik-shabazz-obituary>. Accessed January 18, 2024.
- Kayira, Jean. "(Re)creating Spaces for uMunthu: Postcolonial Theory and Environmental Education in Southern Africa." *Environmental Education Research*, 2015 Vol. 21, No. 1, 106–128, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.860428>.
- Kennedy, Rossane. "Remembering the Indonesian Killings: The Act of Killing and the Global Memory Imperative." In *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory*



- Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Peter Vermeulen, 47-64. Oxford: NY: Berghahn Books, 2017.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *My Garden Book*. New York City, NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1999.
- King, Daniella Rose. "Britain's Black Filmmaking Workshops and Collective Practice." In *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s*, edited by Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey, 205-218. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Kristeva, Julia. [1980] *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon Roudiez. Columbia, SC: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Language of Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Anthony Wilden. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- . "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism." *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 2, no. 2 (1988): 1-22.
- LaCapra, Dominik. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Lachmann, Renate. "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature." In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 301-310. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Laub, Dori. "Truth and testimony: the Process and the Struggle." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 61-75. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Law, Ian. "Scarman Report, The" In *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, edited by John Stone, Rutledge M. Dennis, Polly S. Rizova, Anthony D. Smith and Xiaoshuo Hou, 1-2. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015.
- Lawrence, Errol. "Just Plain Common Sense. The 'Roots' Of Racism." In *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in the 70s*, edited by Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies, 47-94. London: Hutchinson, 1982.
- Lee, Christina. "We'll Always Have Hong Kong: Uncanny Spaces and Disappearing Memories in the Films of Wong Kar Wai." In *Violating Time: History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Cinema*, edited by Christina Lee, 124-141. London: Continuum, 2012.
- Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. "The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 87-106.



- Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznajder. *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 2006.
- Lodge, Tom. *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences*. Oxford: OUP, 2011
- Lotringer, Sylvere. "The Fiction of Analysis." *Semiotexte* 11, no 3 (1977) :173-190.
- Lövgren, Sven. *The Genesis of Modernism: Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh, & French Symbolism in the 1880's*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1971.
- Lipman, Amanda. "When the Dancing Stops." *City Limits*, no. 270 (1986): 21.
- . "Songs and Desires", *City Limits*, no. 275, (1987): n.p.
- Luckhurst, Roger. *The Trauma Question*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Lynne, Hanley. *Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- MacCabe, Colin. "Black in the Frame." *The Guardian*, December 4, 1986.
- . "Black Film in 80's Britain." In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 31-32. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- Macedo, Lynne. "Handsworth Songs." In *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, edited by David Dabydeen, John Gilmore, and Cecily Jones, 206. Oxford: Oxford University press, 2007.
- Mack-Nataf, Isiling. "Passion of Remembrance." *Spare Rib*, no. 173 (1986): 22-26.
- Maizière, Michael. "Towards a Specific Practice." In *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*, edited by Nina Danino and Michael Maizière, 43-44. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Makama, Godiya Allanana. "Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward" In *European Scientific Journal* 9, no 17 (2013): 115-144,
- Malcolm, Dereck. "The Passion of Remembrance." *The Guardian*, December 4, 1986: 23
- . "Handsworth Songs." *The Guardian*, January 8, 1987: 23.
- . "Time and Judgement." *The Guardian*, 1989a: 23.
- . "Twilight City." *The Guardian*, August 24, 1989b: 23.
- Malik, Michael Abdul. *From Michael DeFreitas to Michael X*. London: Dust Jacket, 1968.
- Malik, Sarita. *Representing Black Britain: Black Images on British Television from 1936 to the Present Day*. Ph.D. diss, The Open University, 1998.
- . *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television (Culture, Representation, and Identity Series)*. London: Sage, 2001.

- . “Black Film British Cinema: In Three Acts.” In *Black Film British Cinema II*, edited by Clive James Nwonka and Anamik Saha, 21-41. London: Goldsmiths Press, 2021.
- Mangena, Mosibudi. *On Your Own: Evolution of Black Consciousness in South Africa/Azania*. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1989.
- Manier, David and William Hirst. “A Cognitive Taxonomy of Collective Memories.” In *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 253-262. Berlin; De Gruyter, 2008.
- Marada, Miroslav, Zévl, Jiří-Jakub, Petříček, Jakub and Blažek, Vojtěch. “Interurban Mobility: Eurythmic Relations among Metropolitan Cities Monitored by Mobile Phone Data.” *Applied Geography* 156 (2023): 102998-103012.
- Marks, Laura U. “Black Audio Film Collective’s Who Needs a Heart?” *Cineaction*, no. 36 (1995): 53
- . *The Skin of The Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Duke, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- . “Monad, Database, Remix: Manners of Unfolding in The Last Angel of History.” *Black Camera* 6, no 2 (2015): 112-134, <https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.6.2.112>
- Marriott, David. “Bastard Allegories: Black British Independent Cinema”. *Black Camera* 7, no. 1 (2015): 179-198.
- Massey, Doreen. *Spatial Divisions of Labour Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. London: Red Globe Press, 1995.
- Maude, Colette. “Testament.” *Time Out*, no. 993 (1989): 36
- Mayer, Ruth. “Africa as an Alien Future’: The Middle Passage, Afrofuturism, and Postcolonial Waterworlds.” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 45, no. 4 (2000): 555–66.
- Mead, George H. Mind. [1934] *Self & Society: from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Mercer, Kobena. “A Third Cinema: Black and Third World Film-makers are Determined to Make Cinema an Agency for Social Change.” *New Socialist*, October (1986): 32-33.
- . “Past in the Present. Handsworth Songs.” *New Socialist*, January 1987: 45.
- . “Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination: The Aesthetics of black Independent Film in Britain”. In *Black Frames: Critical Perspectives on Independent Black Cinema*, edited by Mybe B. Cham and Claire Andrade-Watkins. 50-61 Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988a.

