

Examining personal memory in film: A reflection of documenting  
memory-stories in *Reimagining Memories*

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# Examining personal memory in film: A reflection of documenting memory-stories in *Reimagining Memories*

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## Abstract

My film, *Reimagining Memories*, explores my grandmother's childhood. Some of her most cherished memories are her trips between Lesotho and Cape Town and the time she would spend in the city. With clarity, attachment and a sense of longing, she often never misses an opportunity to reminisce about her travels. She longingly talks about her train trips from Gugulethu to Cape Town CBD, the beach and the home she shared with her brothers and sisters. These are the stories I grew up hearing, and when she was diagnosed with dementia in 2019, these memories stayed with her the most. At its core, *Reimagining Memories* interrogates space, remembering and the storytelling aspect of orality that has allowed my grandmother's memory-stories to exist inter-generationally. The concept of orality is integral to the film and is what inspired its making. Based on stories of her childhood that I heard growing up, my film visually reimagines what my grandmother's childhood between two worlds would have looked like had she had access to technologies that would allow her to document them. Instead, it is through *telling* that her memory-stories have been preserved and transmitted down generations.

Based on the film, this mini-thesis examines the representation of personal memory using cinematic language and the documentary genre. It utilizes three conventions of documentary, namely testament (interviews), archive and experimentation, to reimagine my grandmother's memory stories while simultaneously interrogating what it means to remember Cape Town in the 1950s during a time of political unrest, with great fondness. In conjunction with my film, this mini-thesis highlights the selectiveness and subjectivity ingrained in the process of an individual's act of remembering. In documenting these stories, the film itself becomes a memory – performing new meanings and alternative ways of engaging with orality, questions of memory and remembering.

**Examining personal memory in film: A reflection of documenting  
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Written by Refiloe Mathafeng

A FAM5012W Mini thesis research paper

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## INTRODUCTION

My mini-thesis is a creative explication - and a critical reflection - that serves as an accompaniment to my Master's of Documentary Arts film *Reimagining Memories*. I reflect and expound on the film itself, and on the creative process of making it - including research queries, production, and editing. In doing this, I aim to contextualise how I creatively reimagined my grandmother's memory-stories through interviews and visiting sites of her memories – while also examining what it meant for her to remember Cape Town with great tenderness. I do this taking into consideration that she would visit in the 1950s – a time when the city was segregated on the basis of race. One of the ways memory can be understood, is as a process, “an activity, a construct, and... [as having] sociocultural, as well as personal, resonance” (Kuhn, 2010). Based on *Reimagining Memories*, this thesis studies the construction and representation of memory, using cinematic language and the documentary genre's conventions of testament (interviews), archives and experimentation. Through discussing its thematic and narrative coordinates, this paper studies the insights *Reimagining Memories* provides on not only memory but the qualities of personal memory specifically. It utilizes narrative and thematic features to draw a closer analysis of what the film says broadly about personal memory. The thesis, in conjunction with the primary text, highlights the selectiveness as well as the subjectivity ingrained in the process of an individual's act of remembering – particularly in the case of Nkhono, who is recently suffering from dementia. It also foregrounds the performativity of personal memory and how it can become intergenerational on account of oral tradition and memory-stories being passed down generations.

The film analyses the private, and public, in memory. Personally, in the film, I consider what my grandmother's memories would have looked like had they been documented, these individual memories are then located within social and cultural history. When listening to her recount these stories, I had always been interested in the importance of orality as a means of preserving history on the basis of how they have been told generationally within our family. At its core, this film interrogates space and remembering. To conduct its interrogation, it considers hybrids of home (migration between Lesotho and South Africa), of memory (personal memory and political memory), and of place (rural vs urban: in Linotsing, Lesotho and Cape Town, South Africa). These hybrids that exist within my grandmother's stories, that are also present within the film,

ultimately speak to its fundamental question of what it meant for my grandmother to remember a place such as Cape Town with such fondness during the times she would visit all those years ago.

This film visually recreates something out of the oral storytelling aspect of orality, which is regarded as an old art form (Middleton, 1993: 64). This recreation is basically imagination that is based on my grandmother's memories and the stories borne from them, hence the title 'Reimagining Memories'. The film interrogates what it means to remember a place that bears a tumultuous history with great tenderness. Simultaneously, it also considers what her memories - which have been narrated to me and some participants in the film through oral storytelling - would have looked like had they been documented all those years ago. The filmmaking approach involved using my grandmother's memory-stories - told and corroborated by her siblings, children and grandchild - as a means to give me, the filmmaker, an insight into visually reimagining events and moments from her childhood. The intention behind this approach is for audiences to view *Reimagining Memories* as a film that centers oral memory and the act of imagining. I want to encourage the viewer to use their own imagination when engaging with this film through the way in which it is stylistically approached.

Structurally, this mini thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter one establishes frameworks for autoethnography and its similarities with my work. This is followed by framing the varying definitions of the documentary genre, how it will be understood in this study as well as its historical context within South Africa. Frameworks within which memory and non-fiction films exist are discussed as well. I also briefly discuss Cape Town's Apartheid past and Lesotho's history in conjunction with South Africa's in the 1950s, including migration during that time. I then briefly discuss history in connection with memory as well as oral tradition as a theme. Chapter two draws attention to memory and orality, specifically in the case of Nkhono's memory-stories and how they were approached in the making of the film. Lastly, in chapter three, I discuss the documentary modes within which the film is structured, I reflect on the film's narrative and thematic coordinates and what this reflection says broadly about personal memory.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Framing autoethnography, documentary and its history in South Africa, as well as memory and non-fiction films**

For the purpose of my mini-thesis as the researcher and filmmaker of *Reimagining Memories*, it is essential that I reflect on autoethnography and how this approach to research was adopted in my work. When considering the relationship and dynamics that exist between the filmmaker and the film's subjects, autoethnography, "strives to write all participants in the encounter - their observations, their dialogues, their subjectivities - into the story or stories being told" (Jeursen & Tomaselli, 2007: 19), this results in experiential and dialogue-based participatory involvement between the researcher/filmmaker and the researched/participants. Delving further into this approach, "the "auto" in autoethnography is a method and a product, in which the Self has a hand in play in the productive process... [and] because auto/ethnography is a form of ethnography, it has to focus on what we have in common with others, even though this might be in and through the life (voice) of an individual, the author's or someone else's" (Roth, 2009). *Reimagining Memories* is situated within this framework because, as the filmmaker, I am a part of - and related to - the people in the film: my family. I know of the memory-stories shared, having experienced some of them myself. The film centers my grandmother's family, her life as a young girl and her experiences - in the words of herself, her children and her siblings. This story is told by myself as a family member - and as the filmmaker, I take the insight I receive from the position I hold and utilise it to tell a story about my grandmother and my family (Roth, 2009). In reflecting on the similarities between autoethnography and my work, I do so in relation to Roth's statement that this form of research focuses on what the self has in common with others and the outcomes that emerge from this.

