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Acts of remembering in contemporary Nordic documentary film

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ABSTRACT

Acts of remembering in documentary film create temporal, audiovisual compilations that interweave historical and imagined realities. They disrupt linear perceptions of temporality, and generate new ways of perceiving, feeling and thinking pasts (and presents) with the films.

In this article-based dissertation, situated between documentary film studies and cultural memory studies, I examine the aesthetics and politics of remembering in Nordic documentary films produced during the 21st century. Remembering is thus related to both the aesthetic form of the films, such as autobiography, the use of archival material and dramatizations, as well as their ethical and political stakes. In the research, remembering is understood as evocative and generative act, where pasts become present in this moment, and the present affects the ways in which we imagine, experience and perceive pasts, as part of the present.

The research delves into the Nordic audiovisual memory culture, where in the recent decades discussions on various "difficult" pasts have been initiated. These relate to, for example, Nordic colonialism or women's experiences during and after the Second World War. I have examined closer five films, which can be located to the field of Nordic creative documentary. They are *Santra and the Talking Trees* (2013, dir. Miia Tervo), *Sámi Daughter Yoik* (2007, dir. Liselotte Wajstedt), *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* (2016, dir. Katja Gauriloff), *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* (2010, dir. Virpi Suutari) and *The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge* (2014, dir. Alejo Moguillansky and Fia-Stina Sandlund). Two of the films are directed by Sámi filmmakers (Wajstedt and Gauriloff). The films studied participate in cultural memory work, where questions of belonging and non-belonging, decolonial agency and redeeming history are negotiated. Their topics and production background reflect the transnational nature of contemporary Nordic documentary industry.

Through "multidirectional" audiovisual analysis, the films included in the research open up new perspectives on the forms and practices of documentary remembering: they seek to re-establish a connection to the world, disrupt and complement dominant historical narratives as well as produce non-linear conceptions of temporality. The films layer, fold and manipulate time, thus diversifying the ways in which we understand the connections between temporalities and historical agencies. In the temporal folds created by the films, historical and fictional times also overlap.

Remembering appears in the films as performative acts that make it possible to reimagine pasts in this moment. In them, both film subjects as well as images and films themselves act as remembering agents. Documentary remembering is thus not only a matter of re-presenting pasts or (re-)mediating remembrance, but of re-creating pasts, while utilizing various aesthetic tactics: audiovisual *traces* and embodied material-performative acts that affect in the present moment (of the film); *gaps* created within the film narration that invite the viewer to imagine pasts with the films; and temporal *constellations* that create connections between historical and fictional temporalities and agencies.

In the research, I discovered four acts of documentary remembering, which generate unique, living aesthetico-political relations with the narrated and experienced pasts. In them, the films *reanimate*, *reclaim* as well as seek to *redeem* and *derail* pasts. In the acts of remembering, cinematic worlds harness the forces of pasts that appeal to the viewer and the historical moment we live in.

KEYWORDS: documentary film, cinematic remembering, temporal constellations, memory work, documentary aesthetics, Nordic film

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Muistamisen teot ja esitykset dokumentaarisissa elokuvissa luovat audiovisuaalisia, ajallisia koosteita, jotka kietovat yhteen historiallisia ja kuviteltuja todellisuuksia. Samalla ne häiritsevät lineaarista aikakäsitystä sekä tuottavat uusia tapoja havaita, ajatella ja tuntea menneisyyksiä (ja nykyisyyksiä) elokuvien kanssa.

Dokumentaarisen elokuvan ja kulttuurisen muistin tutkimuksesta ammentavassa artikkeliväitöskirjassa tarkastelen muistamisen estetiikkaa ja politiikkaa 2000-luvulla Pohjoismaissa tuotetuissa dokumentaarisissa elokuvissa. Muistaminen liittyy siten sekä elokuvien esteettiseen muotoon, kuten omaelämäkerrallisuuteen, arkistomateriaalin käyttöön ja dramatisointeihin, että niiden eettisiin ja poliittisiin kytkentöihin. Muistaminen ymmärretään tutkimuksessa aktiivisena, uutta luovana tekona, jossa menneisyydet tulevat läsnä oleviksi tässä hetkessä, ja nykyisyys vaikuttaa tapoihin, joilla kuvittelemme, koemme ja ymmärrämme menneisyyttä, osana nykyhetkeä.

Tutkimus porautuu pohjoismaiseen audiovisuaaliseen muistikulttuuriin, jossa on 2000-luvulla käynnistetty keskusteluja erilaisista ”vaikeista” menneisyyksistä, liittyen esimerkiksi pohjoismaiseen kolonialismiin tai naisten kokemuksiin toisen maailmansodan aikana ja sen jälkimainingeissa. Tutkin lähemmin viittä pohjoismaisen luovan dokumentaarin kentälle sijoittuvaa elokuvaa. Ne ovat Miia Tervon ohjaama *Santra ja puhuvat puut* (2013), Liselotte Wajstedtin *Sámi Nieida Jojk* (2007), Katja Gauriloffin *Kuun metsän Kaisa* (2016), Virpi Suutarin *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* (2010) ja Alejo Moguillanskyn sekä Fia-Stina Sandlundin *El escarabajo de oro, o Victoria’s hämnd* (2014). Elokuvista kaksi on saamelaisten elokuvantekijöiden (Wajstedt ja Gauriloff) ohjaamia. Tutkimusaineiston elokuvat osallistuvat kulttuuriseen muistityöhön, jossa neuvotellaan kuulumisen ja ei-kuulumisen, dekoloniaalin toimijuuden ja historian lunastamisen kysymyksistä. Niiden aihepiirit ja tuotantotausta heijastelevat pohjoismaisen nykydokumentaarin transnationaalia luonnetta.

Tutkimuksessa mukana olleista elokuvista avautuu ”monisuuntaisen” audiovisuaalisen analyysin keinoin uusia näkymiä dokumentaarisen muistamisen muotoihin ja käytäntöihin: ne käsittelevät maailmaan kiinnittymisen kokemusta, häiriköivät ja täydentävät dominoivia historiallisia kertomuksia sekä tuottavat nonlineaarisia ajallisuuden käsityksiä. Elokuvat kerrostavat, poimuttavat ja manipuloivat aikaa monipuolistaen siten tapoja, joilla ymmärrämme ajallisia ja historiallisten toimi-

juuksien välisiä kytköksiä. Elokuvien luomissa ajallisissa laskoksissa myös historialliset ja fiktiiviset ajat limittyvät toisiinsa.

Muistaminen esiintyy tutkimusaineiston dokumentaarisissa elokuvissa performatiivisina tekoina ja esityksinä, jotka tarjoavat mahdollisuuden menneisyyden uudelleenkuvitteluun tässä hetkessä. Niissä sekä elokuvasubjektit että audiovisuaaliset kuvat ja elokuvat itsessään esiintyvät muistavina toimijoina. Kyse ei ole siten vain menneisyyden uudelleenesittämisestä tai muistamisen (uudelleen)välittämisestä, vaan niiden uudelleenluomisesta, hyödyntäen erilaisia dokumentaarisen muistamisen esteettisiä taktiikoita: audiovisuaalisia *jälkiä* ja keholliseen läsnäoloon kytkeytyviä materiaalis-performatiivisia tekoja, jotka vaikuttavat (elokuvan) nykyhetkessä; elokuvakerrontaan luotuja *aukkoja*, jotka kutsuvat kuvittelemaan menneisyyttä elokuvan kanssa; sekä ajallisia *konstellaatioita*, jotka luovat yhteyksiä historiallisten ja fiktiivisten aikojen sekä toimijuuksien välille.

Tutkimuksessa löysin elokuvista neljä muistamisen muotoa, jotka synnyttävät ainutlaatuisia ja eläviä esteettis-poliittisia suhteita kerrottuihin ja koettuihin menneisyyksiin. Niissä elokuvat ”uudelleen elostuttavat” (*reanimate*), vaativat takaisin (*reclaim*) sekä pyrkivät lunastamaan (*redeem*) ja horjuttamaan (*derail*) menneisyyksiä. Muistamisen teoissa elokuvamaailmat valjastavat käyttöönsä menneisyyden voimia, jotka esittävät vetoomuksensa katsojalle, ja historialliselle hetkelle, jota elämme.

ASIASANAT: dokumentaarinen elokuva, elokuvallinen muistaminen, ajalliset konstellaatiot, muistityö, dokumentaarinen estetiikka, pohjoismainen elokuva

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On a fresh and bright 4th day of November, 2024, in Turku

Niina Oisalo

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List of original publications

This dissertation is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by numbers 1–4. All four articles presented in this dissertation are published in academic peer-reviewed publications. Please cite the original place of publication when referring to them.

1. Niina Oisalo. Cinematic Worlding: Animating Karelia in *Santra and the Talking Trees*. *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 2016; 6 (2): 153–168. https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca.6.2.153_1
2. Niina Oisalo. Saamelaisuuden maisemissa: kuulumisen ylirajaisuus *Sámi Nieida Jojk* ja *Kuun metsän Kaisa* -elokuvissa. In *Kuulumisen reittejä taiteessa* (eds. Kaisa Hiltunen & Nina Sääskilahti), 2019; Eetos: 127–148.
3. Niina Oisalo. Enemies within: Reimagining the 'Fallen Women' of World War II in Finnish Contemporary Documentary. In *The Enemy in Contemporary Film* (eds. Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż & Martin Löschnigg), 2018; De Gruyter: 145–158. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110591217-009
4. Niina Oisalo. How does a film remember? Cinematic memory as a living constellation in *El escarabajo de oro, or Victorias Hämnd*. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 2022; article number 2040153, 14 (1): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2022.2040153

1 *Crew* – objectives and questions

There is no film without the crew, who work behind the scenes, exercising their vision and dedication.[1]

In this research, I ask how documentaries generate acts of remembering – with remembering bodies and remains, imagined histories and entangled temporalities. I explore aesthetics of remembering in Nordic documentaries, as well as their socio-cultural environments, while tracing the memory work that the films activate and contribute to. These aesthetic considerations are grounded in practices of documentary filmmaking, that is, traces that the films carry about the process of their making.

This research is situated in the field of documentary film studies. However, cultural memory studies[2] affords valuable concepts to work with the non-linear understandings of temporality that the films propose. Furthermore, the articles draw on perspectives offered by film theory and Indigenous studies.