- . “Recording Narratives of Race and Nation.” In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 4-14. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988b.
- . “Recording Narratives of Race.” *The Independent* 12, no. 1 (1989): 19.
- . “Black Art and the Burden of Representation.” *Third Text* 4, no. 10 (1990): 61-78.
- . *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black British Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- . “Post-Colonial Trauerspiel.” In *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective*, edited by Kodwo Eshun and Anjalika Sagar, 43-59. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.
- . *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008.
- . “Cosmopolitan Contact Zones.” In *Afro-Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic*, edited by Tanya Barson and Peter Gorschlüter, 40. Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2010.
- . *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practice Since the 1980s*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Mercer, Kobena and Isaac Julien. “De Margin and De Centre.” In *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 194-209. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Middleton, David and Steven D. Brown. “Experience and Memory: Imaginary futures in the past.” In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 241-252. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonisation*. Detroit, MI: University of Michigan, 1995.
- Miller, Jonathan. “Film on Estate Riot Delayed by IBA.” *The Times*, April 25, 1987: 3.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Misztal, Barbara. *Theories of Social Remembering*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003.
- Moody, Jessica. *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, Slaving Capital of the World*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.
- Moon, Suzanne. “Great Expectations.” *Newstatesman and Society*, September 8, 1989: 42.
- Morley, John. *The Making of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton: Designs and Drawings*. Boston, Mass: David R Godine Pub, 1984.
- Morrison, Toni. [1970] *The Bluest Eye*. London: Random House UK, 2000.

- Moses, Dirk, and Michael Rothberg, "A Dialogue on the Ethics and Politics of Transcultural Memory." In *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders*, edited by Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, 29-38. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014
- Muir, Ramsay. [1907] *A History of Liverpool*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" *Screen* 16, no. (1975): 6–18.
- Nama, Adilifu. *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Naughton, Mike. "Twilight City: Televiews with Mike Naughton." *The Morning Star*, November 18, 1989: 8.
- Navarro, Ray. "Eso, me esta pasando." In *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Gay and Lesbian Film and Video*, 38-40, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Neumann, Birgit. "The Literary Representation of Memory." In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 333-344. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2008.
- Nora, Pierre. *Essais d'Ego-Histoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1987.
- . "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989), 7-24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>
- North, Wyatt. *The Life and Prayers of Saint Michael the Archangel*. Scotts Valley, Ca: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.
- Nwonka, Clive James and Anamik Saha. "Film, Culture, and the Politics of Race: An Introduction to Black Film British Cinema II." In *Black Film British Cinema II*, edited by Clive James Nwonka and Anamik Saha, 1-18. London: Goldsmiths Press, 2021.
- Ofori, Ruby. "Testament of Faith." *West Africa*, November 12, 1991: n.p
- Olick, Jeffrey K. "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products." In *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 151-162, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.
- Oliveros, Pauline. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Olsen, Bjørnar and Þóra Pétursdótt. "An Archaeology of Ruins." In *Ruin Memories: Materiality, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past*, edited by Olsen Bjørnar and Þóra Pétursdótt, 3-30. London: Routledge, 2014
- Omelsky, Matthew. "Fugitive Time: Black Culture and Utopian Desire." PhD diss., Duke University, 2018.

- O'Pray, Michael, "Black Audio Film Collective." In *The Elusive Sign: British Avant-Garde Film and Video 1977-1987*, edited by David Curtis, 7-10. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1987
- . "A Touch of the Tar Brush." In *Arrows of Desire: New Directions in British Film and Video*, edited by ICA, 19. London: ICA, 1992
- . *The British Avant-Garde Film: 1926-95. An Anthology of Writings*. Luton: University of Luton Press, 1999.
- Orlando, Sophie. "Sonia Boyce: Post-1989 Art Strategies." *Critique D'Art* 43 (2014): 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.4000/critiquedart.15362>
- Ové, Horace. "The Passion of Remembrance". *The Voice UK*, March 8, 1988: 26
- . "ScreenTalks: On Pressure." London: Barbican Centre, 2017.
- Padva, Gilad. *Queer Nostalgia in cinema and Popular Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Parker, Rianna Jade. *A Brief History of Black British Art*. London: Tate Enterprises, 2021.
- . "'The People's Account of State Violence in Britain" In *Frieze* (2020). <https://www.frieze.com/article/peoples-account-state-violence-britain>. Accessed September 17, 2023.
- Parmar, Pratibha. "Handsworth Songs." *Women's Review* 17 (1987): 4
- Paskin, Sylvia. "Without Heroes or Victims. Sylvia Paskin talks to Sankofa about Making a New Black Cinema." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 53, no. 635 (1986): 362-363.
- . "Dreaming Rivers." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 56, no 669 (1989):298-299.
- Passerini, Luisa. *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Paterson, Peter. "Less Blunt—and More Pointed." *Daily Mail*, July 5, 1987: 26.
- Pavsek, Christopher. *The Utopia of Film: cinema and its Futures in Godard, Kluge and Tahimik*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Peters, John Durham. *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Perry, Colin. *Radical Mainstream: Independent Film, Video and Television in Britain, 1974-1990*. Bristol: Intellect, 2020.
- Perth, Nicholas. *Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2019.
- Petley, Julien. "The People's Account." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 153, no. 648 (1988a): 29
- . "We are the Elephant." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 55, no. 652 (1988b): 153.