On the above, Roth continues to write about collective autoethnography. Collective autoethnography speaks to the approach of making *Reimagining Memories*, which involved a coming together of myself and my film's participants to reflect on memory-stories and experiences in the form of interviews. With this approach and the outcome from it, "because each person gets to speak and each person provides space for others to speak, the understandings (about what has happened) are not conflated into the homogenizing one (usually the researcher's) voice but retain

the multiplicity arising from the co-presence of all participants' voices" (Roth, 2009). While I am present in the film in the form of narration and I am a part of the family within which it is made - as a grandchild, daughter, or relative of the participants - my voice is not predominant in the film, but it is present. *Reimagining Memories* falls within bounds of autoethnography in that, as the filmmaker, I rely on my grandmother and family members to reflect on stories and experiences shared. Moreover, in the film, I focused on not only the relation that I have as a researcher and filmmaker with others, but how others - in this case the participants in the film - relate with each other. In order to imagine what my grandmother's memories would have looked like had they been documented and to consider the historical context within which these memories exist - I relied on the documentary genre's convention of testament (interview). What emerged was multiple perspectives of my grandmother's life as a young girl. To achieve this, I used my own knowledge and experiences of her memories as a point of departure.

It is also imperative that the history and definition of documentary - or the parameters within which the genre can be understood - be discussed. Documentaries have historically been regarded as being real or realistic accounts of a particular reality. There are a number of definitions that constitute what this genre is. One of its earlier definitions is by John Grierson, who terms it as a creative treatment of actuality (Grierson, 1932). Actuality, in the case of this genre, undergoes various processes of arrangement and rearrangement. It is generally a, "genre that is most associated with objectivity and truth" (Oyinsan, 2016: 200). Over the years, Grierson's definition has been greatly contested as many debates and discussions about the term 'documentary' and its characteristics have been presented.

In my mini-thesis, I consider suggestions that challenge and expand on Grierson's definition. Documentary tells us, "something about reality that has a quality of truth, reality and authenticity... and all theories about documentary genres confirm that documentaries use all kinds of communicative strategies and the appeal not only to reason but also to more sensual dimensions of our reality" (Bondebjerg, 2014: 14). Documentary, as a finished creative product, is a combination of elements that are drawn from real-life events. However, these elements are submitted to be processed by those involved in the making of the film, creating a contestation between what is real and true and what is creative. This paper, based on *Reimagining Memories* and the actual making of the film, takes a holistic look at the genre and considers contestations of

‘truth’ vs. creativity by taking into account the film’s subject matter, its participants and the processes of filmmaking as a whole. Bondebjerg further notes that perhaps the best way to define and understand this genre, is by considering documentaries as a combination of factors that include but are not limited to, “factual evidence... documentation and elements of narrative, audio-visual style and creativity, appeal to imagination, identification etc., in sum a rhetoric of cognition and emotion” (Bondebjerg, 2014: 15). When taking the above into consideration, the best way to define documentary is by looking at its style, where it fits within non-fiction moving image texts, the filmmaker's intentions - including creative decisions - and the film’s intended audience. *Reimagining Memories* is a performative documentary with participatory qualities; it simultaneously re-imagines what my grandmother’s memories would have looked like had they been documented, while also using these memory-stories to examine what it means to remember a place during a time painfully etched in South Africa's collective memory, with a great sense of fondness.

Considering the history of documentary in South Africa is equally as essential when it comes to understanding the nature and value of documentary filmmaking today. To locate research that is pertinent to the written component of *Reimagining Memories* – a study conducted by Da Canha on the history of documentary in South Africa and work produced by Martin Botha and Keyan Tomaselli was critical to writing this paper. Early documentary filmmaking in South Africa emerges from a time when the nature and parameters of filmmaking, in general, were imbued in politics. Films were either made in support of the Apartheid government’s acts of segregation, or they were made by anti-apartheid agencies as a means of illustrating the atrocities and injustices these laws had on many non-White South Africans. On this, Keyan Tomaselli notes that, “pressure against apartheid intensified and more films were made by producers who identified suffering under apartheid” (Tomaselli, 1988: 10). These producers and directors were independent and not affiliated with state media and production companies.

Da Canha, who wrote a paper studying the history of the country’s film industry with a particular interest and focus on the history of South African documentary film, observes that – outside of the relatively extensive history of filmmaking in South Africa – early film became, “polarized into the two extreme and conflicting industries... the only commonality in their ideology regarding the filmmaking, was the power of the moving image as a significant propaganda tool” (Da Canha,

2001: 1). Thus, at its core, early filmmaking in South Africa was exceedingly political, suggesting it offered no avenues for freedom and creative outlets. Filmmakers during that time were not free to creatively explore their surroundings or the societies in which they existed. When they did, there was no freedom to distribute their work. It was only until recently, after the country's democracy in 1994, that limitations within filmmaking – including documentary filmmaking and film scholarship – began to shift radically. Botha notes that in Africa, with South Africa emerging later, “independence feature and short films have been produced in Africa with a voice, content and aesthetic, which are rich, historical and creatively responsive to African social reality” (Botha, 2014: 3). Liberation and radical change meant access to a new generation of filmmakers allowing them various means of making films, and new audiences who were able to witness emerging stories that were being explored and told.