The material for the analysis consists of five Nordic documentaries in which remembering plays an important role. Two of them are Finnish productions, one Finnish-Sámi, one Swedish-Sámi and one is a Danish-Argentinian-Swedish co-production. Two of them are thus Indigenous films, directed by Sámi[3] filmmakers. Yet, all the films transcend the national borders of their production countries and are in fact more transnational endeavors in terms of their makers, subjects, narratives and the pasts they evoke. Two of the films are autobiographical, one is biographical,

1 These epigraphs are conceived by the author and describe the role of the chapter in relation to the work as a whole, using filmmaking vocabulary.

2 More specifically, the work can be connected to the field of media memory studies. According to Dagmar Brunow (2015, 1–2), it supplements cultural memory studies by offering "a heuristic device" to emphasize the role of media in the construction of cultural memory.

3 The Sámi are a linguistically Finno-Ugric Indigenous people living traditionally in the Sámi land, or *Sápmi* (in Northern Sámi), which stretches over the Arctic areas of four nation-states – Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in northwest Russia. They speak 9 different Sámi languages (some languages have died or been assimilated), live and practice their culture in different ways. See, e.g., Valkonen 2009, 10.

one a testimonial documentary and one a hybrid that immerses documentary elements into a fully dramatized setting. In this respect, they complement one other by bringing into discussion acts of remembering that are involved in distinct practices of filmmaking.

The films present remembering as a performative and vibrant process that creates new ways to intervene in historical narratives. There is something critical at stake in these cinematic acts of remembering (Kuhn 2002 [1995]; Bal et al. 1999), touching on processes of trauma, belonging and becoming. The films present a search for belonging in the Karelian rune lands by creating a magical-realist film-world (*Santra and the Talking Trees*); experiences of the daughters of the "lost" Sámi generation who seek connection with the tradition of Sámi storytellers through practices of auto- and biographical documentary filmmaking (*Sámi Daughter Yoik & Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*); witness accounts of the Finnish women who followed Nazi soldiers from Lapland to Germany in the final stages of the Second World War through their testimonies (*Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*); and transnational histories of unequal power relations between Europe and South America by a performance of a filmmaking process (*The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge*). Media articles related to the films, such as film reviews and directors' interviews offer supplementary material for the analysis of the films' environments, looking into the ways in which documentaries participate in reworking Nordic memory cultures.

The research seeks to deepen the understanding of the aesthetico-political ways in which remembering takes place in documentary. On a broader level, the aim of the research is two-fold: firstly, it proposes documentary film as an active agent in memory work, and secondly, it pursues a theoretical interest in developing an interdisciplinary approach to documentary remembering that breeds with cultural memory studies.

I have thus examined the aesthetics and politics of remembering entangled in the researched films, which means looking into the *cinematic techniques* involved in the acts of remembering while considering the films as sensorial and sense-making operations embedded in the *practices of filmmaking*, and the wider socio-cultural and ethical discussions that they give rise to. I want to show how documentaries merge with the *memory work* of individuals, groups and societies that transcends the borders of nation-states. In the process, the films resist, replenish, complicate and meddle with historical narratives.

Documentary offers an inspiring ground to examine acts of remembering, as it involves our capacity to imagine.[4] This aspect relates to all of the three aesthetic phenomena that have emerged during this research. Past lives and events produce *traces*. These traces leave their mark on various audiovisual materials that are brought together in the film-world. In the documentaries studied, pasts are not addressed as a compartmentalized, separate set of events, but as a process still affecting how we live in the present and the potentialities that the future holds. The ambiguity of remembering is present in all the researched films as *gaps*, which invite imaginative leaps (Hirsch 2012 [1997], 5) and critical reflection. The films call for the viewer to actively engage with temporalities as living *constellations* (see Lange 2014). These constellations make visible the malleability of time and form new relations between temporalities. Remembering is thus a generative act, an intervention that, therefore, always involves a certain politics. The politicality of documentary remembering means that it shapes agencies and possibilities in the present, including the perceivable and the imaginable, and thus also has implications for the future (see, e.g., Meretoja 2018).

In the films studied, the acts of remembering attempt to (re-)connect with the world – to create continuity and affinities through the process of documentary filmmaking. The cultural mediations of remembering are particularly important to study in the present historical moment, when many forms of "uncomfortable" Nordic pasts are finally beginning to be uncovered. They involve events, individuals and groups that have been marginalized in the dominant narratives, such as the Sámi people's historical experiences. This research calls for more awareness of the ways in which audiovisual, mediated memory operates in our culture and society. It highlights the active and embodied nature of remembering, and how documentaries can take part in imagining alternative pasts and futures while building conditions for living with both hope and despair.

In the four original articles and this summary section, I analyze how the acts of remembering compose new historical narratives with the specific aesthetic techniques and practices of documentary filmmaking. These include, among others, archival montage, the framing of testimonial interviews or the embodied practices of reenactment. Simultaneously, the films raise important ethical questions, such as how traumatic experiences should be approached in documentary filmmaking.

The main research question addressed is: *How do documentaries remember?* In other words, how are acts of remembering expressed in the analyzed films?

[4] Psychological studies in fact show that the human capability to remember is reliant on the ability to imagine, and vice versa. For this reason, brain damage causing memory impairment also inhibits the ability to, for example, imagine the future (see De Brigard et al. 2013).

The three research subquestions (SQ) cover distinct aspects of documentary remembering examined in the articles (A):
SQ1. *How can acts of remembering change one's relation to the world?* (A 1 & 2)
SQ2. *How to negotiate agency through acts of remembering?* (A 2 & 3)
SQ3. *How do acts of remembering recreate pasts?* (A 1 & 4)

The subquestions cover the aspects of transformation in acts of remembering – how do the films create world-relations (SQ1) and new realities (SQ3) as well as agency (SQ2). The questions thus bring forth complementary aspects of documentary remembering in the context of documentary as an agent in memory work. Keywords of the research subquestions[5] are presented in figure 1 (in green) in relation to the articles and acts of remembering that emerged from the films (in yellow in the figure; these are addressed in chapter 8).

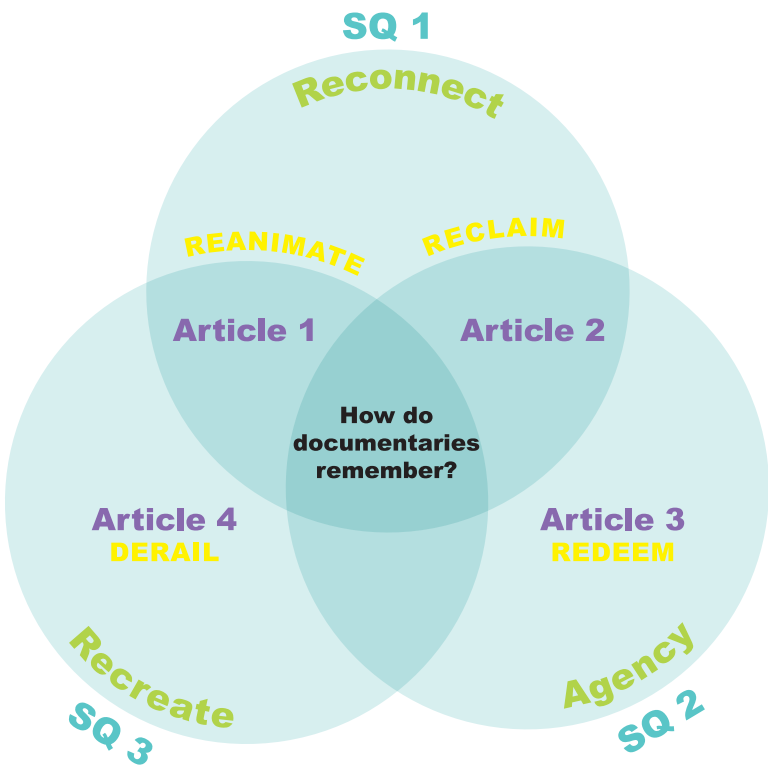

Figure 1. The subquestions' relation to the articles and the acts of remembering addressed.

[5] SQ1 is presented with the keyword "Reconnect", which alludes to the findings of the work.

The cover image is from a dramatized scene in Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, shot on sensitive film stock. It is the final scene in the film and takes place after the last words of the film have been spoken. In the heavily grained image, a young woman leaning on a man's chest turns her gaze towards the camera, and the viewer, inviting the audience into the same time-space of the film. Here, the gesture embodies a moment when "the past" looks into "the present", perhaps calling for the viewer's responsibility to remember. It reminds us of the film's capability to collapse temporal distances and to disturb homogenous conceptions of time (see Cua Lim 2009). The image from the reenactment effects "a fold in time", as Bill Nichols (2008, 88) writes, entwining the present with an imagined past. It is "a temporal vivification in which past and present coexist in the impossible space of a fantasmatic" (ibid.) The time-space created by the film evokes the ongoingness of the past. In this shared instant, the image invites the audience to imagine alternative pasts, together.*[6] *Evocative cinematic moments such as this have been important in my research process, where I have worked with a multidirectional intention, allowing the films to guide my work (for further discussion on the methodology, see subchapter 7.1). Here, the close-up of the human face beckons the viewer; it becomes a poignant force whose presence calls for a response.*[7] *It asks the viewer to enter into a relationship with the past (of the film).*

6 See also Renov 2012 on the functions of facial close-up as a form of embodied testimony. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas' and Bela Balázs' thinking, he outlines close-up as an image that engages the viewer deeply and "effectuates the proximity and exposure to wounding, the demand to answer the call to become the one-penetrated-by-the-other".

7 This moment also resonates with the idea that an artwork could look back at us. Walter Benjamin (2007 [1968], 188) described how this kind of encounter has an auratic quality, as it transforms our relationship with an object (or artwork) into one we might have with another human being. See also Laura U. Marks' (2000, 80–81) discussion on "fetish-like" objects in films that hold histories in them. I return to this idea later on in relation to remembering with traces.

2 *Script* – research design

The script outlines the plan for filming, the main storyline and its characters and the organization of sequences. It forms the spine of the cinematic work.

Table 1, on the next page, introduces the orientations of the original articles and their role in the research. In the matrix, the specific research questions of each article are also introduced. In addition to the different aspects of documentary remembering, the articles complement one another by looking into distinct filmmaking practices, such as auto- and biographical filmmaking, and different aesthetic forms of remembering, such as sensorial memory, material-performative memory and constellational memory. They also concentrate on diverse aesthetic techniques, such as archival montage and framing of interviews.