- . “Possessed by Memory.” *Monthly Film Bulletin* 56, no. 668 (1989): 259-261.
- Petty, Sheila. “Afrofuturist Visions in John Akomfrah *The Last Angel of History*.” *Screen Noir* 1, no. 2 (2008): 6-7.
- Pierson, Michele. “Feminist Filmmaking from the Ground Up: Three Films from the 1980s.” A *Companion to Experimental Cinema*, edited by Federico Windhausen, 840-901. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022.[Ebook]
- Pillemer, David B, Kristina L. Steiner, Kle J. Kuwabara, Dorthe Kirkegaard Thomsen and Connie Svob. “Vicarious Memories.” *Consciousness and Cognition* 36 (2015): 233-245.
- Phillips, Trevor, and Mike Phillips. *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*. New York City, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.
- Piqueras-Pérez, María “Mixed-Identity in the Liverpool Black Community.” In *Narratives of Displacement*, edited by Miriam Sette, 25-49. Milan: Biliblion Edizioni Srl Milano, 2021.
- . “Slow Emergency, Siren Ongoing: Accessing Handsworth Songs, Sarah Hayden (2022)” *MIRAJ: Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 12, no 1 (2023):290-296.
- Pines, Jim. “Territories: Interview with Isaac Julien.” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no 26/27 (1985): 2-9. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44111047>.
- . “Introduction.” In *Association of Black Film and Video Workshops Brochure*, edited by by Jim Pines, 1-3. London: BFI, 1988.
- . “The Cultural Context of Black British Cinema” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, edited by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg, 183-193. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1996.
- Pines, Jim, Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Isaac Julien, and Marsh-Edwards. “The Passion of Remembrance.” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 32/33 (1986): 92-103. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44111115>
- Piper, Keith. “Shifting Landscapes.” In *Trophies of Empire*, edited by Bryan Biggs, 9-14. Liverpool: Bluecoat and Liverpool John Moores University, 1994.
- Pond, Emily. “Vicarious and Autobiographical Memory: Exploring Associations with Mood, Identity and Meaning-Making”. PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2020.
- Poole, Ross. “Memory, Responsibility, and Identity.” *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 263-286
- Popkin, Jeremy. “Ego-Histoire and Beyond: Contemporary French Historian-Autobiographers.” *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 4 (1996): 1139-1167.

- Powell, Enoch. "Rivers of Blood." Speech Presented at the Conservative Association Meeting, Birmingham, April 20, 1968.
- Power, Nina. "Counter-Media, Migration, Poetry: Interview with John Akomfrah". *Film Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2011): 59-63.
- Prescod, Colin. "Introduction." In *Third Eye: Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema*, edited by GLC Race Equality Unit, 56-57. London: GLC Race Equality Unit, 1986.
- Price, Thomas J. "Black British Artists Can No Longer Be Ignored, Says Sculptor Thomas J. Price." *The Guardian*, February 13, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2024/feb/13/black-british-artists-can-no-longer-be-ignored-says-sculptor-thomas-j-price>.
- Priestley, J.B. [1934]. *English Journey*. Bradford: Great Northern Books, 2009
- Pycroft, Christopher. "Angola—the Forgotten Tragedy." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 2 (1964): 241-262.
- Raczynow, Henri. "Memory Shot Through with Holes". *Yale French Studies*, no. 85 (1994): 98-105.
- Radio, Nick. "IBA Holds up Race Conflict Video." *Broadcast*, April 24, 1987: 3.
- Raengo, Alessandra. "Introduction." *Liquid Blackness: Fluid Radicalisms* 1, no. 4 (2014): 7-11.
- . *Critical Race Theory and Bamboozled*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Ramdin, Ron. *Reimagining Britain: 500 Years of Black and Asian History*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Rascaroli, Laura. *How the Essay Film Thinks*. New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Reber, Deborah. "Collective Insights". In *The Independent Film and Video Monthly* 19, no. 2 (1996): 22-25.
- Rees, Alan Leonard. *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.
- Redhead, Olivia Grace. "Histories of sickle cell anaemia in postcolonial Britain, 1948-1997." PhD diss, UCL, 2020.
- Reese, Sam V.H. *Blue Notes: Jazz, Literature & Loneliness*. New Orleans, LA: LSU Press, 2019.
- Reynolds, Lucy. "Experiment Cybernetics, and the Formal Film in Britain." In *A Companion to Experimental Cinema*, edited by Federico Windhausen, 673-734. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022. [Ebook]

- Ribeira Sanches, Manuela. "Memory, Authenticity, and (the Absence of) Ruins: Resonances between Werner Herzog and John Akomfrah." *Black Camera* 6, no. 2 (2015): 94-111. <https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.6.2.94>
- Rice, Alan. *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- . "Narrative Identity." *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 73-81. doi:10.5840/philtoday199135136
- Robinson, David. "Testament." *The Times*, August 31, 1989: 14.
- Robson, Andy. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Utopia-The Workshop Declaration (1982-1989)*. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Rodney, Donald. "Doublethink." In *Trophies of Empire*, edited by Bryan Biggs, 60. Liverpool: Bluecoat and Liverpool John Moores University, 1994.
- Rodriguez, Richard T. "From Harlem to Mazatlán: Transnational Desires and Queer of Colour Politics in the Work of Isaac Julien." *Black British Cinema II*, edited by Clive James Nwonka and Anamik Saha, 71-80. London: Goldsmiths Press, 2021.
- Rose, David. "The View from the Barricades." *The Guardian*, May 11, 1987: n.p.
- Roth, Marty. *Cultures of Memory: Memory Culture, Memory Crisis, and the Age of Amnesia*. London: Academica Press, 2011
- Rothberg, Michael. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- . *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2009.
- Ruchatz, Jens. "The Photograph as Externalisation and Trace". *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 367-378. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2008.
- Rushdie, Salman, "Songs Doesn't Know the Score." *The Guardian*, 12 January 1987: 7.
- Russell Catherine. *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Rye, Howard. "Towards a Black British Jazz: Studies in Acculturation, 1860-1935. In *Black British Jazz: Routes, Ownership and Performance*, edited by Jason Toynbee, Catherine Tackley and Mark Doffman. 23-42 London: Routledge, 2014
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York City, NY: Vintage, 1979.