Filmmaking in South Africa has been around and practised since the early 1900s. Botha notes that “it was not until the late 1970s that several key events came together to create the conditions for an independent documentary film industry to develop. The introduction of television in 1976 necessitated a lifting of the ban of video technology, thereby making more affordable small-format video cameras available to South African film-makers” (Botha, 2014: 8). There were many restrictions on filmmakers and their work during this time. The establishment, especially of SABC 2 and SABC 3 in the 1980s which were aimed at black audiences – paved the way for ‘social realist’ documentarians and their films. It is worth noting, however, that production, and inadvertently filmmaking, was under very tight control. Stemming from social and political change in the country, the documentary film industry developed in the late 1970s and 1980s (Da Canha, 2001:12). The extent to which resistance, both within and outside of film, began to intensify resulted in the growth of the resistance movement ultimately changing the film industry. Subsequently, the documentary film movement, and various others, emerged – progressing the genre as well. These movements, funded by Western embassies, churches and foundations, later introduced democratic structures, “and ways of producing films which [gave] oppressed people control over how they [were] represented” (Tomaselli, 1988: 11). By 1994, these democratic structures carved spaces for intellectual freedom as well as creativity – which meant the beginning of a move away from stereotypical ways of imagining and positioning black subjects. It also

enabled scholarship and critiques of various ways of looking – encouraging new imaginations of active, and not passive, audiences.

Moreover, around the 1980s, film and video studies were introduced, and incorporated into some institutions of higher learning in South Africa. This allowed for two very essential things; active, critically thinking audiences – and a change, or shift, of emerging relatively liberal filmmakers. To a certain extent, these studies facilitated the growth of independent anti-apartheid films and filmmakers. Although, up until 1994 they were still restricted in subject matter, how they made their films and in how they were distributed. Some films were heavily censored while others were banned altogether. In addition, film and video studies in South African universities also carved a space for documentary scholarship where anti-apartheid documentaries exposing black people's oppression were being critically analysed by students and emerging academics. On a scholarship level, engaging with these films was a practice that was much less restricted than documentary filmmaking at the time. While the rest of the continent's documentary industry in particular was growing, South African films were not performing on the same level, and its industry was not connected to other African industries. Botha notes that, "as a result of international isolation during the 1980s, South Africans were seldom exposed to... debates on film aesthetics, distribution and other important issues on the continent" (Botha, 2014: 4). Today South African cinema – including documentary filmmaking – still continues to operate in relative isolation from cinema on the continent, with more and more co-production treaties between countries now being initiated.

It is important to note however that while the filmmaking industry has grown in the country and on the continent, it continues to be predominantly white and male. In the case of the aforementioned genre in particular, documentary film scholarship is essential in examining history, environment and representations of documentary filmmaking in South Africa, Africa and abroad. Film, including documentary filmmaking, has played a major role in establishing counter-narratives, and in building South African and African identity. However, scholarly research on documentary film has received limited attention, with its study remaining confined to a select number of scholars (Tomaselli, 1988: 10). In general, the film industry – or cinema – in the country has been studied quite extensively over the years with research abroad being used to conduct studies that apply to South Africa's industry. However, "the nature of extensive research of documentary film in South Africa has... been in the context of the media or in the wider context

of fiction and documentary as a whole” (Da Canha, 2001: 14). Hence, scholarship in the aforementioned genre and the nature of its expanding industry is limited.

Additionally, there has not been much scholarly research done on memory and film, particularly within the documentary genre in South Africa. The written research component of *Reimagining Memories* delves into studying the correlation between the above, especially as it relates to studies that correlate with the film’s subject matter, thematic and narrative coordinates. This mini-thesis and the film - seek to show how sound and visual objects are able to communicate memory using documentary as a vessel. The concept of memory has been applied in cinema, both in fiction and non-fiction films, in numerous different contexts. It is thus essential to briefly establish the frameworks of how memory has been represented in the documentary genre specifically. Theories on memory and film by MacDougall, Waterson as well as Rincón, Cuevas and Torregrosa are used to establish theoretical frameworks within which *Reimagining Memories* is situated.

On one hand, the film is a reimagination of my grandmother’s memory-stories. On the other, through questions that are posed to the participants, the historical context and the realities of life in Cape Town during the years my grandmother would visit her family is examined. On account of this examination, personal memory and historical memory are interconnected. In *Reimagining Memories*, the film predominantly engages with personal memory and how it intersects with the latter. Documentary cinema is often focused on collective memory (Rincón, Cuevas & Torregrosa, 2007: 160). However, this paper relies on research that analyses personal memory in non-fiction films.

When writing about film and memory, MacDougall contends that moving image texts that focus on memory do not record memory itself, instead, they rely on external factors such as speech and the use of objects to evoke the past and what is being remembered. He continues to assert that these are only representations. In *Films of Memory*, he writes that, “films which focus on memory do not of course record memory itself, but its referents, its secondary representations (in speech for example) and its correlatives. In films, objects survive from the past, people reminisce, and certain objects evoke or resemble those of memory... Films of memory could thus be said to represent only the external signs of remembering” (MacDougall, 1992: 29). The acknowledgement to MacDougall, particularly in relation to *Reimagining Memories*, is twofold. To construct memory

and communicate my grandmother's memory-stories visually, the film does indeed rely on speech (what is said in the interviews) and objects such as photographs owned by family members to evoke memory. However, cinematic techniques such as shot composition and action – accompanied by dialogue – provide space for engagement that can reveal internal signs of memory and remembering.

In her research on non-fiction moving image texts and memory, Waterson notes that indeed films of memory rely on speech to construct memory. However, the presence of the camera allows for something far greater. She regards the documentary genre's convention of testament as an event, and as a performative act of remembering. She makes the assertion that interviews are filmed testimonies that offer signs, "to be read in the speaker's manner of self-presentation, with all its attendant dimensions of non-verbal communication: the style of speech, the pitch, tone and tempo of voice, pauses, hesitations, facial expressions, body language, gesture and all these tell us about emotion and state of mind" (Waterson, 2007: 61). While MacDougall contends that speech, and in this case referring to interviews, is an external correlative of memory and not memory itself - this paper relates with the way in which Waterson theorises the construction of memory in film. Along with editing, the camera can be positioned to treat the recording of testament in a way that reveals or speaks to the state of mind and emotions that accompany the act of remembering. Moreover, this study echoes Waterson's sentiments that interviews are performances of memory that predominantly consist of talking about the past in the present – essentially constructing memory in the film.