Yet, there are also shared aesthetic traits, such as the use of archival material, which is analyzed in articles 1, 2 and 3. In this case, the articles offer different perspectives on the archival aesthetic in the context of remembering.

Table 1. How do documentaries remember? Overview of the research design.

Article no.	*Research material*	*Main concepts & type of memory discussed*	*Article's specific research question(s)*	*Role in the whole: pasts remembered & cinematic techniques and practices addressed*	*Act of remembering*
1.	Santra and the Talking Trees (2013)	Cinematic worlding & sensorial memory	How to relate with a mythical past in cinematic aesthetics?	Remembering mythical past & archival montage (editing), autobiographical filmmaking	RE-ANIMATE
2.	Sámi Daughter Yoik (2007) & Kaisa's Enchanted Forest (2016)	Belonging & material-performative memory	How does cinematic aesthetics express forms of belonging (and non-belonging)?	Remembering Indigenous past & cinematography, after effects, auto- and biographical filmmaking	RE-CLAIM
3.	Auf Wiedersehen Finnland (2010)	Re-collection image & cultural memory	How to ethically approach a traumatic past?	Remembering traumatic past & framing of interviews, use of archival footage, testimonial documentary	RE-DEEM
4.	The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge (2014)	Performance & constellational memory	How to remember colonial pasts with cinematic aesthetics? & How does a film remember?	Remembering colonial pasts (in relation to colonial presents) & reenactment, voice-over, dramatized documentary	DE-RAIL

3 *Freeze frame* – background

A cineast freezes the view into a certain spot,
she stops time in order to be able to sense and think with the image,
to describe the palpable environment (but the world keeps moving).

The idea of *ongoingness of the past*, or past*s*[8] that have not passed, sweeps through this research. Documentary filmmaking is a mnemonic practice that creates ways to engage with pasts that are still here. The films studied touch upon many pasts, real and imagined – the mythical past, 17th- and 20th-century European and Latin-American pasts, the Second World War and its aftermaths, as well as the long processes of colonization. All of these reverberate in the present, in the early 21st century.

As Astrid Erll (2020, 861) points out, memory studies, among other Western research fields, has carried the baggage of a Newtonian conception of linear time, implicated in modernity's capitalist, colonialist and racist orders. However, other perspectives, such as those of modern physics, particularly quantum theory or new materialism (see, e.g., Barad 2017), have also challenged the idea of linear time. Different conceptions of temporality are always entangled with life-worlds (Hristova, Ferrándiz & Vollmeyer 2020, 778–779; Erll 2020, 862).[9] This research calls for a more complex understanding of temporality in documentary, where remembering is intrinsically connected to performing, staging and experimenting with pasts. Here, remembering is considered as a process that does not move only from the present towards the past, but involves a variety of ways by which pasts and presents intertwine.

[8] Pasts are not considered in this work as a monolith – *the* past – but plural and polyphonic in their experiences and manifestations. The films devise multiple pasts in the present moment that operate through what Adrian Ivakhiv (2013, x) calls cinematic "object-worlds, subject-worlds, and life-worlds".

[9] Elsewhere, the passing of time and the nature of temporality have been described with various concepts. These include cyclical and seasonal time in Indigenous cultures (e.g., Little Bear 2000, 78), time conceived as a network (Rovelli 2018, 115), rhythm (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]), constellation (Benjamin 2002 [1972–89], 463) or duration and simultaneity (Bergson 2002 [1922]). Of these, most attention is given in this research to the metaphor of constellation, though other conceptions are also briefly touched upon.

Film is "a temporal art" that has the capacity to manipulate time by reworking temporal elements such as rhythm, duration and repetition (Wahlberg 2008, xiii). In addition to this, as Malin Wahlberg (ibid., xiv) points out, recorded film images have a mnemonic quality in themselves, as they hold traces of pasts that open up to time experience and recollection in their "creative staging" of temporality. Film images operate on a double temporality, as they can "perform simultaneously as an image of the present and a trace of the past" (ibid., 6). That is, they have a quality of immanent presence but, at the same time, work as historical referents.

The documentaries researched reveal how temporal layers and continuums interact. They make these connections visible and tangible in the film-worlds, while showing how cinematic time is not linear but multidimensional. Documentary remembering is a process that does not have a clear beginning or end – it forms a wide network of relations between people and places that keeps on expanding.

One could ask how to write about something that continues to grow, to cast its shadows, to shimmer in the present and extend to the future. In this situation, a researcher must simultaneously freeze the frame and allow the world to keep on moving, while acknowledging the ways in which documentaries participate in ongoing memory work.

In this chapter, I will freeze this moment in time to present an overview of the socio-cultural discussions, that is, Nordic memory cultures as fields of memory work in which the articles (and films) take part. Before that, I will introduce the articles and their contributions to set a context for the reader.

3.1 The articles

Article 1, "Cinematic Worlding: Animating Karelia in *Santra and the Talking Trees",* investigates Miia Tervo's short documentary, mentioned in the title (2013, FI, 28 min., *Santra ja puhuvat puut*). The film presents an autobiographical journey, where Tervo searches for a sense of homecoming in White Karelia, the mythical and imagined "origins" of Finnish culture and a region close to the Eastern border of Finland that was ceded to the Soviet Union after the Second World War. There, she meets Santra Remsujeva, an elderly rune singer who carries an immense treasury of folklore tradition within her. For Tervo, the granddaughter of Karelian evacuees, filmmaking becomes a way of imagining and creating a place in which to feel grounded in a world that she experiences as disjointed. In my analysis, I show how cinematic worlding as specific cinematic techniques and an autobiographical filmmaking practice *reanimate* this mythical, imagined Karelia. The first article was published in a special issue on Scandinavian documentary in the *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*. Contributing to the theorization of documentary aesthetics of worlding, it converses mainly with documentary film studies and, to a minor extent, with film philosophy. The article also

adds to the understanding of workings of sensorial cultural memory in documentary, and thus takes part in what has been called the "cinematic sensory turn", which is interested in the sensorial aspects of mediated – and in this case, remembered – worlds (Geiger 2020, 186; see also Pink 2015; Stoller 1997).

In article 2, "Saamelaisuuden maisemissa: kuulumisen ylirajaisuus *Sámi Nieida Jojk* ja *Kuun metsän Kaisa* -elokuvissa",[10] two documentaries created by Sámi filmmakers are examined. *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* (2016, FI, 82 min., *Kuun metsän Kaisa*), directed by Skolt-Sámi Katja Gauriloff, explores the myths of the Skolt Sámi people side by side with their 20th-century experiences. The biographical film weaves together different temporal existences while portraying the friendship between the director's great-grandmother, Kaisa Gauriloff, and the Swiss–Russian writer Robert Crottet. It recounts the story behind Skolt Sámi's battle for survival after their land was ceded to the Soviet Union following the Second World War. In the autobiographical *Sámi Daughter Yoik* (2007, SWE, 58 min., *Sámi Nieida Jojk*), the director with Northern Sámi background, Liselotte Wajstedt travels to her childhood home in Kiruna, Lapland, in *Sápmi*[11]. She wants to discover whether she could feel belonging with the Northern Sámi tradition that her mother did not pass on to her. These films seek to *reclaim* a colonized past that was suppressed by the settler colonialist society. The second article was included in the anthology *Kuulumisen reittejä taiteessa* ("Trails of belonging in art"), published by Eetos, and conceived in cooperation with the research group "Arts of belonging – cultural, material and affective aspects of homing". The book chapters cover various fields in arts studies, such as literature, film, plastic arts and theatre. My chapter brings together documentary film studies and Indigenous studies with emphasis on documentary aesthetics. The article contributes to discussions on the role of performativity in documentary remembering and on the audiovisual aesthetics of belonging. It also adds to the academic discussions on Sámi filmmaking practices, where representations of remembering also become acutely political in the contemporary neocolonial situation. It should still be kept in mind, that the Northern Sámi and Skolt regions, languages, traditions, histories and experiences differ from each other, and thus the films' contributions to Sámi memory cultures are also divergent. I suggest, that the films themselves also contribute to the process of decolonization, as they re-evaluate the effects of the settler colonialist past (and

10 "In the landscapes of Sáminess: belonging that crosses borders in *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest"* (my translation).

11 *Sápmi*, as well as *gákti*, meaning the Sámi dress, are Northern Sámi words, utilized here, because of Wajstedt's Northern Sámi family background and their usage in the film.

present) and through them, the filmmakers reclaim their sovereignty as Sámi storytellers.[12]

The aesthetic analysis in article 3, "Enemies within: Reimagining the 'Fallen Women' of World War II in Finnish Contemporary Documentary", focuses on Virpi Suutari's *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* (2010, FI, 79 min.). In the film, a group of women who fled from Finland with Nazi soldiers try to make peace with their difficult memories of wartime and its aftermaths.[13] The women were stigmatized as traitors and enemies of the Finnish "fatherland", and they had remained silent about their experiences for 65 years at the time of filming. The internalized shame ostracized them from society, even from their families, as they reminded of the disgraceful alliance with Nazi-Germany that others wanted to forget. The women struggle to *redeem* the traumatic pasts through testimonial interviews which are filmed with discretion, allowing them also the possibility to stay silent and maintain distance from the difficult experiences. The film creates a gap between the voice that is heard and the person that is seen in the image, thus paying attention to the ethics of framing acts of remembering. The third article was also a book chapter, included in the anthology *Enemy in Contemporary Film*, published by De Gruyter as part of the series Culture & Conflict. The anthology engaged primarily with cultural memory studies and, in this context, my chapter also took on a broader outlook, focusing more on aspects of cultural memory than on documentary aesthetics, particularly compared to the other research articles.[14] The article contributes to discussions on cultural memory of the Second World War, and particularly war experiences beyond the battlefields as they are remediated in audiovisual media. It also complements research on testimonial documentary, with theorization of performative aesthetics used in an ethical way in the cinematography and in archival montage.

12 According to Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (2013, 73), decolonization is "the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms". This includes "the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power" (ibid.). In the case of the Sámi, the structures of colonialist hegemony are still prevailing, which complicates and hinders the process of decolonization (Kuokkanen 2007, 146).

13 Mari Soppela's *Who the Devil Can See in the dark* (2015, FI, 71 min., *Kuka piru pimeässä näkee*) is also discussed in the article as secondary material. In the autobiographical documentary, Soppela tries to track down her unknown grandfather, who is suspected to have been a German soldier.