- . *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary Essays*. London: Granta Books, 2012.
- Sam, Diky. *Liverpool and Slavery: A Scouse Press reprint of the 1884 Account by 'Dicky Sam'*. Liverpool: A. Bowker and son, Booksellers, 1884.
- Sankofa. "Sankofa." In *Association of Black Film and Video Workshops*, edited by Association of Black Film and Video Workshops: *Brochure*, edited by Jim Pines, 6-7. London: BFI, 1988a.
- . "Dreaming Rivers." *Sankofa's Profile*. London: Channel 4, 1988b.
- . *Power and Control*. GLC: London, 1984.
- . "In-Between." *Sankofa's Profile*. London: Channel 4, 1992.
- Sargent, Tony. *The Secret Anointing*. Vereenging: Christian Art Distributors, 2007.
- Sawtell, Jeff. "Testament." *Morning Star*, September 9, 1989a: n.p.
- . "Twilight City," *Morning Star*, October 20, 1989b: 8.
- Sayers, Nicola. *The Promise of Nostalgia: Reminiscence, Longing and Hope in Contemporary American Culture*. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Sealy, Mark. *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2019.
- Shuckmann, Patrick. "Masculinity, the Male Spectator, and the Homoerotic Gaze." *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 43, no. 4(1998): 671-680.
- Schwab, Gabriele. *Haunting legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*. New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Shabazz, Menelik. "Kuumba Productions." In *Third Eye: Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema*, edited by GLC Race Equality Unit, 59-60. London: GLC Race Equality Unit, 1986.
- . "Time and Judgement." *Monthly Film Bulletin* 56, no. 663 (1989):100-101.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Shin, Chin Yun. "Engaging Theory and Making Films: Radical Black Cinema in Britain." In *Postcolonial Media Culture in Britain*, edited by Cere Rinella and Rosalind Brunt, 99-108. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

- Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Shudson, Michael. *Watergate in American Memory: How we Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct The Past*. New York City: Basic Books, 1993.
- Sierp, Aline. *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Silverman, Katja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Silverman, Max. *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*. Oxford: Berghahn books, 2013.
- Sipe, Dan. "The Future of Oral History and Moving Images". In *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistar Thompson, 379-388 London: Routledge, 1998.
- Sithole, Tendayi. *Steve Biko: Decolonial Mediations of Black Consciousness*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016.
- Skoller, Jeffrey "Space is the Place." *Afterimage* 25, no. 3 (1997): 14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.1997.25.3.14>.
- Slim, Hugo, Paul Thompson, Olivia Bennett, and Nigel Cross. "Ways of Listening." In *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistar Thompson, 114-125. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Smith, Anthony. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Smith, Kate Bolgar. "Ghosts of Songs: The Haunting Soundtracks of the Black Audio Film Collective". In *The New Soundtrack* 5, no. 2 (2015): 89-101.
- Snead, James A. "Images of Blacks in Black Independent Films: a Brief Survey". In *Blackframes: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema*, edited by Mbye. B. Cham and C. Andrade-Watkins 16-25. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988.
- Sobchack, Viviane. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

- Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Gettino. "Toward a Third Cinema." *Tricontinental*, no. 14 (1969): 107-132.
- Solanas, Fernando and Coco Fusco. "The tango of Esthetics and Politics. An interview with Fernando Solanas". *Cineaste* 16, no 1-2 (1987-88): 57-59.
- Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York City, NY: OUP, 1986.
- Solomos, John. *Political Language and Violent Protest: Ideological and Policy Responses to the 1981 and 1985 Riots' Youth and Policy* 18 (1986): 12- 24.
- Solomos, John, Bob Findlay, Simon Jones, and Paul Gilroy. "The Organic Crisis of British Capitalism and Race. The Experience of the Seventies." In *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, edited by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 9-46. London: Hutchinson & co., 1982.
- Spare Rib. "Twilight City, ICA." *SpareRib*, October 1989: 28.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 243-261. <https://www.jsor.org/stable/1343469>.
- Stimpson, Mansel. "Night People." *What's on London*, October 18, 1989: 73.
- Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Straub, Jürgen. "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present." In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 215-228. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Suárez, Juan A. "Disquieting Soundtracks: The Sonorites of Experimental Cinema." In *A Companion to Experimental Cinema*, edited by Federico Windhausen, 484-553. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2022. [ebook]
- Sulter, Maud. "The Passion of Remembrance". *The Guardian*, December 14, 1986: n.p
- Swanson, Gillian, Enahoro Carole, Lina Gopaul and Frank Abbott. "Questions of Language." *Undercut* 17 (1998): 11-18.
- Tackley, Catherine" Tiger Bay and the Roots/Routes of Black British Jazz". In *Black British Jazz: Routes, Ownership and Performance*, edited by Jason Toynbee, Catherine Tackley and Mark Doffman. 43-62 London: Routledge, 2014