Lastly, it is also essential that in this mini-thesis, I contextualise *Reimagining Memories* within South African and African film thought and practice, and discuss it alongside films of memory. *Reimagining Memories* is based in both Lesotho and South Africa, in Cape Town specifically. Although it uses animation to relay 98-year-old Ella Blumenthal's memories of the Holocaust, a very recent film *I am Here* (Sank, 2020), captivantly uses the participant's recollection of her past to unpack multiple layers of memory, family and home. *Reimagining Memories* functions similarly. The documentary accompanies my grandmother's stories with visuals of the places she remembers and visited – this is in an attempt to reimagine these memories that are based on oral tradition and to highlight memory's qualities of subjectivity, selectivity and performativity. In an article that serves as an observation, or a reading, of the film *Ye Wonz Maibel (Deluge)* (Mekuria,

1997) - Bunmi Oyinsan writes that filmmaker, Salem Mekuria, used documentary and subsequently the film, as an, “avenue to get herself and her subjects to actively perform their thinking through of the traumatic events [of the Red Terror in Ethiopia]. The process of active introspection allows Mekuria and her subjects to question official accounts of the events” (Oyinsan, 2016: 200). While *Reimagining Memories* and the film that Oyinsan writes about above have subject matters that differ – the use of documentary as a genre to introspect and interrogate is similar in both films. Introspection, in the case of the film subjects’ active thinking and telling of her memories, creates a space where I, as the filmmaker, can begin to identify and interrogate the intersection of Nkhono’s fond memories of Cape Town with not only the space, but the realities of the lives black people lived during the time in which her memories took place.

### **Brief history of Cape Town, South Africa and Lesotho**

This paper considers South Africa’s overall turbulent Apartheid past but because of the film’s subject matter, it focuses on Cape Town specifically. Taking a deeper look into this city and its apartheid past allows for the contextualisation of my grandmother’s memories and stories within the history from which they are told. It is also equally essential to discuss Lesotho’s history in relation to South Africa during the late 1940s to 1960s, taking cross-border travel into account because one country is landlocked by the other. My grandmother’s parents and her siblings lived in various townships around Cape Town, including Athlone and Phillipi, before settling in Gugulethu in the 1950s. They had moved from Lesotho to Beaufort West and eventually to Cape Town because her father was looking for work to support his family. During that time, the Influx Control policy had been implemented in the Western Cape and South Africa, as a whole, from 1916 to 1984 – this regulation severely prohibited the ability for black people to secure residence and gain livelihoods in urban areas (Lee, 2005; Savage, 1986). This policy, and many others enforcing different laws, impacted and informed black people’s quality of life, where they lived in the Western Cape and how they moved within it.

South Africa’s fraught history of Apartheid spanned from about 1948 to the momentous 1994. In the earlier part of these years, my grandmother would frequent Cape Town to visit her family during her school holidays. During this period, “legislation culminating in the 1953 Group Areas Act ensured that each [ethnic] group lived in separate neighborhoods which differed greatly –

Whites in pleasant, green suburbs and Coloureds and Africans in bleak townships” (Houssay12 Holzschuch & Teppo, 2009: 351). To a certain extent, this act ultimately indicates that white people and people of colour experienced and memorised Cape Town starkly differently. This same act, including other racial and spatial policies of categorisation, informed the differences that were ingrained in the city’s urban practices. With this in mind, the paper – in relation to the film – considers the effects of these practices in public places and private domestic spaces.

The effects of urban practices during Apartheid, in conjunction with my grandmother’s childhood in Cape Town, call for examination because she remembers Cape Town with a great sense of warmth and longing. However, even when listening to her stories, the personal is always political. The way she remembers Cape Town, the reasons for which she had to move within two worlds, and the effects this had on her family’s life and her own – was all political. Minh-Ha makes an interesting observation on this, noting that, indeed, the aforementioned statement rings true, “not because everything personal is naturally political but because everything can be politicized down to the smallest details of our daily activities” (Minh-ha, 2019: 2). *Reimagining Memories* explores its fundamental question by considering the spaces my grandmother had access to, how and why she had to travel, the jobs her mother and father had, the effects of migration on her siblings, her family structure, and her sense of home. In the film, my grandmother’s younger brother and sister’s interviews offer insight into how differently they saw Cape Town. Her sister moved to the Western Cape when she was very young, and her brother Christopher was born in Southfield in Cape Town, hence they see their childhood in the city very differently compared to my grandmother. Moreover, they were more aware and had experienced the realities of Apartheid on a larger scale than she had.

## Migration

My great grandfather and mother’s relocation from Lesotho to Beaufort West and then to Cape Town - and Nkhono’s trips between the two places as a young girl – are a result of migration. Due to the film’s subject matter, *Reimagining Memories* focuses predominantly on cross-border migration into South Africa from Lesotho. Migration has, historically, been surrounded by stereotypes. Moreover, movement into South Africa from bordering and further African countries still exists in the contemporary period. Historically, cross-border migration in Southern Africa has

a long and complex history – originating with the need for large pools of cheap labour. In leaving Lesotho, Gordon writes that, “when the men cross the border to work in South Africa, they leave their families behind in the villages and towns of Lesotho” (Gordon, 1981: 59). In a study focused on the effects of migration on women, Gordon notes that men would leave Lesotho to work in the mines or on railways.

My great-grandfather worked on the railways. However, before he left Lesotho, he was a teacher earning ten pounds every three months. The degree of labour migration in Lesotho was determined by, “the paucity of wage-earning opportunities within the country, and by the fact that working in South Africa... has become a tradition for its men” (Gordon, 1981: 60). My great-grandfather left Lesotho for the Western Cape before arriving in Cape Town. In the first few years of working in the Western Cape, he had left his family back in Lesotho. However, once he got to Cape Town my great-grandmother eventually moved with him to the city. They moved around different townships before settling in Gugulethu. My grandmother’s siblings lived in Cape Town with their parents, while she remained in Lesotho with her paternal grandmother. The effects of migration are evident in her childhood in that it was a norm back then for people to move to South Africa for work. I contend that migration had a significant effect on family life, as well as on women and children. By virtue of being the eldest born in her family, it was tradition that the first born stayed at home with grandparents if, and when, the family moved.

## History, memory and orality

For this documentary, it has already been established that the years in which my grandmother would visit Cape Town were of great significance when making the film – this is because it was essential to first locate these years within their historical context. Secondly, as stated earlier, Apartheid and its policies had several effects on how black people experienced different spaces. There is importance in exploring these effects because they were not just due to racial classifications of people but of place as well. On this, Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo note that,

The implementation of racist beliefs and policies shaped spaces at the national, regional, and city level, producing what could be described as typical geographies of (racial) classification and socio-spatial control. Not only were people labelled members of specific racial groups, but South African cities, too, were strictly structured along racial lines" (Houssay-Holzschuch & Teppo, 2009: 351).

While I had always been intrigued by my grandmother's memory-stories, what has never left me from these stories is the reality of moving in and around Cape Town as a young woman of colour from Lesotho. These thoughts propelled me to explore memory in the film – including its selectivity and the intersections that exist between recollections of personal, collective and national or historical memory.