14 The challenge in writing article 3 was to accommodate the dissertation's focus on documentary aesthetics with the editors' wishes to foreground cultural memory. Though the latter is emphasized in the article, I was later able to give presentations that deepened my work on the aesthetics of remembering in the film. To compensate for the scarcity of film analysis in the article itself, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* receives slightly more space, in relation to the other films, in the chapters 7 and 8 on concepts and findings.

Lastly, article 4, "How does a film remember? Cinematic memory as a living constellation in *El escarabajo de oro, o Victoria's Hämnd"*, engages with *The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge* (2014, DK, ARG, SWE, 100 min.), directed by Alejo Moguillansky and Fia-Stina Sandlund. It is a dramatized performance of a real filmmaking process, where several historical and fictional narratives compete for their place in the film. I suggest that, in the documentary, reenactments and voice-over narration are used to *recreate* a constellation of European and South American colonial pasts that criticize the ongoing processes of neocolonialism in the transnational filmmaking industry. The fourth research article was published in the *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, whose audience is mainly comprised of scholars in aesthetics, art, media and cultural studies. The journal calls for research on aesthetic and cultural phenomena, and particularly "close studies of cases, art-works or media-productions in order to foster new thoughts, methods and theories" (Taylor & Francis Online 2024). My article presented a close study that was a cross-fertilization between documentary studies and memory studies, with a focus on cinematic aesthetics. It contributes to discussions on the politics of remediating colonial narratives in cinema.

3.2 Nordic memory cultures in the early 21st century

Documentary remembering refers in this work to acts of remembering by filmmakers, (other) film subjects or films and images themselves. Each documentary produces memory in its own particular way and, at the same time, becomes part of the social arena, where understandings and experiences of pasts are summoned and debated. The films are involved in "memory cultures"[15] (Assmann 2011), the ways in which pasts are remembered in a certain cultural region and in a specific historical moment – in this case, the Nordic countries[16] at the beginning of the 21st century.

This research focuses on pasts that have been mostly left out of dominant historical narratives, such as Nordic colonialism, or histories of displacement and

[15] Concepts such as historical consciousness (see, e.g., Bjerg, Lenz & Thorstensen 2011) or history culture (see, e.g., Kortti 2016) have also been used in research to describe the ways in which histories become actual in the present.

[16] Nordicness can be considered a living practice, "something more than a geographical region", as defined by film scholar Tytti Soila in our conversation in 2017. It is a porous, flexible and contested concept (see, e.g., Marjanen et al. 2022), but often based upon common political, cultural and societal ideas that have historically been shared by these countries, such as gender equality and welfare state based on equal rights to health care, education and housing. Though the societal execution of some of these ideals has waned in recent decades, they still form an important part of the political rhetoric.

exclusion (see, e.g., Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012). In *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik,* the effects of colonialism loom in the background as the waning connection to Sámi ancestors. In *The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge* (further on, *The Gold Bug*), (neo)colonial relations between Europe and the Global South, particularly South America, are brought to the fore. *Santra and the Talking Trees, Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* also convey the repercussions of the Second World War, speaking from positions that have been largely omitted from the national grand narratives, though tackled with in the arts, such as literature.

In the documentaries studied, the filmmakers approach these so-called "difficult pasts" anew – as well as the dominant ways of viewing these pasts, challenging the reluctance and reticence of previous generations to confront them.[17] By shedding light on issues such as Nordic colonialism, the filmmakers participate in the debates on the role of the Nordic countries in the cycles of globalization and modernization. They invoke historical and intimate narratives that have not gained as much attention as the World Wars or the Holocaust in European[18] memory cultures. The films awaken ambivalent emotions and challenge linear and clear-cut national narratives, such as the Finnish narrative of a "separate war", describing the "extraordinary" conditions under which the country sought cooperation with Nazi Germany, or the narrative of "Nordic exceptionalism" in relation to histories of colonialism, where the Nordic countries are described as "innocent bystanders" in relation to the atrocities of other European imperialists (see, e.g., Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012).

17 Though a widespread notion in the academic literature, the idea of a *difficult past* is rarely defined. Gross & Terra (2019, 4) claim that difficult histories are nationally important but "refute broadly accepted versions of the past". They make us confront uneasy topics and often involve state-sanctioned violence (ibid.). Yet, there is no consensus on what should be considered "difficult". Neither do events remain equally difficult over time (ibid.) Thus, I hesitate to call the pasts touched upon in the films "difficult". Surely, they do not appear equally difficult, and their difficulty is not always emphasized in the films. Still, situations in the films have grown from troubled, even violent histories, such as war and colonialism. For the most part, the films do not depict these difficult pasts in themselves but rather their repercussions, sometimes in ironic or playful ways. Here, the definition of Wolnik et al. (2017, 164) could be more useful, as they emphasize how the notion of a difficult past entails a dynamic process between different *interpretations* of the past: the official one, the academically informed one and the one based on individuals' memories. The difficultness here thus encloses friction between mnemonic agents, emphasizing the *contested* nature of remembering (see also Hodgkin & Radstone 2003).

18 On the significance of the two World Wars and the Holocaust in European remembrance see, e.g., Lähdesmäki et al. 2020.

The Nordic countries have been and continue to be complicit in the ongoing processes of colonial and other exploitative global networks.[19] Denmark–Norway and Sweden held colonies in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean from the 17th until the 20th century, and even up to the present day, as in the case of for example Greenland. Moreover, the colonization of the Indigenous Sápmi and Sámi cultures is still ongoing in many forms, such as in land use that threatens Sámi livelihoods. The Nordics have been slow to discuss or take responsibility for their colonial pasts, though some progress has been made in the first two decades of this century.[20] For one thing, scholarship on Nordic colonialism has increased, raising awareness in an effort to acknowledge the darker sides of Nordic pasts, and to the fact that histories of the Nordic people do not end at the borders of Norden.[21] Articles 2 and 4 also contribute to the growing field of Nordic postcolonialist studies, which aims to critically assess the legacy of colonialist practices relating to questions of knowledge and power (see Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2013, 1–2). The work at hand enriches the understanding of cinematic remediations of historical and contemporary colonial processes in the Nordic countries, drawing Nordic postcolonial studies into dialogue with documentary film studies.[22]

19 See Vuorela 2009 on Nordic colonial complicity; Naum & Nordin 2013 for an encompassing historiographical review on Nordic colonialism.

20 In Sweden, the former Gender Equality Minister Nyamko Sabuni recognized, in 2007, Swedish involvement in the slave economy, and both national commemorations and public apologies have been discussed. Yet, the Swedish or Finnish link to colonial crimes is still commonly seen as a weak one (Sonck 2016). In relation to the acknowledging the rights of the Sámi people, the Nordic countries are at different stages. In Norway, discussions over colonial policies affecting the Sámi are extensive, and the country has ratified the ILO Convention no. 169 guaranteeing Indigenous people rights to their ancestral land and waters, and to cultural and economic development (among other things). However, Sweden and Finland are further behind. (Wesslin 2017; Juuso 2021; Sametinget 2021.)

21 In the field of documentary filmmaking, past and present forms of Nordic colonialism have been the feature of many works durings the 2000's – among others, *A Man from the Congo River* (Jouko Aaltonen, 2009, FI, *Kongon Akseli*), explores Finnish complicity in colonized Africa, and Suvi West's films, such as *Eatnameamet – Our Silent Struggle* (2021, FI, *Eatnameamet – Min jaskes dáistaleapmi*), touch on topical issues of Indigenous activism. *Concerning violence* (Göran Olsson, 2014, SWE, US, DK, FI, *Om våld*) and *Deep Trouble in Lake Victoria* (Bengt Löfgren & Suzanne Nilsson, 2012, SWE) offer a Swedish perspective on European colonialist endeavors in Africa.

22 Until the turn of the century, postcolonial studies largely concentrated on the big European empires and their colonies, such as Great Britain and India, while less attention was given to smaller states' colonial projects, such as those of the Nordic countries. However, more research on Nordic colonialism has been published during the 2010s (see, e.g., Merivirta, Koivunen & Särkkä 2021). See also: postcolonial research on Nordic documentaries, e.g., Holander 2015; Körber 2019; Kyrölä 2023.

The Second World War is one of the central historical narratives in the Nordic countries in relation to which national narratives have been written and projected.[23] It also remains an important theme in Nordic documentary at the beginning of the 21st century. The war is in fact present in all the Finnish films discussed here, though in indirect ways, as they focus on events beyond the battlefields.[24] In Finland, what has changed from roughly the 1990s and the collapse of the Soviet Union onwards is how the Second World War is remembered in public debates. Broadly speaking, narratives from the battlefronts have been complemented by the perspectives of those formerly marginalized in war narratives – such as women and children. The psychological devastation caused by the war and the uneasy liaisons with Nazi Germany have also surfaced.[25] *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, for example, shows how the war drastically changed the lives of the film's subjects, who were treated as the embodied reminders of the Finnish alliance with the Nazis. For the Finnish director-protagonist Tervo in *Santra and the Talking Trees,* the war means a lost connection to her family origins in Karelia. In *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, the war proves nearly fatal to the survival of the Skolt Sámi people and livelihoods. This research contributes to the academic discussions on remembrance of the Second World War by bringing to light Othered perspectives.

3.3 Memory work of postmemory generations

Until the final scene of *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, the filmmaker Katja Gauriloff has not made her presence known in the film. In the last image, she discloses herself as the great-granddaughter of the film's other main subject, Kaisa Gauriloff, with a photograph where she sits in Kaisa's lap as a child. This is when the audience realizes that the film also confesses, "between the images", to the director's kinship with her

23 Due to historical differences, Nordic countries have very different relationships with histories and memories of the war (see, e.g., Kingsepp 2023). For the Finnish context see, e.g., Hakokõngäs, Pirttilä-Backman & Halme 2021; Kortti 2021.

24 These films could thus be named "unwar films" (Lebow 2015, 40).

25 See Sundholm 2013. In documentary, the psychological effects of the war and war mentality have been raised in films such as Ari Matikainen's *War and Peace of Mind* (2016, FI, *Sota ja mielenrauha*) and Ville Suhonen's *Children of War and Peace* (2024, FI, *Sodan ja rauhan lapset*). The Finnish-German cooperation during the war has been tackled for example in Heikki Huttu-Hiltunen's *Instrument of Himmler* (2014, FI, *Himmlerin kanteleensoittaja*), where Nazi scientists hope to find the birthplace of the "Aryan race" in Finnish Karelia. In Pia Andell's *Göring's Baton* (2010, FI, *Göringin sauva*), a young cameraman from the Finnish army is given a secret assignment in the Third Reich.