- Tamm, Marek. "History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of the Estonian Nation." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2008): 46-516.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43212851>
- Thatcher, Margaret. "TV Interview for Granada World in Action, 'Rather Swamp'. Interview by Granada Television, January 27, 1978.
- The Independent. "We are the Elephant." *The Independent*, January 1, 1988: 25
- The Otolith Group. "This Day Remains," *Frieze*, no. 106 (2007): 142-147.
- The Times. "Critical Eye: Mysteries of July." *The Times*, October 17, 1991.
- The Tottenham Three Family's Campaign. *A Miscarriage of Justice: The Case of the Tottenham Three*. London: The Tottenham Three Family's Campaign, 1991.
- Thompson, Matthew. *Reconstructing Public Housing: Liverpool's Hidden History of Collective Alternatives*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.
- Thompson, Paul. "The Voice of the Past". *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistar Thompson, 21-29. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity, 1995.
- Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*. London: Routledge, 2015. 1995.
- Totaro, Donato. "Deluzian Film Analysis: The Skin of the Film." *Offscreen Journal* 6, no. 6 (2002). [https://offscreen.com/view/skin\\_of\\_film](https://offscreen.com/view/skin_of_film). Accessed September 17, 2023.
- Totterdell, Ann. "The Passion of Remembrance" *Financial Times*, December 5, 1986: 26.
- Towardsos, Gilane. "Sweet Oblivion." In *Trophies of Empire*, edited by Bryan Biggs, 17-21. Liverpool: Bluecoat and Liverpool John Moores University, 1994
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995.
- Turner, Francesca. "Watching Brief: Mysteries of July." *The Guardian*, October 17, 1992: n.p.
- Visser, Irene. "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47, no 3 (2011): 270- 282.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "The Black Aquatic." *Liquid Blackness* 5, no. 1 (2021): 63-73.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/26923874-8932585>

- Walder, Dennis. *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Walsh, Linda S. "Water and Dreams: Exploring Bachelard's Concepts through new Audiovisual Works for the Oboe." Phd Diss, University of Technology Sydney, 2017.
- Walter, Colin. *Caller's Opinion: The Passion of Remembrance*. London: Channel 4, 1986.
- Walton, David. *Introducing Cultural Studies: Learning through Practice*. London: Sage, 2007.
- . *Doing Cultural Theory*. London: Sage, 2012.
- Ward, Tony. *Death and Disorder: Three Case Studies of Public Order and Policing in London*. London: Inquest 1986
- Warren, Kate. "Creative Re-enactment in the Films and Videos of Omer Fast." In *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film*, edited by Russell J. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty, 287-305. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2013.
- Washington, Robert and David Karen. "Sports and Society," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 187-212.
- Waters, Rob. "'Time Come': Britain's black Futures Past." *Institute of Historical Research* 92, no. 258 (2019): 838-850. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12291>.
- Wauchope, George. "Azania=Land of the Black People." *Frank Talk Editorial Collective* 1, no 5 (1984): 7-8. <https://sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files/FtNov84.1683.7118.001.005.Nov1984.6>.
- Wayne, Mike. *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*. London: Pluto Press, 2001.
- Webb, Floyd. "Black Filmmaker Magazine, Revisited..." *Sight and Sound* 32, no. 2 (2022): 31.
- White, Arnmond. "Panel from the Young, British, and Black Film Series", *Film Comment* 24, no 4, July 1988: 4.
- White, Hayden. "Historiography and Historiophoty." *The American Historical Review* 93 (1988): 1193-9.
- White, Sandra Leigh. "Dreams and Trauma: Late Modernity's Discourses." In *Histories of Dreams and Dreaming: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Giorgia Morgese, Giovanni Pietro Lombardo and Hendrika Vande Kemp, 181-218. New York City, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2019.
- Williamson, Judith. "A world of Difference." *New Statesman*, December 5, 1986: 23.

- . “To Haunt Us”. *Cinema Newstatesman* (1987): n.p.
- . “Two Kinds of Otherness: Black Film and the Avant-garde.” In *Black Film British Cinema*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 33-36. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1988.
- Winter, Jay. “Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War”. In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 61-76. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Yeran, Kim. British Black Independent Film Workshops: Formation and Diasporic Subjectivities. PhD diss., Goldsmiths University London, 2020.
- Zelizer, Barbie. “Journalism’s Memory Work.” In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 379-388. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2008.
- Zephaniah, Benjamin. *The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah: Poet, Lyricist, Writer, Activist. The Autobiography*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2018.

## Filmography and Videography

- Akomfrah, John, dir. *Expeditions I: Signs of Empire*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1984a.
- , dir. *Expeditions II: Images of Nationality*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1984b.
- , dir. *Handsworth Songs*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1986.
- , dir. *Testament*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1988.
- , dir. *A Touch of the Tar Brush*. Black Audio Film Collective, 1991a.
- , dir. *Who Needs a Heart?* London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1991b.
- , dir. *Seven Songs for Malcom X*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1993.
- , dir. *Mothership Connection: The Last Angel of History*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1996.
- , dir. *Martin Luther King: Days of Hope*. London: Black Audio Film collective, 1997a.
- , dir. *Memory Room 451*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1997b.
- , dir. *Gangsta, Gangsta: The Tragedy of Tupac Shakur*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1998a.
- , dir. *The Call of Mist*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1998b.
- , dir. *Digitopia*. London: Smoking Dogs Films: 1988c.
- , dir. *Riot*. London: Smoking Dogs Films, 2000.
- , dir. *The Genome Chronicles*. London: Smoking Dogs Films, 2008.
- , dir. *The Nine Muses*. London: Smoking Dogs Films, 2010.
- , dir. *The Stuart Hall Project*. London: Smoking Dogs Films and BFI, 2013.
- , dir. *Martin Luther King and The March on Washington*. London: Smoking Dogs, 2013.
- , dir. *Listening All Night to the Rain*. London: Smoking Dogs, 2024.
- Attille, Martina, dir. *Dreaming Rivers*. London: Sankofa, 1989.
- Auguiste, Reece, dir. *Twilight City*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1989.
- , dir. *Mysteries of July*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1991.
- Bakari, Imruh, dir. *Riots and Rumours of Riots*. London: National Film School, 1981.
- , dir. *Street Warriors*. London: Ceddo, 1986.
- , dir. *The Mark of the Hand Aubrey Williams*. London: Kuumba Productions, 1987.
- , dir. *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices*. London: Ceddo, 1992.
- Blackwood, Maureen, dir. *Perfect Image?* London: Sankofa, 1988.
- , dir. *A Family Called Abrew*. London: Sankofa, 1992.
- , dir. *Home Away from Home*. London: Sankofa, 1993.
- British Pathè. *Farr V Abrew—Fight in Dublin*. Pathé Newsreels, 1939.