Orality – one of the fundamental themes of this paper – is defined as the transmission of, “stories or history from one generation to another” (Tomaselli, Shepperson & Eke, 2021: 382). Essentially, it is the trans-generational telling of stories. For my family in particular, having access to reflections of my grandmother's childhood and her memories – from the stories my parents and I grew up listening to – for my research has been a privilege. These reflections are an extension of orality, which is understood as a means to preserve and transmit history. In the case of this film, our family's past will be carried down through my grandmother's memory-stories. It is also a means of connecting history and memory to time and space.

In contemporary Africa, and in relation to memory and oral tradition, documentary filmmakers can be regarded as storytellers, keepers of events in the past, or archivists of history in the present. Da Canha utilizes the notion of the Griot in West African culture and history to exemplify the role that documentaries and their filmmakers play. The Griot, who plays both the function of being a storyteller and bearer, “sees his role as fulfilling an important social function and preserving the oral tradition” (Da Canha, 2001: 10). Something I have always appreciated about my grandmother's stories is that they are from a time so different from the contemporary period. When listening to her stories – both in general and for the film's research – the history in which her memories are situated speaks to the statement that, “[in] the African sphere, the ongoing disruption following the move to independence further implies, therefore, that experiences of the world differ from one generation to the next in a given context: the elders of a community can recall different “forms of life”” (Tomaselli, Shepperson & Eke, 2021: 373). My grandmother's recollections of her past have always piqued my interest – and inspired the making of this film because of the above statement.

Using Nkhono's stories as the basis, this mini-thesis considers two aspects when referring to orality: oral memory and oral storytelling. When making *Reimagining Memories*, I relied strongly

on the universe of emotions that accompany the act of remembering. The film interrogates what it means to remember time and space. To do this, it strongly depends on – as well as centers – oral memory, especially on the part of my grandmother’s children who learnt of her experiences of Cape Town through memories-stories, and her grandchild who has had these same stories passed down to her. The qualities of oral tradition, namely oral storytelling and oral memory – that are present in the film, are made evident by the interviews of the aforementioned participants. Their responses highlight how my grandmother’s experiences of Cape Town have transitioned from memories – to stories of what she remembers, to memory-stories. This is oral memory which is the act of, “recollecting the told story” (Morrison, 1984: 389). When listening to Nkhono’s stories, I have always been captivated by the emotions that came with her memories about Cape Town. These memories – relayed in the form of stories; allowed me to imagine, memorialise, and explore personal memory in my film.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Memory and orality in the case of Nkhono's memory-stories in *Reimagining Memories***

This mini-thesis identifies memory and oral tradition as overarching themes. One of the inspirations behind making the film was the concept of orality. My grandmother did not have access to technologies that allowed her to document her most cherished childhood memories. Many years later, her *telling* of these stories has resulted in the preservation of memory in the oral form and its transmission down generations. My grandmother renders the question of memory complex – as a result, the film is essentially exploring the functioning of human memory. Moreso, what it means to remember Cape Town fondly amid a time in history characterised by unrest. Her dementia puts memory, itself, in a state of question – allowing the film to question the act of remembering altogether.

Ciancio notes two ways in which memory functions within film – it is either articulated through movement-image, that relies on a linear narration of memory, or time-image which consists more of a labyrinthine narrative structure of telling a story about memory that resembles its erratic structure (Ciancio, 2013). *Reimagining Memories* relied on the latter when it came to conceptualising my grandmother's memory-stories thus, “the action no longer links the images: instead, these images merely refer to other images [and] this is the recollection-image” (Ciancio, 2013: 102). *Reimagining Memories* imagines events, space and time. It relies on Nkhono's recollection of her travels and how these worlds shaped her perception as well as her remembrance of Cape Town as a young black child in the 1950s.

My grandmother's memories in the film are dependent on time and place. In *Reimagining Memories*, the documentary convention of testament (interviews) constructs memory in the film. Her narration of her memory-stories and what she remembers, as well as accounts from the other participants, represent time – essentially moments in her life of Cape Town in the past. The visuals on the other hand, revisit the sites of her memories. The use of building blocks or elements of cinema including dialogue, sound, mise-en-scene, action, cinematography, and editing constructs memory using Nkhono's memory-stories. Therefore, the visuals (cinematic language) and documentary conventions bring the past as well as the present together which reflects, “the

workings of human memory” (Rincón, Cuevas & Torregrosa, 2018: 19). Cinematic language and documentary conventions are used to construct memory in the film while, Nkhono’s dementia presents complexities in the act of remembering particularly in an individual capacity.

Like my family members, some of whom are participants in the film, I had grown up hearing my grandmother’s stories of Cape Town. I would sit and imagine a whole other world because of the nostalgia and love in her voice every time she reminisced. When she was diagnosed with dementia, the sudden decline of memory and remembering was what inspired the film. The reason behind wanting to make it was because, although she was struggling to remember in the present – from the things she did recall – Cape Town and her trips there as a little girl was a time in her past she was always able to revisit, warmly so. There were times during the filming process when she was struggling particularly with her dementia. However, at the mention of Cape Town and her experiences there, the process of asking her to recall these times instantly took her back and it was evident that it sparked a strong need for her to remember.

Outside of my grandmother, the other participants' contribution in the film – including their interviews – plays a pivotal role. Two of these interviewees are Nkhono’s sister, ‘Maphakoa (‘Maremametsoe Phakoa) and her brother Christopher, who were raised in Cape Town by my great grandparents while my grandmother grew up predominantly in Lesotho from childhood until today. They are an integral part of Nkhono’s memories. Traditionally, it was normal in those days that the eldest born in the family, in this case my grandmother, stayed at home with maternal or paternal grandparents if parents and younger siblings relocated. Hence, in the film, ‘Maphakoa and Christopher’s recollections of the years Nkhono traveled to, and experienced, Cape Town are parallel. They are placed alongside Nkhono’s memory-stories. Due to her dementia, my grandmother’s memories have become episodic therefore her recollection of events and of moments is not chronological. This speaks to the selectivity of remembering, because Cape Town is a significant site of the memories she recalls vividly. Howarth notes this as an episodic way of remembering that, “involves recalling personal episodes (“autobiographical memory”), events, or experiences that are specific to time and place” (Howarth, 2008). The way in which Nkhono remembers differs from the other participants in the film. Her stories have become part of their own memories by virtue of oral tradition and stories within families that are passed down generations. They remember Nkhono’s memory-stories in a more linear way than their source.