Skolt Sámi ancestors. It is a moment which "hurts",[26] as it reveals the delicate and visceral interconnections between generations that have influenced the making of the film.

Documentary film has been an important site for creative and critical memory work[27] that deals with "inherited memories", often through family genealogies (see Quílez 2020, 163). Three of the filmmakers discussed in this work, Tervo (b. 1980), Gauriloff (b. 1972) and Wajstedt (b. 1973), all belong to the generation of "postmemory",[28] as Marianne Hirsch (2012 [1997], 5) calls the second generation witnesses, who do not have firsthand experience of the "original events" but bear the traces of the experiences of their parents, or in some cases, grandparents.[29]

For the Karelians, implicated in Tervo's film, the "original event" was the Second World War.[30] After being evacuated to different parts of Finland, they also experienced segregation and prejudice in their new hometowns and villages for speaking Karelian and practicing Orthodox religion. Nowadays, the granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandsons of the evacuees openly cherish their cultural legacy. Karelian handicraft groups are popular on social media, Karelian language

26 Paraphrasing Fredric Jameson's (1981, 102) famous quote, where he states: "History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis […] we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them". This persisting nature of pasts is what interests me here, particularly through the trajectory of discovery that must begin from the present to venture into the past in order to find out what "hurts" in relation to this current moment.

27 See Kuhn 2002 [1995], 168–169 on the idea of memory work.

28 To some extent also Virpi Suutari (b. 1967), Alejo Moguillansky (b. 1978) and Fia-Stina Sandlund (b. 1973) could be considered as such, though without familial connections with their film subjects. Suutari has disclosed in an interview that, during her youth in Rovaniemi, Northern Finland, she heard many stories about the women who ran away with German soldiers, and that these stories affected her deeply (Kahila 2010). In *The Gold Bug*, Moguillansky, alongside his peers from El Pampero Cine, as well as Sandlund, are implicated in the postcolonial memory work connecting Europe and Latin America.

29 Hirsch's (2012 [1997]) term postmemory referred originally to the second generation after the Second World War. It emphasizes the role of family members in the mediation and remediation of memory. Aleida Assmann (2015) has reiterated the concept as "post memory" when describing the transmission of memories to the third and fourth generations after the war, who have lived in a thoroughly mediatized world. For these generations, the cultural memory of WWII is mediated mostly through images, such as films. Though this description is particularly apt for *The Gold Bug*, I stick with Hirsh's term, favoring the depiction of remembering that runs along family lineages.

30 Though the process of nationalization had begun in Finland already in the 19th century, this event catalyzed attempts to efface the existence of cultural minorities and languages, such as Karelian, or Sámi, while building the myth of a monocultural Finland (see Tervonen 2014).

is once again being taught, and trips to the old homesteads beyond the Russian border have been popular since the 1990s.[31] Tervo humoristically depicts these trips in the archival montage of the film, where travelers gather Karelian soil in glass jars to bring back home.

In the case of the Sámi postmemory generation, the original event refers to the settler colonialist practices that began in the 16th century when Lapland was Christianized (see, e.g., Kuokkanen 2003, 704–706). Due to the colonial policies of the nation-states, the Sámi land was occupied by settlers, and the Sámi people were racialized and ostracized. These colonialist practices contributed to the extinction of many of the Sámi languages, cultures and livelihoods, and endangered Sámi identities.[32] The assimilation policies were in some parts (of Scandinavia) and for some parts more subtle, and for some, more explicit, such as in the different forms of boarding schools.[33] In any case, the consequences for Sámi people were devastating: for a large part, they led to internalized oppression, including shame for being Sámi or speaking Sámi. In the case of the Skolt and Northern Sámi filmmakers featured in this research, the event of disconnection could be situated at the time

31 These trips began after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and lasted until the war in Ukraine (2022–), which significantly diminished, and to a certain extent ended, traffic between Finland and Russia.

32 See, e.g., Lehtola 2015, 25–27; Kuokkanen 2003; Minde 2005.

33 The boarding schools operating in Norway, Sweden and Finland can be considered as part of a long history of intervention into the Sámi land, beginning from the 17th century. Generally speaking, as there were many phases of boarding school systems between the 19th and 21st century Sweden and Norway, some of the Sámi children were in boarding schools for "nomad children" where they received teaching in Sámi (though not necessarily their own Sámi language), but others were sent to general boarding schools where they were taught to assume the values, ways of thinking and languages of the settler colonizers. After the Second World War, public schooling became mandatory also for the Sámi children. (Kuokkanen 2003, 703–709.) As such, as Niina Siivikko specified (2024), there were differences between the schools: in some of them, the process of assimilation happened forcefully, and in others, especially in Finland (Kuokkanen 2003, 706), as a kind of side product: after being separated from their families during the schooling years, the children could not speak their own language or know how to practice their culture anymore. In this respect, one could speak of a "lost generation". As Rauna Kuokkanen (ibid., 707) writes: "While there was no explicit, written policy in any of the Nordic countries intending to assimilate and 'civilize' the Sami by taking children away from their families, the consequences of forcing Sami children to attend the public school system alongside with Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian children was, however, in many ways very similar to those in North America, resulting in commonalities of low self-esteem, alienation from one's cultural background, and difficulties in integrating and adapting in society, whether one's own or the dominant."

when their mothers attended the state boarding schools (though this system was very different in Finland and in Sweden), in the 1950s and 1960s, and abandoned their language. The scars of the state violence are only now slowly being brought to light. Yet, even today most of the nine Sámi languages are still in danger of extinction, and Sámi rights are constantly threatened by national and international economic interests in the resources of Sápmi. The younger Sámi generations have begun a process of recuperation, and Sámi languages and cultures are being revived. However, the processes of colonializing Sámi land and culture have not ended. In that sense, it is debatable whether one can speak of postmemory, rather than the ongoing efforts of decolonization. This is one of the reasons why the understanding of remembering as a one-way stream from the present to the past (or from the past to the present) must be re-evaluated and replaced with non-linear models that allow for multiple temporalities, pasts and presents, and the stakes they pose, to be addressed side by side, as in the concurrent and ongoing processes of neocolonization, revitalization and decolonization.

3.4 On the politics and ethics of remembering and researching remembering

Within filmmaking and film reception, memory work takes place on many stages and in many forms. It moves between personal and public planes (see Radstone 2010, 328), and involves diverse filmmaking practices such as testimonial interviews or confessional accounts. These enable the sharing of experiences within communities and develop the self-awareness of disenfranchised groups. Thus, remembering in documentary also connects with processes of memory politics[34] in societies, while reinterpreting pasts and offering alternative accounts to dominant historical narratives. Michelle Citron (1999, 272) draws an example from autobiographical film, which "publicly speaks about the socially hidden", demonstrating how "honest" acts of remembering, in speaking out against dominant narratives, harbor transformative potential.

Marita Sturken (1997, 10) notes how cultural products, such as documentaries, "embody and generate memory and are thus implicated in the power dynamics of

[34] The politics of remembering and forgetting – or conscious ignorance as a form of "colonial unknowing" (Vimalassery, Pegues & Goldstein 2016) – has long been a widespread topic within the fields of history and political science (among others), especially after the Second World War. The discussion on the "uses of the past" has touched mostly upon violent events, such as the Holocaust, wars, dictatorships or genocides. See, e.g., Lebow, Kansteiner & Fogu 2006. In this work, I will only refer to relevant works in film and memory studies.

memory's production". Also, according to her, images have the capacity to "create, interfere with and trouble" public and private processes of remembering (ibid., 20). When dealing with politically and socially sensitive topics, such as colonialism, trauma and war, considering the power dynamics of remembering in the films becomes particularly prominent. The films make visible the struggles over narrative, political and other forms of power that are present in acts of remembering. The politics and ethics of remembering are raised in most of the articles, invoking questions such as: Which events, people and issues are considered worth remembering? How is the remembering remediated, and how does this remediation interfere with persistent historical narratives? What is disregarded and why?

On the societal level, documentary offers a ground where visions of alternative, dissonant pasts, presents and futures can also be (re-)imagined.[35] Referring to Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989), Laura U. Marks (2000, 56) describes how political cinema is characterized by "gaps and silences, the sites of emergence from (these) smug, sedimented discourses". As an example, in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* the experiences of the interviewed women emerge from the deep muds of the national history agenda, sedimented after the Second World War.

The researched films argue for the importance of staying connected to pasts, and of remembering. In the films, the feel of longing to belong works as an engine for remembering, as bell hooks (2009, 5) writes – the films or film subjects strive for a connection in this moment. As such, leaning on pasts can help renew one's commitment to the present. As Dagmar Brunow (2015, 15) writes, documentaries can be thought of as "interventions against forgetting, against disremembering politically disenfranchised groups in hegemonic historiography and in popular visual culture" (see also Kuhn 2002 [1995], 9). Memory work in documentary can thus resist the convenient amnesia that is inclined to push difficult pasts aside. Indeed, artists such as documentary filmmakers can propose alternative historical narratives,

[35] Yet, as Dagmar Brunow (2015, 10–11) notes, using the term counter-memory creates a binary distinction where all "un-official memory practices" could be thought as such, countering the official forms of remembering. She also points out that official memory is not always discriminative, nor is un-official memory automatically emancipatory (ibid.). There is a risk, argues Brunow, of perpetuating the hierarchy of a "center" versus a "periphery", as well as homogenizing and essentializing the heterogeneous experiences of women, blacks, migrants and queers. As such, these binary distinctions might lead the way towards new marginalizations. (Ibid., 12.)

revealing the sore points, showing solidarity to those silenced by agno-politics[36] and creating new ways to include the multitudes of pasts in contemporary debates.

It should also be noted, that this work in general has focused on the life-affirming aspects of documentary remembering, though it does not always function as such. This choice, however, relates to the broader level of the research, where documentary is regarded as a medium capable of dealing with feelings of hope and despair (see chapter 9). Documentaries generate an intense relationship with reality and with pasts, while instigating new ways to perceive and act in the world.[37] Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro (2010, 3) further state that, "aesthetic innovation in documentary often serves a clear political purpose as it introduces an unfamiliar or unconventional way of looking at the world". While the political purposes of the films in this research are not always enunciated explicitly, they do favor certain positions and viewpoints over others.[38] They also convey a deep commitment to specific societal battles and controversies that should be handled with ethical sensitivity.