Chadha, Gurinder, dir. *Bhaji on the Beach*. London: Channel 4, 1993.

Cissé, Soleymane, dir. *Yeelen*. Films Cissé, 1987.

Courtauld, Mina, dir. *Dusty's Story*. London: Sankofa, 1998

Crusz, Robert, dir. *In-Between*. London: Sankofa, 1992.

Davis, Elmina D, dir. *Omega Rising: Women of Rastafari*. London: Ceddo, 1988.

Donnellan, Philip, dir. *The Colony*. London: BBC, 1964.

Dymond, Frankie, dir. *Death May be your Santa Claus*. London: Frankie Dymond, 1969.

Gordon, Pauline, dir. *Culture for Freedom*. London: Ceddo, 1990.

Hall, Stuart, dir. *It ain't half Racist Mum*. London: Campaign Against Racism in the Media, 1979b.

Herzog, Werner. *Cobra Verde*. Mainz: Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, 1987.

Hudson, Hugh, dir. *Chariots of Fire*. Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 1981.

Julien, Isaac, dir. *Who Killed Collin Roach?* London: Central Saint Martins, 1983.

—, dir. *Territories*. London: Sankofa, 1984.

—, dir. *This is not an AIDS Advertisement*. London: Sankofa, 1987.

—, dir. *Looking for Langston*. London: Sankofa, 1989.

—, dir. *Young Soul Rebels*. London: BFI in association with Sankofa, 1991.

—, dir. *Black and White in Colour Television, Memory, Race, 1936-1968*. London: BBC, 1992.

—, dir. *The darker side of black*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1994.

Julien, Isaac and Blackwood, Maureen. *The Passion of Remembrance*. London: Sankofa, 1986.

Krishan, Tinge, dir. *Been So Long*. London: BFI, 2018.

Langfield, Stuart, dir. *Stigma is More Harmful than HIV*. Scotland: NHS Sexual health Tayside, 2023.

Lee, Spike, dir. *She's Gotta Have It*. New York City, NY: 40 Acres and Mule Filmworks, 1986.

Mathison, Trevor and Edward George, dir. *Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light*. London: Black Audio Film Collective, 1995.

McCann, Tessa, dir. *Vacuum*. London: Sankfoa, 1999.

Milton, Bryan, dir. *I am not Two Islands*. London: Kuumba Productions, 1984.

—, dir. *The People's Account*. London: Kuumba Productions, 1986.

—, dir. *Racism: A Response*. London: Ceddo, 1990.

Martin, Henry, dir. *Big George is Dead*. London: Kuumba Productions, 1987.



Masokoane, Ujebe Glenn, dir. *We are the Elephant*. London: Ceddo, 1987.

McQueen, Steve. *12 Years Slave*. Los Angeles, CA: Regency Enterprises, 2013.

—. *Small Axe*. London: BBC, 2020.

Ngakane, Lionel, dir. *Jemima and Johnnie*. London: Lionel Ngakane, 1966.

Ové, Horace, dir. *Reggae*. London: Horace Ové, 1971.

—, dir. *Pressure*. London: BFI, 1976.

—,dir. *Skateboard Kings*. London: BBC, 1978.

Pontecorvo, Gillo, dir. *Kapò*. Zebra Film, 1960.

Reckord, Lloyd, dir. *Ten Bob in Winter*. London: Lloyd Reckord, 1963.

—, dir. *Monolith*. London: UK Government, 1987a.

—, dir. *Iceberg*. London: UK Government, 1987b.

Sembenè, Ousmane, dir. *Ceddo*. Senegal: Film Doomi Reew, 1977.

Shabazz, Menelik, dir. *Step Forward Youth*. London: Kuumba, 1977

—, dir. *Breaking Point: The Sus Law Controversy*. London: ITV, 1978.

—, dir. *Burning an Illusion*. London: BFI, 1982

—, dir. *Blood Ah Go Run*. London: Kuumba Productions, 1982.

—, dir. *Time and Judgement: A Diary of a 400 Year Exile*. London: Ceddo, 1988.

—,dir. *The Story of Lover's Rock*. London: SunRa, 2011.

—,dir. *Looking for Love*. London: SunRa, 2015.

—,dir. *Pharaohs Unveiled*. London: SunRa, 2019.

—,dir. *The Hand of Ken*. London: SunRa, 2020.

Sheridan, Tessa, dir. *Is it the design of the wrapper?* London: Sankofa, 1997.

Thompson, Danny, dir. *Fathers, Sons, Unholy Ghosts*. London: Sankofa, 1994

Trinh T. Minha-ha. *Reassemble*. Senegal: Trinh T. Minha-ha, 1982.

Valerie, Thomas, dir. *The Flame of The Soul*. London: Ceddo, 1990

Yeung, Raymond, dir. *Yellow Fever*. London: Sankofa, 1998



# APPENDIX A

## Characteristics:

- Documenting black British experiences.
- Training black British individuals interested in cinema.
- Recording black British communities' own perspectives and expression.
- Community access to equipment.
- Creating a cultural space for black communities (community engagement).
- Giving validation and authority to black voices.
- International, global and Pan-African perspective/context.