In this film, the documentary genre's convention of testament is used to construct and study memory. Differing perspectives from the interviews moves *Reimagining Memories* away from centering my grandmother's dementia as the film's main subject – instead they become a point of departure to exploring the selectiveness of memory, and its subjectivity. Outside of Nkhono, participants offer varying encounters of her memory-stories and alternative ways of engaging with memory as a whole.

Outside of visually reimagining my grandmother's stories, the film's aim was to locate her memories – imbued with a sense of nostalgia – within the very turbulent history they are situated in. Terence Ranger (2008) wrote an article that is based on oral interviews that had been conducted with elderly residents of a number of townships in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s. In this article, Ranger uses the stories borne from these interviews to interrogate official, recorded, narratives of history. When drawing on conversations with the interviewees, he notes that the politics from their past that surface from their stories, greatly influenced their experiences as well as their quality of life. In earlier days in the townships, the subjects' lives were marked by racial classifications and the political implications of these categorisations were explicit in that, “during colonialism Africans in the towns were not more than a smear under the white man's boot... but our old men and women do not remember themselves as smears” (Ranger, 2008: 78). I found these sentiments true to the stories I grew up listening to about Nkhono's experiences. During her visits, Apartheid was rife in South Africa, and as a black woman in Cape Town it affected how she experienced, accessed and moved around the city. However, her memories of her travels to Cape Town have always reflected how, “most old people remember their youth with special affection” (Ranger, 2008). The galaxy of emotions that are embedded in Nkhono's stories are true to the aforementioned statement because, she too remembers Cape Town with great affection, and in her memories the turbulence of the time is never highlighted. One of the film's aims was to foreground these affections.

When Nkhono was diagnosed with dementia, her memories of Cape Town stayed with her the most – despite the fact that she could not recall them as readily as before. She renders the question of memory complex in that, in remembering, there is also forgetting. Above, I have discussed how I rely on the corroborations of family members, through the use of documentary's convention of testament, in order to engage with her memory-stories in *Reimagining Memories*. Memory itself

can be problematic in terms of its unreliability, therefore these testaments, or interviews, solidify the claims accrued in the film. Dementia reveals dynamics of remembering and forgetting, shedding light on the ways in which memory is selectively recollected because every person's life is lived in relation to political and historical events (Krüger-Fürhoff, Schmidt & Vice, 2022: 3). With remembering, comes the possibility of forgetting. Nkhono renders memory complex because forgetting offers symbolic equivalence between, “the experience of individual/personal memory [and] historical and subjective memory” (Medina, 2022: 203). Thus, the selectivity of memory in my work is considered in two ways: firstly, I imaginatively explore my grandmother’s memory-stories while also locating them within the history in which they exist. Essentially, I am filling in the remaining gaps accrued from the selective and subjective ways in which my grandmother remembers Cape Town during Apartheid in the 1950s.

Secondly, memory’s selectivity lies in its unreliability. Through the use of documentary conventions – the retelling and subsequent construction of memory, “brings to the foreground concepts such as, on one hand, historical memory, remembering, collective and individual memory... and on the other hand forgetting” (Medina, 2022: 204). Forgetting thus places reliance on testaments from family members, particularly from children and grandchildren, that includes the later-born generation filling in, but also preserving the blanks of those that come before them (Krüger-Fürhoff, Schmidt & Vice, 2022). Hence, I approach the unreliability of memory by relying on accounts of other family members who fill in the gaps while also reflecting on the importance of preserving my grandmother’s memory-stories. Nkhono may not recall her experiences of childhood in Cape Town as vividly as she did when she told us stories growing up. Her inability to do this is a reminder that forgetting is part of remembering because it is not possible to remember everything forever.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Reimagining Memories: A reflection on the film, it's making, and of memory*

*Reimagining Memories* is based on memory-stories that are told as a sequence of events connected over a period of time. The stylistic visual approach to my grandmother's memories was more poetic, leaning away from attempting to chronologically structure her memories. Kuhn writes that this approach is true to cinematic memory texts which deliver, “as they tend to do, abrupt shifts of scene and/or narrative viewpoint, memory texts have more in common with poetry than with classical narrative” (Kuhn, 2010:2). In *Reimagining Memories*, Nkhono's memory-stories are intercepted by what I call *poetic interventions*. Poetic interventions are understood in this paper, and used in the film, as imagistic qualities such as poetic performance, visuals and/or music that align with the subconscious, dream or fantasy-like qualities of memory.

*Reimagining Memories* relies on narration from interviews as well locations – incorporating landscapes – poetry, photographs and archival material to relay Nkhono's memory-stories. It also consists of narrative and thematic coordinates that outline an analysis of what *Reimagining Memories* says about personal memory in greater detail. Khan writes that in the documentary genre, “sound effects, mise-en-scene (background), voices, names of actual persons and faces constitute the core of the narrative; they are the meaning and the message” (Khan, 2010: 15). On one hand, the film uses video and sound equipment, together with conventions of cinema such as sound, mise-en-scene, action, and dialogue to reimagine Nkhono's memories. On the other – through the documentary genre's convention of testament – her memory-stories, from accounts provided in the interviews, are utilised as narrative points to study the selectivity of memory.

Nichols identifies six modes of representation that form part of the sub-genres of documentary, these are namely; expository, poetic, observational, reflexive, participatory and performative. However, a documentary can have more than one mode (Nichols, 2001; Bruzzi, 2000) because it consists of qualities of other modes. In the case of my film, *Reimagining Memories* is largely a performative documentary consisting of participatory qualities. Nichols writes that performative documentaries highlight and place more prominence on the subjective traits of experience and memory, leaning more towards representing subject matters using, “poetic liberties, more unconventional narrative structures, and more subjective forms of representation” (Nichols, 2001:

132). *Reimagining Memories* is structured within the frameworks of the performative mode, consisting of one poetic intervention towards the end of the film in which I reflect on testaments of my grandmother's childhood and her memory-stories that are provided by the participants throughout the film. Another poetic intervention happens towards the middle of the film where I visit the train station that is now abandoned, where my grandmother would board the train heading to Cape Town. The last one, which is connected to audio of a conversation between Nkhono and I at the beginning of the film, is a visual representation of Cape Town CBD consisting of signs of some of the places my grandmother would pass and the spaces she would walk through when she was in the city. These poetic interventions are essentially an experimental way of constructing, representing and engaging with memory in the film – simultaneously highlighting its abstract, dream-like nature.