Consequently, one of the ethical questions in this research process relates to my position as a white, Finnish, non-Indigenous researcher. I represent the dominant, settler colonialist culture, writing in English and Finnish about Sámi films (article 2) and neocolonial circumstances (articles 2 & 4). Along the process, I have benefitted from the knowledge and experiences of filmmakers and other scholars. I am grateful for the learning experience that the films themselves and the people encountered have offered, and particularly so to the Sámi filmmaker Katja Gauriloff, who has donated her time in two interviews to discuss her work, the realities of Sámi filmmaking and the structural inequalities of the contemporary Nordic film industry (see Oisalo 2020). However, this research does not intend to "speak for" the Sámi people, but to let the films speak for themselves, and for its small part to introduce perspectives from Indigenous filmmaking into discussions on memory work in

36 Paul Gilroy (2006) speaks of *agno-politics* as "patterned forms of ignorance", where "knowledge of the colonial adventures and colonial missions of the Nordic countries in the past can be effectively denied". This is fueled by uneasy feelings, such as guilt and shame. According to Gilroy (ibid.), artists, such as filmmakers, have a special role to play in "breaking this cycle of guilt and denial and ignorance".

37 Though social and cultural action beyond films is not a focus of this research, it is an important part of "documentary world-making". In this vein, documentary filmmakers are involved with creating worlds outside the screen through activities such as education, community building or cultural preservation. (Guildford & Lee 2020, 163.)

38 It has been stated that the openly political documentaries of the 1960s and 1970s gave way, in the 1980s and 1990s, to more introspective films – "the subjective turn" – where ideologies were replaced by identity politics (see, e.g., Helke 2018, 172). In the 2000s, a new wave of politicality has been detected in the Nordic documentary, but the films are more subtle and indirect in this respect than before (see Helke 2016b; 2019).

Nordic documentary. The films themselves are much more significant in this respect, as *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* work "within and against prevailing representational and aesthetic traditions to assert Indigenous voices and experiences" (Smith 2020, 492). The filmmakers proclaim "visual sovereignty" of the Sámi people as directors of their own stories and cinematic art (see Raheja 2010).[39] While recognizing my own position as an outsider, I have wished to listen to the films and their makers according to my best sensitivity in order to bring forth perspectives from the two Sámi films into (Finnish) settler colonialist academia, where Sámi people's knowledges, perceptions and experiences have been largely ignored. Yet, something has definitely changed in my thinking during the process of writing this thesis and, at this moment, I would only take part in a research project pertaining to Sámi issues in which Sámi researcher/s are themselves involved.[40]

Sámi researcher Veli-Pekka Lehtola has claimed, on many occasions, that while discussions on Nordic colonialism are important, the Sámi people's own perspectives and own histories should be brought to the fore more extensively. This does not only apply to traumatic experiences but to the everyday stories that shape Sámi cultures and histories. Lehtola (2022, 25) notes how, in the Sámi cultures, this kind of everyday remembering that creates a sense of belonging to the chain of generations has long been an important part of people's day-to-day understanding of themselves. Community storytellers, as vital carriers of oral history, are in fact central figures in two of the documentaries studied: in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, as the director's great-grandmother Kaisa Gauriloff, and in *Santra and the Talking Trees*, as Santra Remsujeva, the Karelian rune singer. They recount a time when everyday practices of doing and being in the world were intersected with cultures of remembering that were vital for preserving and passing on knowledge. Today, films and filmmaking are significant channels for memory work. Through them, voices of "silent resistance" (Lehtola 2022, 30–31) may also come forth.

This work sees cultures as morphing, living phenomena, and prefers to speak of culture(s) in plural, instead of one monolithic culture, for example in the case of

[39] This sovereignty becomes understood only in relation to "dominant cinematic aesthetic" (whatever that might be), as perceptively noted by Kata Kyrölä (2024).

[40] Two of the central ethical demands in Indigenous research are that Indigenous people themselves should have agency in the research, and that research on, for example, the Sámi should benefit the Sámi community (Heikkilä 2021, 207–208). Ethical guidelines for research involving the Sámi people have been published in Finland this year, so I could not make use of them during this research process. Their purpose is to ensure that research relating to the Sámi is conducted respectfully and fairly. The guidelines also intend to guarantee the rights of the Sámi to participate in the production of knowledge about themselves and to address the consequences of unequal power relations, both past and present. (Heikkilä et al. 2024.)

Sámi people(s). In this context, I recognize how complex[41] it is to write about the questions of belonging in relation to the myriad of forms that "Sáminess" beckons, as an outsider.[42] There is no shared understanding of what Sáminess means among the Sámi themselves (see, e.g., Valkonen, 2014) – it is a cultural hybrid, as stated by Stuart Hall (1999, 55) in reference to modern "national cultures". There has never been only one Sámi culture, or Sámi "way of being", but Sáminess has always meant plurality (Valkonen 2009, 103). Sanna Valkonen (2009, 101–102) draws attention to the fact how a more unified Sámi identity, or "nation subject", took shape as a response to the oppression that Sámi people encountered. In this respect, the Sámi themselves have made use of what Gayatri Spivak (1985, 184) has called "strategic essentialism" – a strategic use of essentialist notions as an act of resistance against essentialism to defend their political rights. I hope that I have been able to address this issue with the subtlety and care that it deserves in relation to the Sámi films included in the study.

41 As an example, the question of who has the right to call themself Sámi or vote in the Sámi parliament elections has been a highly politicized question for decades now. This is related for example to the rights that Sámi have been given, such as special rights of land use and fishing in their homelands in Lapland based on their status as Indigenous people. In Finland, a law that would guarantee Sámi community's right to decide who is Sámi and who is not has passed through six governments now without getting passed. The new law on Sámi parliament (*Saamelaiskäräjälaki*) would, as an example, erase the possibility of being included in the Sámi parliament's electoral register on the basis of having ancestors who were called "Lapps" in former registers, as this term was also given to Finns who practiced reindeer herding or other traditional Sámi livelihoods. The Sámi themselves, and the new law, would present a definition of Sáminess based on having parents or grandparents who speak one of the Sámi languages as their mother tongue, and thus would have a connection to the Sámi tradition. (See, e.g., Sámediggi 2024.)

42 I thank the pre-examiner Dagmar Brunow for further drawing attention to this issue, as well as Kata Kyrölä for reflecting this question with me.

4 *Material* – the films in their environment

In documentary filmmaking, the question of materials is a crucial one, as it largely affects the nature of the project. Materials bring in worlds.

During the first decades of the 21st century, the Nordic scene of creative documentary has expanded, and documentary audiences have increased significantly.[43] Moreover, the idea of *creative documentary*, which demonstrates artistic ambition in its use of the cinematic medium, has become more widely acknowledged.[44] This comes across in the Policy Plan 2021–2024 of IDFA, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, one of the leading documentary festivals in the world, defining the ideal entries for the festival:

> In cinematographic documentaries, the filmmaker's vision and its translation into image, sound and montage are of primary importance. Form and content reinforce each other, and there is an authentic cinematic approach. Filmmakers make artistic choices in the use of cinematic means to express their view on the subject, tell their story, and draw in the viewer. An ideal film is one that leads to the development of the film's language. (IDFA 2021, 5.)

Three points in particular demand attention here. Firstly, the term "cinematographic documentary" and the mention of "authentic cinematic approach" highlight the use of cinematography and other cinematic means in developing the documentary art. Secondly, the word choice in "to *express* their [the filmmakers'] view on the subject" emphasizes the aesthetic and expressive possibilities of documentary filmmaking.[45] Furthermore, the idea that the films selected for the program should lead "to the development of the film's language" suggests that these documentaries should contribute to the advancement of the film craft more broadly. This description sums

43 See Hongisto & Wahlberg 2016; Haase 2016.

44 It should be kept in mind, however, that there have been "artistic documentaries" from the beginning of cinema – just think of Dziga Vertov, one of documentary's pioneers.

45 See also Renov 1993, 21 on the expressive function in documentary.

up the cinematic approach present in the creative documentaries of this research, as they strive to expand the potential of the film medium.[46]

All of the films studied here can be identified as part of the Nordic tradition of creative documentary, where the filmmakers demonstrate ambition towards cultivating documentary film as an art form. Roughly speaking, creative documentary could also be defined in terms of what it is not – it is not part of the "argument-driven" documentary, relying on "discourses of sobriety", as described by Bill Nichols (2001, 38–39), such as journalistic "television documentary" or commercial mainstream documentaries where straight-forward, linear narratives are favored (see Story 2021). Creative documentaries apply cinematic techniques inventively, and they often favor "hybrid strategies" that blur the boundaries between fiction and documentary filmmaking, sometimes verging on experimental film practices.[47] They can be thought of as part of the arthouse filmmaking tradition, shown primarily in cinemas and film festivals[48]. It is important to also note that the tradition of creative documentary, like the Nordic documentary industry more broadly, relies on state funding.[49]

46 See also de Jong 2012, 19–26 on the definition of creative documentary.

47 See Helke 2019, 212 for a more detailed account of these "hybrid strategies".

48 Nordic documentary film festivals, such as CPH:DOX in Copenhagen, Denmark and DocPoint in Helsinki, Finland, have grown in size and span during the past two decades – they attract more visitors and screen more films than ever before. Festivals have so become an important space for developing documentary culture and a space of networking for the professionals.