# CEDDO

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Ceddo's chronology		Ceddo formed in Kuumba's offices		Ceddo registers as a co-op	Paley, Sembène, Giral visit Ceddo.  Ceedo moves to Tottenham  The future of black workshops seminar  Races programme	Full ACTT franchise  Technical video seminar	Faces of women Film Screenings  Voices and visions film screening	Film Screening: A Marcus Garvey Season  Screening: works from black independents  Conference television and political censorship  Screening: Religion, Mysticism s and Magic  Short course editing, directing, screenwriting	Ceddo tries to restructure itself and establish a relationship with Middlesex Polytechnic	Lectures in South Africa on Third World Cinema, Black British Independent Cinema and African Cinema.  Training courses in the UK 1990/91	Workshops and training of young people in South Africa as in the UK		Screenwriters development programme	Ceddo officially closes down				
Productions						<i>Street Warriors</i>  <i>The People's Account</i>	<i>We are the Elephant</i>	<i>Time and Judgement</i>  <i>Omega Rising</i>		<i>The Flame of the Soul</i>  <i>Culture for Freedom</i>  <i>Racism: a Response</i>		<i>Blue Notes and Exiled Voices</i>						
Black British Film History	Undercut starts printing	Workshop Declaration  Channel 4	Third Eye/Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema Conference	Association of Black Film and Video Workshops established		GLC abolished  Edinburgh Film Festival and Third Cinema Conference	June Givanni's Black & Asian Film and Video List.  London COuncils Grant Scheme	Black Film, British Cinema Conference	Workshop Declaration expires	Broadcast Act		African Caribbean Film Unit BFI	Black Film Bulletin starts publishing					Black Filmmaker Magazine starts publishing.

**Visited Archives:** British Film Institute, Iniva, June Givanni PanAfrican Film Archive, British Library, London Metropolitan Archive, Channel 4 Archive Service, George Padmore Institute, Black Cultural Archives, Westminster Reference Library, interview with Imruh Bakari Caesar.

Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating critically and challenging racist stereotypes.</li> <li>Fostering a space to discuss and assess black cinema.</li> <li>Expanding black film culture.</li> <li>Creating an understanding of the diversity of black experiences</li> <li>Documenting black experiences</li> <li>Returning to the archive</li> <li>Emphasising the role of memory.</li> </ul>

APPENDIX B

BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
BAFC's chronology		Informal group formation	BAFC registers as a co-op programme Black women and Theatre and Cinema and Bk representation	Anti-racist film programme  Visions and Revisions Course (1984/5)	Races Traces (with Ceddo)  Headquarters in Hackney  Looking Black Film Programme	Full ACTT franchise	BAFC gets a contract with Channel 4					Channel 4 contract expires	BFI summer school					BAFC officially closes down
productions				<i>Expeiditions I and II</i>		<i>Handsworth Songs</i>		<i>Testament</i>	<i>Twilight City</i>		<i>Mysteries of July</i>  <i>A Touch of the Tar Brush</i>  <i>Who Needs a Heart?</i>		<i>Seven Songs for Malcom X</i>	<i>The Darker Side of Black</i> (with Isaac Julien)	<i>Three Songs</i>	<i>The Last Angel of History</i>	<i>Memory Room 451</i>  <i>MLK Days of Hope</i>	<i>The Call of Mist</i>  <i>Gagsta, Gangsta</i>
Black British Film History	Undercut starts printing	Workshop Declaration  Channel 4	Third Eye/Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema Conference	Association of Black Film and Video Workshops established		GLC abolished  Edinburgh Film Festival and Third Cinema Conference	June Givanni's Black & Asian Film and Video List.  London COuncils Grant Scheme	Black Film, British Cinema Conference	Workshop Declaration expires	Broadcast Act			African Caribbean Film Unit BFI	Black Film Bulletin starts publishing				Black Filmmaker Magazine starts publishing.

**Visited Archives:** British Film Institute, Iniva, June Givanni PanAfrican Film Archive, British Library, London Metropolitan Archive, Channel 4 Archive Service, George Padmore Institute, Black Cultural Archives, Westminster Reference Library,Tate Britain, V&A Museum, Central Saint Martin’s, Margaret Dickinson (1999); Eshun and Sagar (2007)

Characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making more visible the diverse experiences of black British people.</li> <li>• Reflecting questions of class, sexuality, histories, herstories, and images of black British people.</li> <li>• Raising questions that were unacceptable before in Black circles.</li> <li>• Focusing on the question of gender and sexuality.</li> <li>• Creating anti-racist and anti-sexist spaces.</li> </ul>

APPENDIX C

SANKOFA

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Sankofa's chronology			Sankofa set up in the summer	Black Women and Representation programme  Power/Control programme.  Sankofa becomes a full franchised workshop	Film course for black people.  Wokrshop in conjunction with minority arts advisory service	Black Feminine Course		Familiarisation course			Isaac Julien establishes Normal Films			New Members appear				Sankofa officially closes down
productions				<i>Territories</i>		<i>The Passion of Remembrance</i>	<i>This is not an Aids Advertisment</i>	<i>Dreaming Rivers</i>  <i>Perfect Image?</i>	<i>Looking for Langston</i>		<i>Young Rebels</i> (in association with Sankofa)	<i>Soul</i> (in association with Sankofa)  <i>A Family Called Abrew</i>  <i>In-Between</i>	<i>Home away from Home</i>	<i>Fathers, Sons and Unholy Ghosts.</i>			<i>Is it the design on the Wrapper?</i>	<i>Yellow Fever</i> <i>Dusty's Story</i>
Black British Film History	Undercut starts printing	Workshop Declaration  Channel 4	Third Eye/Struggle for Black & Third World Cinema Conference	Association of Black Film and Video Workshops established		GLC abolished  Edinburgh Film Festival and Third Cinema Conference	June Givanni's Black & Asian Film and Video List.  London COuncils Grant Scheme	Black Film, British Cinema Conference	Workshop Declaration expires	Broadcast Act		African Caribbean Film Unit BFI	Black Film Bulletin starts publishing					Black Filmmaker Magazine starts publishing.