*Reimagining Memories* does not have a conventional narrative form. Instead, as previously mentioned, the film's structure is constructed around thematic and narrative coordinates based on fragments or moments of Nkhono's childhood in Cape Town. The *thematic* coordinates of the first half of the film highlight oral tradition, and the other half reflects on its importance as a means of preserving and transmitting history. Inasmuch as I aimed to reimagine my grandmother's memories on account of her inability to record them, the storytelling aspect of oral tradition has allowed us to know about my grandmother's history, and to keep her memories alive. On the other hand, the film's *narrative* coordinates consist of establishing some of Nkhono's memory-stories, told predominantly by her children, 'Mathakane and 'Mapaseka. Following this is her sibling's corroboration and contextualisation of these memories, and finally a reflection on the documentary's aims.

While the documentary is based on the reimagining of memories, it is also poetic in how this is approached. The idea was not to appeal to viewers' cognitive reasoning, I wanted them to feel and become immersed in stories about my grandmother's journeys. I therefore wanted to operate on a level of evocation. To achieve this, the editing places more emphasis on visuals, that include sequences of photographs and archival materials, landscapes as well as surroundings 'interrupting' talking head interviews. This encourages viewers to adopt a mode of listening that evokes feelings as the audio functions to tell a story. There are, however, a few scenes in the film where I have left the interview as is because I want to show the emotion on the faces of the interviewees – especially

my grandmother's and her siblings who offer insight into Nkhono's upbringing. The film, then, is a reflection of the act of remembering and, "memory is understood here as a process, as a human capacity on which the film makes a proposal for its audiovisual representation" (Rincón, Cuevas & Torregrosa, 2018: 18). I want viewers to feel as though they are sitting under a tree with my grandmother as her stories are shared with them. When they watch the documentary, I want them to feel as though they are journeying with her, visiting every place, feeling every emotion.

The film is also made up of qualities of the participatory mode in that, "the filmmaker's voice emerges primarily as a perspective on the subject matter of the film" (Nichols, 0000: 118), while the performative mode allows for this perspective to be constructed in relation to the participant's point of view. Interviews are another characteristic of this mode. The interview enables the filmmaker to address the documents in a formal manner. One of the most typical interactions between the documentarian and the film's subjects in the participatory mode is the interview (Nichols, 2001:121). To reimagine my grandmother's memories, and to locate them within their historical context – I relied on interviews conducted with my participants.

Nichols also notes that, similar to the performative mode, there are cases where the filmmaker's voice emerges in the participatory documentary – adopting a reflexive stance. Together with the interviews, which are reflective on their own, I incorporated narration where I too reflect on my grandmother's childhood. The use of narration in the film is threefold, it establishes transition from one narrative point to another, recalls Nkhono's return to Cape Town after decades, and reflects on the participants' contributions, corroborations and their own reflections of memory and remembering through poetry. In so doing, narration as a whole serves as a diary-like reflection of my grandmother's life and how her stories, that have filtered down generations, have impacted not only our perceptions of her memories, but the way that we see and think about ourselves as a result. Moreover, I also appear in an experimental scene where I'm moving about the Cape Town CBD, over-layered with visuals of the city that are sites of Nkhono's memories. I do not only construct memory – by physically being in, and showing sites of memory as well as imagining movement within those spaces - I also highlight the relationship that the Self, this being myself as the filmmaker, has with the film's participants who also reflect on her memories.

Although I was working with family when making this film, it is always essential to consider the power dynamics between the researcher/filmmaker and the participants. On this, Nichols notes that the documentarian, “retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of power and control over events” (Nichols, 2001: 116). It is thus imperative that I reflect on the above in relation to the filmmaking process. There is indeed a certain level of influence and control that the filmmaker has over how events play out during both the production and the editing process. Considering the relationship between the documentarian and the documented is essential – and how control is negotiated between them. In order to mitigate this inherent power, I was constantly in communication with my family – both part and not part of the film – about how I wanted to approach *Reimagining Memories*, and how I intended on documenting it.

The film opens with audio from a conversation between my grandmother and I about Cape Town, and the different places I have lived throughout my years in the city. After my arrival in Cape Town, this is how we would begin talking about her childhood. Before, I would just hear about places like Mowbray, Salt River, Claremont and Wynberg from her train trips from home to the CBD. The audio is accompanied by visuals of descending family photographs. The opening is followed by a sequence of mountainous landscapes aimed at locating the viewer with Nkhono’s country of birth. Moreover, the brief landscape montage generally establishes her both in the past – where her stories take place – and in the present as she is captured in interviews. The beginning part of *Reimagining Memories* relays the earliest recollections the participants have of Nkhono’s stories, including some of the fondest memories she has of her travels to Cape Town, and the time she would spend in the city. The narrative and thematic point of the early parts of the film introduce the construction of memory with photographs of participants when they were younger. Thematically, oral tradition is foregrounded when ‘Mathakane and ‘Mapaseka recount one of their favourite memory-stories – when on one of her trips, Nkhono was carrying packed food, *mofao*, on the train. When it reached Cape Town, she was so excited that she ran towards the exit even before the train stopped, and fell. The food she was carrying in her little basket flew out of her hands, onto the ground scattering her home cooked bread and chicken across the floor.

The scene above is intercut with visuals of moving landscapes of the border out of Lesotho into Ficksburg, signifying movement from one place to another; a South African railways map that outlines the route the train would take, and a shot from the interior of a train moving across Cape

Town. Together with the story they are reflecting on, the act of remembering is a performance of memory, and these visuals aim to capture these memories and visually relay them. Following this is the first poetic sequence of Ficksburg train station which, today, is abandoned consisting only of deserted buildings and rusted train tracks. A poem is recited through song – accompanied by visuals of the train station my grandmother boarded all those years ago to go to Cape Town. I reimagine this memory through ‘Mathakane, who walks towards and sits on the benches (which were since renovated in later years) where Nkhono used to wait for her train.