49 National broadcasting companies and other public subsidy organizations have played a prominent role in the growth of Nordic documentary in recent decades, both on national and regional levels (see, e.g., Haase 2016). Nordic film cultures, reliant on state-support, have been framed as "small nation cinema" in research (see, e.g., Gustafsson & Kääpä 2015; Hjort & Lindqvist 2016). The term, originally presented by Mette Hjort and Ib Bondjeberg (2001, 20) in relation to Danish cinema, refers to "minor cinema" from relatively small populations, not being able to support a commercially based film industry; film industries from small language areas, making it difficult to expand the market through international distribution; and threatened by the dominant presence of American film productions. Dafydd Sills-Jones and Pietari Kääpä (2016, 89–90) note, that between 2008 and 2015 the expenditure on documentary per capita was roughly the same in Finland, Sweden and Denmark — and this is when most of the films studied were also produced. In the Finnish context however, the 2020's has marked the end of what has been proclaimed as "the golden era of documentary" (Haase 2016, 106) – at least major challenges are in the air. They include the growth of online viewing, which is challenging the traditional production and distribution models based on public funding. (See, e.g., Aaltonen, Kääpä & Sills-Jones 2023, 69–71.) In these new markets, the "forces of commercialism" demand more vendible products from documentary filmmaking industry, often resulting in standardization, not innovation (Haase 2016, 126; see also Zoellner 2010). These developments, including the financial pressures on state-funded institutions (most markedly in Finland), have decreased also budgets of documentary productions, though here, the differences between Nordic countries are growing. It remains to be seen, how will the documentary industry continues to evolve and survive in the presence of these challenges.

My original selection criteria for the research material were as follows: first, the films should be produced after the year 2000 in order to be considered contemporary; second, their production should be at least partly Nordic, meaning that as a minimum, one of the production countries is Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark or Iceland; and third, they should use creative aesthetic techniques to convey acts of remembering in the documentary form. Inside this rather loose grid, a large flock of possible candidates was assembled.

In the flock (or, sample) of dozens of films, some patterns began to emerge: interest in Nordic complicity in colonialist histories and presents, as well as other transnational themes, such as immigration, war, environmental crisis, or, more broadly, the anxiety born from living in a neoliberal, Western world where pasts are disregarded and futures of people, animals and the planet are ignored, a world where individuals are isolated from one other and from historicity of contemporary events and circumstances. I chose films that would convey these themes, but also complement one other in terms of aesthetics and filmmaking practices in their acts of remembering. In articles 2 and 3, the contexts of publication influenced the particular choice of films.[50] The films selected for this research also transcend cultural and national borders. This reflects a broader change in the Nordic documentary scene. Although transnational productions and other cross-border cooperation have played an important role in Nordic filmmaking since the early days (see, e.g., Bacon 2016), in recent decades this development has become an essential part of the Nordic documentary film industry.[51] With the recent cuts to institutional budgets, it may become even more crucial, if we are to maintain a vibrant documentary film culture also in the future.

Sámi filmmaking, discussed in article 2, has proliferated during the 2000s, due especially to the strong transnational networks it has built with other Indigenous filmmakers, festivals and organizations around the world. The rise of Sámi filmmaking is the sum of many things, but improved financing structures, including the establishment of Internášunála Sámi Filbmainstituhtta (International Sámi Film Institute, ISFI), have been an important factor in this development. In addition to offering financing, ISFI supports Sámi filmmaking in terms of production, education and distribution. *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* received funding from ISFI.[52]

50 See chapter 7 for a more detailed account of my methodology. As gender balance was not included in my criteria, almost all of the films chosen ended up being directed by women (the exception being *The Gold Bug*). Equal representation of each Nordic country was similarly not a criterion for selection and, as a result, there are no Norwegian or Icelandic documentaries included in the research material.

51 Yet, most of the co-productions still occur between Nordic countries. See SES 2021.

52 See also Lehtola & Lehtola 2015, 250–251 on the Sámi filmmaking industry.

Yet, as Kate Moffat (2020, 191) notes, Sámi media industries still suffer from a state of precarity, marginalized from both political and economic forums. The rising interest in Arctic and Indigenous cinema has also drawn attention to the complex power relations and frictions between the financiers and the filmmakers. Sámi filmmakers are applying for support from the Nordic state funders at the same time as they are critiquing the nation-states' cultural dominance and (neo)colonialist practices.[53] In the article 4 discussing *The Gold Bug,* a critical view is also directed towards the transnational film industry, and particularly the unequal relations between the so-called Global South and European filmmakers and financiers.

Among the films selected, border crossing practices and themes are diverse: the films are shot and produced in several countries and they deal with transnational memories, such as displacements caused by the Second World War and colonialism. *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* was partly financed by the French-German media company Arte, and it touches on events in Finland, Norway and Germany. *The Gold Bug* is a Danish-Argentinian-Swedish production, commissioned by CPH:DOX's twinning program for directors from the Global South and the Nordic countries. The film takes place in Argentina, presenting Danish and Argentinian historical figures, as well as an old Swedish colony in Misiones. The Sámi documentaries, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest,* cross effortlessly national borders in the Sámi land, reflecting the transnational realities of the Sámi people. The latter film also portrays a Swiss-Russian – Skolt Sámi friendship, and the fate of the Skolt Sámi is tied to events in Finland, Russia and the UK. *Santra and the Talking Trees* celebrates an imagined Karelian culture, situated in the borderlands between Russia and Finland. In sum, the films contest the idea of memory work contained within national borders and show how remembering crosses national confines and complicates expressions of belonging.[54]

In terms of documentary aesthetics, *The Gold Bug* represents hybridity, a common trait emerging from the flock, merging real life ("facts") and fiction. Other films also include hybrid traits, such as *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland,* where dramatizations are used to bring intimacy and experientiality to the film. It became evident that autobiographical and biographical documentary continue to be very popular practices in contemporary Nordic documentary. Though autobiographical films have been made since the early days of documentary, they have emerged as a predominant practice in creative

53 See Kääpä 2015, 45, 61.

54 See, e.g., Bond & Rapson 2014; Erll 2011; Rothberg 2009 on memory work that crosses national borders.

documentary since the early 1990s (Helke 2016b, 187).[55] This mode also comes across in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, following the tradition of confessional, or diary film.[56] *Santra and the Talking Trees* is an autobiographical film with a biographical affinity, as it takes a special interest in the character of Santra. *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* is explicitly biographical (until the last image of the film). The Sámi films also incorporate an explicitly political aspect in their acts of remembering, contesting the national narratives and policies that have contributed to the suppression of Sámi voices and histories.

Although traditionally one of the most typical elements in documentary, interviews seem to have almost vanished from Nordic creative documentaries, which favors forms of observational documentary instead.[57] *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, however, is structured around interviews, presented in the frame of testimonial documentary, which also brings a new aspect of remembering to the work. In *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, the protagonist-director Wajstedt also uses informal interviews as a method in her journey of self-discovery.

My methodological approach is elaborated in chapter 7.1. Generally speaking, the selection of these specific films as research material was guided by their publication contexts in two of the articles: the concept of belonging in article 2, and the topic of enemy images in the field of cultural memory in article 3. In articles 1 and 4, the films were also chosen for their unique cinematic take on remembering within a specific documentary film practice – *Santra and the Talking Trees* as an autobiographical film with a keen biographical interest, and *The Gold Bug* as a performed documentary. Despite the differences in their production contexts[58] and

55 See also Rascaroli 2009, 4–5; Dancus 2016 on the subjective documentary form.

56 For more on the form of diary film, see Rascaroli 2009, 116–132.

57 Yet, for example in *Santra and the Talking Trees*, the scenes where Santra speaks and sings could possibly have been born in informal interviews. Interviews, or conversations, may thus prevail as a method of filmmaking, though they do not always appear as such in the final films.

58 As an example, the total budgets of the films varies, though they are still small in comparison to fiction film budgets in the Nordic countries: *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* received an estimated sum of 331 000 e, *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* 261 000 e, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* 106 000 e (estimations from the films' respective IMDb pages; see also SES 2024). Similarly to the other Finnish documentaries, *Santra and the Talking Trees*, which (similarly to *Sámi Daughter Yoik*) was made as a student production, received support both (65 000 e) from the Finnish Film Foundation (SES) and The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE). As stated earlier, the state support thus played a vital role in all of the productions, as they were realized by relatively small production companies. In practice, this means support from the Finnish Film Foundation and Swedish Film Institute. Information on the budget of *The Gold Bug* was not available, but in the directors have implied in interviews that the film was realized with low budget (see, e.g., Walsh 2015). The films have all been shown at several film festivals around

cinematic approaches, these films together demonstrate an aesthetic complexity and artistic ambition that consolidates their contribution to documentary remembering: in terms of the filmmaking practices they represent (as specified earlier), as well as the cinematic techniques they employ (use of archives, montage, animations etc.).

In table 2, examples of the cinematic techniques used in the films are shown, in order to give an overview of their aesthetic repertoire, their means of expressing acts of remembering.

Table 2. Examples of cinematic techniques and modes of expression involved in the acts of remembering in the films.

Cinematic technique or mode of expression	*Santra and the Talking Trees*	*Sámi Daughter Yoik*	*Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*	*Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*	*The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge*
Archival material	x	x	x	x	x
Interviews with film subjects (film subjects speak to the camera)	(x)	(x)		x	
Dramatizations, e.g., reenactments	x		x	x	x
Autobiographical narration (in the last image only)	x	x	(x)		
Biographical narration	x		x	x	x
Animations	x	x	x		

the world. YLE was one of financiers in all of the Finnish productions and SVT (Swedish Television) in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, and for this reason, they have all been broadcasted (most of them several times) in public service television channels and streaming services (for a limited period). Though film festivals play an important part in forming local and temporary mnemonic communities and platforms for sharing experiences in a transnational setting, broadcasting remains an important site for documentaries to catch the attention of larger audiences, and thus continue to play a significant role in wider memory work. At the moment of writing this, *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik* continue to be available through streaming services (Yle Areena and Movie Boosters), which extends their life span, which is often limited in the case of documentaries.

As the chart shows, there are some important distinctions and similarities between the films. Archival material is used in all the films, in the forms of archival footage, photographs, audio recordings and letters. Interviews appear (explicitly) in only one of the films, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, though their framing is, cinematographically speaking, highly performative. Dramatizations are used in almost all the films, and animations in three of them, testifying to the frequency of both of these techniques in Nordic creative documentary touching questions of remembering (though the research sample is too small to make this conclusion directly). All but one of the documentaries show traits of biographical narration; in two of them, this is the main feature of the film (*Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*), while in the two others this aspect supports the main story.

The films also complement one other in terms of the catalysts involved in the acts of remembering. In the autobiographical films *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, it is the filmmaker-protagonists, Tervo and Wajstedt, who wish to establish a connection to certain heritage and its traditions. *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* both outline acts of remembering that engage with a group of people: the Skolt Sámi and the outcast women, respectively.[59] Yet, all of the films also present forms of remembering that cannot be assigned to any specific film subject. In *The Gold Bug* for example, the film-world as a whole recreates a constellation of whimsical historical and fictional relations that becomes the remembering agent. These forms of remembering are elaborated in chapter 7.