**Visited Archives:** British Film Institute, Iniva, June Givanni PanAfrican Film Archive, British Library, London Metropolitan Archive, Channel 4 Archive Service, George Padmore Institute, Black Cultural Archives, Westminster Reference Library,Tate Britain, V&A Museum, Central Saint Martins

## Appendix D: Where Can These Works be Watched?

### SANKOFA

	BFI Mediatheque	BFI Player	BFI Library	Iniva	CSM <sup>110</sup>	Pan- African Archive	London Metropolitan Archive
<i>Territories</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>The Passion of Remembrance</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>This is not an Aids Advertisement</i>				✓			
<i>Dreaming Rivers</i>			✓	✓		✓	
<i>Perfect Image?</i>	✓		✓				
<i>Looking For Langston</i>	✓			✓			
<i>Young Soul Rebels</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>In-Between</i>	✓		✓				
<i>A Family Called Abrew</i>		✓		✓		✓	
<i>Home away from Home</i>	✓	✓	✓				
<i>Fathers, Sons, Unholy Ghosts</i>	✓					✓	
<i>Is it the Design on the Wrapper?</i>	✓		✓				
<i>Yellow Fever</i>	✓						

<sup>110</sup> Central Saint Martins

<i>Dusty's Story</i>			✓				
----------------------	--	--	---	--	--	--	--

*Vaccum* (1998) can only be accessed through the BFI's Research Viewing Service (Stephen Street), prior request and payment of fee. *The Passion of Remembrance* has recently been made available to rent on Amazon Prime UK.

## BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE

	BFI Mediatheque	BFI Player	BFI Library	Iniva	CSM	Pan- African Archive	LUX	British Library
<i>Expeditions I</i>				✓				
<i>Handsworth Songs</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
<i>Testament</i>				✓	✓		✓	
<i>Twilight City</i>	✓			✓	✓		✓	
<i>Mysteries of July</i>			✓	✓				
<i>A Touch of the Tar Brush</i>				✓	✓			
<i>Who Needs a Heart?</i>			✓	✓			✓	✓
<i>Seven Songs for Malcom X</i>			✓			✓	✓	
<i>The Darker Side of Black</i>			✓	✓	✓			
<i>Black Cabs</i>	✓		✓					
<i>Three Songs on Pain, Time and Light</i>				✓			✓	

<i>The Last Angel of History</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	
<i>Memory Room 451</i>				✓			✓	
<i>MLK Days of Hope</i>				✓				✓
<i>The Call of Mist</i>							✓	
<i>Gangsta, Gangsta.</i>			✓					

The works in LUX can be accessed online through a fifteen day subscription without the need of being based in the UK. *Expeditions II* is not available anywhere. I managed to access it through a link shared by David Lawson (Smoking Dogs).

## CEDDO

	BFI Mediatheque	BFI Player	BFI Library	Iniva	Pan-African Archive	British Library
<i>Street Warriors</i>			✓			
<i>The People's Account</i>	✓		✓		✓	
<i>We are the Elephant</i>	✓		✓		✓	
<i>Time and Judgement</i>	✓		✓			
<i>Omega Rising</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓



<i>The Flame of the Soul</i>					✓	
<i>Culture for Freedom</i>					✓	
<i>Racism: A Response</i>			✓		✓	
<i>Blue Notes and Exiled Voices</i>			✓		✓	

When I started to locate the different works (September 2021), some of the productions currently available at the BFI Mediatheque were not available and I requested them such as *The Flame of the Soul* and *Culture for Freedom*. These were available at the Mediatheque for a few months. When I returned to the BFI in August 2022, some of the requested films had disappeared from the BFI Mediatheque and were only available through the Research Viewing Service. This appendix is my attempt at providing a stable record, considering I cannot control the changes in ownership happening at archives, helping anyone interested in watching these productions locate them easily.

The information on this appendix has been contrasted in different occasions (September 2021, December 2021, August 2022, December 2022, April 2023, July 2023, and December 2023). The location of the productions has been changing showing how titles were added or eliminated in certain locations, specially at the BFI. This reflects how ownership of the works has been altered throughout the years. These productions are only accessible in London and the BFI player, only available in the UK. Lux is the only service granting access outside of the UK through a subscription. In different countries, they can be watched if they are curated through a film series. In the upcoming years it is expected that these productions will be made more accessible. As Imruh Bakari argues, he is working with the BFI to digitalise the Ceddo archive since they want to make the productions more accessible (2024).



## Appendix D: el nforme de evaluación Comisión de Ética de Investigación (CEI )

Jaime Miguel Peris Riera, como secretario de la Comisión de Ética de Investigación

### CERTIFICA

Que esta Comisión de Ética de Investigación, ha evaluado la propuesta de la investigadora María Piqueras Pérez, M10/2023/042, para la realización de la práctica docente: "La cultura audiovisual afro británica de la era Thatcher a fin de siglo: memoria, identidad y vanguardia".

Y considerando que,

1. La investigación está justificada porque sus objetivos permitirán generar un aumento del conocimiento y un beneficio para la sociedad que hace asumibles las molestias y riesgos previsibles.
2. La capacidad del equipo investigador y los recursos disponibles son los adecuados para realizarla.
3. Se plantea según los requisitos metodológicos y éticos necesarios para su ejecución, según los criterios de buenas prácticas de la investigación científica.
4. Se cumple la normativa vigente, incluidas las autorizaciones, acuerdos o convenios necesarios para llevarla a cabo.

Ha emitido en la reunión celebrada el martes 24 de octubre de 2023 (ACTA1/2023/CEI),  
**INFORME FAVORABLE** a que dicha práctica docente sea realizada por el equipo investigador:

Juan Antonio Suárez Sánchez

María Piqueras Pérez

Y para que conste y tenga los efectos que correspondan, firmo esta certificación, con el visto bueno del/de la presidente/a de la Comisión de Ética de Investigación