



Constructed, Told, Spoken: A Counter-History of Britain on TV

Multicultural TV in Europe

Bandung File: License to Kill
C4 1985. Dir Greg Lanning. 27min. Digital

Black on Europe: France
BBC 1991. Series Prod Onyekachi Wambu. 30min. Digital

Flâner (france)
UK 2015. Dir Cecile Emeke. 11min. Digital

**The Body's Legacies, Pt. 2:
The Postcolonial Body, 2018**
France 2018. Dir Kader Attia.
48min. Digital

Total running time 126min

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+ intro by writer and researcher Momtaza Mehri

Early explorations of multicultural TV looked at Europe, through the lens of interconnected forms of global oppression. Over time, focus on the lived experiences of multi-ethnic people increased. Here we juxtapose documentaries focusing on the lives of racialised communities in France to reveal how conversations, cultures and analyses of lived experience have become foregrounded in non-fiction.

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In more recent installed films, [Kader] Attia explores the ambivalence and ephemerality of the moving image itself as an archival and testimonial artefact, including *The Body's Legacies, Pt 2* (2018), which was displayed within 'The Museum of Emotion' alongside a broken plastic chair, held together with metal staples. The content of the 48-minute film consists of talking heads – the writer Olivier Marboeuf, journalist Louisa Yousfi, philosopher Norman Ajari, and critic Amine Khaled located in domestic, institutional, and cultural settings – who discuss the wider impact of the release of surveillance footage documenting the assault, rape and abuse of Black youth worker Théo Luhaka by police in February 2017. The attack on Luhaka subsequently provoked protests against police brutality, and counter-responses by affiliates of the Front National, particularly when the silent surveillance footage of the incident was released.

As described in the film, far-right commentators claimed that the footage presented Luhaka resisting arrest, that his body shape indicated resilience or even aggression incompatible with his claims of sexual assault and bodily harm, or that the police were behaving proportionately. The original surveillance footage of the assault is not revealed during the course of *The Body's Legacies, Pt 2*, but only referred to through the critical engagements of Marboeuf, Yousfi, Ajari, and Khaled, who discuss the colonial contexts of bodily humiliation as a disciplinary and subjugating practice, and the paucity of the footage as a silent, malleable, decontextualised archival document, which summarily fails to 'document' anything but the site of its own discursive power as it enters the public domain. *The Body's Legacies, Pt 2* responds to a desire for reparation of colonial and racial violence, without denial of the personal, social, and cultural wounding that took place, first when Luhaka was assaulted, and subsequently when public discourse turned the release of the surveillance footage depicting the assault against him.

Attia's *The Body's Legacies, Part 1: The Objects* (2018) was commissioned by the Bauhaus imaginista project and first exhibited at Le Cube, an independent art space in Rabat. Nonetheless, this 'part 1' is not alluded to in the second: what instead remains tangible is the repeated wounding resulting both from the paucity of archival documentation, and the subsequent racially motivated critiques of Luhaka's body which serve to undermine both his agency and the violence enacted upon him. This desire for reparation, and the possibility or even likelihood of repair, are of necessity ambivalent. As Claire Veal notes of *The Body's Legacies, Pt 2*, 'the audibility of the four speakers' testimonies seems to represent the work's successful reparation of the wounds opened by Luhaka's assault.' And yet, as a reparative form, this speaking-out-loud of the acts and discourses that wound is not enough to repair or complete the healing process; not for Luhaka, nor for the experts interviewed, nor for the wider Black, Maghrebi, and migrant communities inflamed by the evident miscarriage of justice that took place. Like the broken chair, visibly repaired with metal staples and placed in front of the large flatscreen monitor onto which the film was projected, repair of a wound or break is provisory, temporary, and vulnerable inasmuch as it is also hopeful, imaginative, and improvisatory.

Jenny Chamarette, 'Critique, Repair and Care: Rebuilding the Black and Decolonial Archive with Theaster Gates and Kader Attia' (extract) in Annie Ring and Lucy Bollington (eds), *Citational Media: Counter-Archives and Technology in Contemporary Visual Culture* (Legenda, 2025)

Momtaza Mehri is a writer and researcher working across poetry, criticism, education and radio. She was the Poet-in-Residence at Homerton College, University of Cambridge, as well as the former Young People's Poet Laureate for London. Her debut poetry collection *Bad Diaspora Poems* won the 2023 Forward Prize for Best First Collection, as well as an Eric Gregory Prize, Somerset Maugham Award, and a Sky Arts Award.

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