The second narrative coordinate ensues when my grandmother and her siblings are introduced in the film. This coordinate indicates progression from the participants who recount and reflect on memories shared about Cape Town, to the participants who have lived experiences of them. Recollections of the first encounters of Nkhono and her family’s life in Cape Town, and stories from that time are given context. ‘Maphakoa (‘Maremametse Phakoa) shares the reasons her father left Lesotho for Cape Town. Nkhono corroborates that her father worked on the railways while her mother was a housewife and seamstress who also brewed beer. Nkhono then shares and reflects on a moment from one of her visits – going to the beach with her family. Binaries of rural and urban, as well as of place (Lesotho and Cape Town) come into play here as she shares that because she was unfamiliar with the ocean – she was afraid of it compared to her siblings who lived in Cape Town. The film then begins to pose questions that draw attention to the political climate of that time – seeking to unpack Nkhono’s experiences in conjunction with the realities of living in Cape Town as a black person. While Nkhono shares a dear memory, Christopher reflects on the family having to go to Kalk Bay because it was the only beach black people were allowed access to. The film then focuses on her siblings’ experiences of the city.

In this section of the film, two conventions of documentary are used to construct memory: interview and archive, and as previously discussed Waterson (2007) regards interviews as performative acts of remembering. Furthermore, the way that shots are composed is able to show audiences the emotion and state of mind of the interviewee through facial expressions, hesitations, tone, pitch and so on. Interviews in the second narrative coordinate are left as is, and are shot from one angle. The intention here is to allow viewers to sit with the participants as they reflect on childhood and the effects of apartheid in their upbringing. Where there are cutaways, memory here is constructed by, and reflected on through the documentary genre’s convention of the archive.

The third, and final, narrative coordinate goes back to oral tradition, a theme identified in this paper that plays out in the film. Nkhono did not have the means to document cherished moments from her childhood, and as a result these memories have continued to exist on account of the storytelling aspect of oral tradition. This is shown in the interviews where 'Mapaseka and 'Mathakane share one of the many stories they heard growing up. Additionally, in hearing some of the memory-stories and locating them within their historical context, the final narrative coordinate goes back and reflects on the previous. Christopher speaks on why Nkhono has such fond memories of Cape Town, despite the political climate of that time – while 'Mathakane reflects on how they have to rely on Nkhono's *telling* of her memories as a means to preserve and transmit them. She also shares that had Nkhono been able to document herself, maybe they would have been able to know more about where their mother came from, how life in Cape Town in those days was, and to physically see my grandmother's memories. These photographs would also go as far as forming part of her legacy through the moments that are captured within them.

## Final reflections on what *Reimagining Memories*' thematic and narrative coordinates say broadly about personal memory

In a conversation while recording Nkhono's interview, I had asked her to share some of her memories of Cape Town – from train trips, to the time she would spend in the city and the things she would do with her family. Initially, she responded saying she does not remember. This highlights the selectivity of memory because later when she introduces herself in the film and talks about her *family's* history of Cape Town - she begins to remember, starting with where her father worked, to the fact that her mother was a housewife. The selectivity and subjectivity of memory is also made evident through drawing attention to what the film says about my grandmother's love for Cape Town even with the political unrest of that time. In his interview, Christopher states that his sister feels the way she does about Cape Town because her family lived there. Furthermore, there are many instances in the film where it is mentioned that she was the only one who did not live in Cape Town whereas the rest of her siblings did, and so for her Cape Town was about family more than it was about anything else.

In a part of her interview that is not in film, my grandmother reflected a little on the fact that she was aware of the realities of apartheid in Cape Town. 'Mathakane also corroborated this in an unseen clip of her interview saying that Nkhono's memories of the city are selective on account of associating the space with family – subsequently affecting how and what she remembered of Cape Town. Moreover, her life was not based in the city. She used to move in and out of it, and in doing so she did not fully experience the realities of living in Cape Town during apartheid. Christopher adds to this when he states that going to the city was about seeing family, thus her core memories of the space were informed by this. Historical memory of Cape Town is reflected on through the use of archival material of Cape Town in the 1950s and of Apartheid signage – and the subjectivity of memory is signified through interviews that show that people, places, food and experiences strongly influenced Nkhono's personal memory of Cape Town. At the end of the film, she also reflects on why it is so dear to her heart, saying "I still hold it close to my heart because my family lived there for many years".

## Conclusion

Based on the film, this mini-thesis set out to examine the representation of personal memory using documentary conventions of archive, testament as well as experiment. Through the use of these conventions, together with cinematic devices of sound, dialogue, mise-en-scene and action - memory is constructed in the film and explored. The use of interviews allowed for not only dialogue-based memory construction, they also showcased the performance of memory, especially in the way that they were recorded. In the film, personal memory is represented through the imagination or re-imagination of my grandmother's childhood stories of Cape Town. Personal memory is also expressed through the testimonies of the participants who help in answering pertinent questions of memory and its selectivity.

In the beginning, the film establishes some of the participant's first encounters with stories of how their family came to have a history in Cape Town. The beginning part of the film signifies the central theme of oral tradition which was explored more in the paper. The second part of the film then progresses to locating these stories, memories, and family history within historical context. Moreover, this is when the participants who have lived experience of Cape Town, are introduced. Through this introduction, the audience gets to know more about my grandparent's parents, and how the family came to move to the city. Additionally, viewers then come to know of personal experiences of living as a person of color from another country in Cape Town. Finally, the film reflects on the importance of oral tradition as a means of preserving and transmitting memories. In films of memory, certain objects evoke or resemble reflections of memory. In the case of *Reimagining Memories*, there are instances where photographs are used to not only indicate or stand in for memory, but they are also used to foreground the fact that the film deals with the reimagining of memories because Nkhono was not able to document herself. The film also relies on the performance of memory, which involves the act of remembering to construct memory in the now based on the past.

Finally, it is essential that I reflect on autoethnography, as well as the performative and participatory mode. The performative mode allows for the personal perspective of the filmmaker to exist in relation to other participants in the film. In order to explore memory, and how my grandmother's stories have been told and passed down generations, the correlation between my

point of view and my family's is established within the film – this is done in a way where the intimate/close relationship between the filmmaker and the participants is/can be understood. The 'auto' in autoethnography is a method that establishes what the filmmaker, or the self, has in common with others. In this case, as a relative of the participants – I had insight of the memory-stories they reflected on in the film, and in working with them, I was able to explore them in conjunction with my research queries. Moreover, similar to approaches to participatory documentary, autoethnography involves participatory involvement between the filmmaker and the film's participants. In *Reimagining Memories*, my presence in the film exists alongside the participants. I lastly rely on the contributions of my family to delve further into exploring my grandmother's memory-stories.

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## **Filmography**

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