[59] In *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* there is also a level of autobiographical remembering, activated by the last image of the film.

5 *Ambience* – approaches to cinematic remembering

Ambience refers to the sonic atmosphere, produced by rain, wildlife, crowd, or other sources, surrounding the film subjects. It creates an aural space upon which the other sounds are layered.

With this brief overview of how other film scholars have perceived the relationship between film and remembering, I introduce my own starting points for the exploration. As remembering and memory have been widely discussed in the field of film studies – which seems only relevant to a time-based medium, a mnemonic machine that actively produces memory[60] – I introduce here only a few studies that intersect with my own research.

In her introduction to the anthology *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*, Vivian Sobchack (1996, 7) emphasizes the plurality and plasticity of historical narratives, exploring how film and television productions relate to "the transformations in the sense and representation of history".[61] These ideas still resonate with current film research, which tends to focus on representations of the past. Representations of remembering are of interest in this research as well, but the articles also extend towards non-representational aspects of remembering – their embodied nature and the events within and around the films – their environments, agencies, stakes, politics and temporalities (see Vannini 2015, 7). These also relate to Sobchack's "sense of history" which, in addition to a meaning, can signify a sensation, an impression or appreciation, but also a direction

60 As, e.g., Marita Sturken (1997, 9) has noted.

61 Other notable examples of previous research on film's relationship with remembering historical events include Marcia Landy's (1996) and Marita Sturken's (1997) analyses on how fiction films have countered broad cultural and historical phenomena, such as the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic or decolonization.

in a motion (Merriam-Webster 2024). The film medium is thus capable of expressing a sense of history, in all its senses.[62]

Alison Landsberg (2004) theorizes cinematic memory in the age of commodified mass culture with the concept of "prosthetic memory", that is, implanted memories that emerge "at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past", such as when encountering a media work or a museum exhibition (ibid., 2, 20, 22). In the experience, "the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history", immersed in the "deeply felt memory of a past event" that was not originally his/her own and has "no direct connection to a person's lived past" (ibid., 20).[63] I share Landsberg's contention that cinematic remembering is "a sensuous phenomenon experienced in the body" (ibid., 8) – an idea she later develops into an "affective engagement" with the past (Landsberg 2015). Cinematic remembering can also complicate the ways in which people negotiate their place in history. Yet Landsberg's notion does not exhaust the full range of variables in this research, as the articles present both historical narratives with no connection and those with a deep connection to the film subjects' own experiences, in a documentary context.

Documentary filmmaking has a unique bond with reality; it exhibits real people, real lives and real events. This preset often raises certain expectations from the film subjects, the audience, producers, filmmakers, etc., towards the expressions of remembering and the ethics of filmmaking. In documentary, the boundary between film and life, filming and living, is porous. One seeps into the other and extends its forces beyond the frame.[64] Conventionally, documentary film has been regarded as a record of the past or as evidence: it is a document *of* the past that has an indexical relationship to history and is thus bestowed with "documentary value", as Robert Flaherty described it.[65] This conception has however been challenged by numerous

62 Though film is not unique in this aspect, as many other media and art forms are capable of the same, it is still worth mentioning here as one of film's capabilities in relation to remembering.

63 Landberg's approach resonates with what Astrid Erll (2011, 4) has called the third wave of memory studies. In this phase, memory and remembering are considered "a fluid and flexible affair", a process that "circulates, migrates and travels" as well as crosses temporal, spatial and cultural boundaries (Bond, Craps & Vermeulen 2016, 1). See also Rothberg 2009; de Cesari & Rigney 2014 on similar, dynamic takes on memory.

64 See Hongisto 2015, 11 on extending the aesthetics of framing in documentary.

65 Quoted in Rabinowitz 2013, 121; see also Le Roy & Vanderbeeken 2018, 197-200 for a discussion of Flaherty's phrasing. It should be noted though, that Flaherty himself also used reenactments and restagings to convey a coherent narrative (Rabinowitz 2013, 121).

documentary scholars, complicating the very idea of what documentary is, and how it relates to pasts.[66]

Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow (2015, 11) describe how documentaries can coalesce "diverse temporalities into the same moment" by "presenting historic situations beyond the historicity of the event" and surpassing historical authenticity. At the same time, they "subvert the principle of referentiality and the logic of the representation" (ibid.). In this work, I am interested in documentary's capability to move beyond recounting historical events to creating memory, while seeking to integrate "the movements and counter-movements" that permeate images, as Juhasz and Lebow formulate it (ibid.).

Paula Rabinowitz (2013, 119) claims that, "films interrogate not only historical memory but their own investment in its recreation". What she calls "imaginative documentaries" foreground their "partial and contingent qualities" while questioning their place in historical memory. They call for viewers to think about "their responsibility to the past and its interpretations". (Ibid.) Similarly, I recognize the complex relationship that documentary medium has with pasts and explore its mnemonic ecologies,[67] the elaborate forms of mediations and remediations[68] of remembering (and forgetting), and the relations and movements they instigate when playing with temporalities.

66 See, e.g., Nichols 1991; Rabinowitz 2013; Hongisto 2015 on studies challenging documentary's position as a record of the past. Assessing the boom in memory studies at the turn of the 2000s, John Sundholm (2005, 58) also argues that the rise of the research field was in fact a reaction against traditional historical studies that had strived to assert the accuracy of facts and truth claims. Memory studies presented itself as a way to question this epistemology and foreground subjective experience. "Hence, the study of memory became a way of studying history in action, embodied and lived; like a film projected so it comes into being on the screen", writes Sundholm (ibid.). "Non-narrative cinema", especially essay film, personal documentary and experimental film are, according to Sundholm, fruitful places from which to reflect the poetics and politics of memory, as they negotiate history and memory, fiction and documentary aesthetics. (Ibid.)

67 See Hoskins 2018, 8–11 for an ecological approach to memory's workings with the media.

68 As Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (2009, 4) put it, "there is no cultural memory prior to mediation, there's no mediation without remediation: all representations of the past draw on available media technologies". The role of remediation in the acts of REmembering is palpable in the research films. As an example, they include vast amounts of remediated material, from archival footage and sound recordings to photographs and texts, while creating new ways to perceive pasts and to imagine with them.

In Anglophone documentary film studies, discussions on remembering have focused, in recent decades, mainly on trauma[69], testimony[70] and the archive[71]. Specific cinematic techniques used to convey remembering have also gained interest among documentary scholars, such as reenactments[72] or animations[73], as well as the relationship between documentary remembering and historical truth.[74] In terms of documentary filmmaking practices, researchers have been particularly interested in remembering in "first person documentaries", which include, but are not limited to, autobiographical films (see Lebow 2012).[75] These studies often deal with the family history of filmmakers or film protagonists.[76] Poignant cases, illuminating the inseparable links between private and public remembering, can be found in the research on queer, migrant and other "sub"cultures' documentary, or studies on Indigenous documentaries, in which personal lives are closely interwoven with state politics, societal attitudes, legislative and cultural changes.[77]

As discussed earlier, documentary remembering has been examined in the Nordic context particularly in relation to specific historical events and processes. These include the Second World War,[78] but also queer, migrant and women's histories[79] as well as colonialism and decolonization.[80]

69 In this context, experiences related to the Second World War and the Holocaust stand out. See, e.g., Elsaesser 1996; Kerner 2011; ten Brink & Oppenheimer 2012; Kohen-Raz 2014. Also, Joshua Oppenheimer's influential documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012, DK, NO, UK), on the Indonesian mass killings (1965–66), has gained wide attention among film scholars (see, e.g., Møhring Reestorff, Camilla 2015; special edition of *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 2, 2013; roundtable discussion in *Critical Asian Studies* 46, no. 1, 2014), raising questions over the ethics of documentary filmmaking when dealing with historical perpetrators.

70 See, e.g., Walker 2005; Guerin & Hallas 2007; Morag 2012; ten Brink & Oppenheimer 2012; Kraemer 2015; Daniels-Yeomans 2017; Melzer 2019.

71 On tendencies within theorizations of the archive in film and media studies, see Brunow 2015, 34–41. For more studies on the topic see, e.g., Baron 2014; Brunow 2015; Russell 2018; Procopio Furtado 2019; Rosas & Dittus 2020.

72 See, e.g., Møhring Reestorff 2015; Bruzzi 2015, 2020; Koch 2023.

73 See, e.g., Honess Roe 2020.

74 See, e.g., Bruzzi 2020; Arnau Roselló 2021.

75 In chapter 7, I elaborate Lebow's approach to first person filmmaking practices in relation to my research.

76 See, e.g., Marks 2000; Erhart 2001; Walker 2003; Ishizuka & Zimmermann 2007; Hongisto 2013; Daniels 2019; Rosas & Dittus 2020.

77 See, e.g., Cvetkovich 2002; Erhart 2018; Kyrölä & Huuki 2021.

78 See, e.g., Stecher-Hansen 2021; special issue in *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema* vol. 2 no. 3, both including also several articles on World War II documentaries.

79 See, e.g., Brunow 2015, 2019; Stigsdotter 2019; Vilhjálmsson 2022.

80 See, e.g., Holander 2015; MacKenzie & Westersthål Stenport 2016; Sand 2022; Austin 2023.

Given the scarcity of research on Nordic contemporary documentary in general,[81] not to mention of studies that touch specifically on remembering,[82] I did not want to confine this work to particular techniques, themes or "genres" in filmmaking practices[83] related to documentary. Instead, I wished to explore the variety of aesthetic modes and socio-cultural debates that arise in the context of remembering in Nordic creative documentary in this specific moment in time and place. In this way, the articles aim to deepen and expand knowledge on the aesthetics and politics of documentary remembering in the Nordic context.[84]

81 While still keeping in mind, that research on Nordic documentary cinema has multiplied in the last decade. In addition to individual contributions, many recent anthologies focusing on fiction film include analyses of documentary (e.g., Kääpä 2014; Hjort & Lindqvist 2016; Stenport & Lunde 2019). Moreover, special issues on Nordic documentary (*Journal of Scandinavian Cinema,* 2016, no. 2) and Finnish documentary film culture (*Studies in Documentary film* (2016, no. 2) have been published. Nevertheless, compared to the number of pages written on fiction film of the region, Nordic documentary remains an under-researched field in film studies.

82 In addition to those mentioned earlier see, e.g., Aaltonen & Kortti 2015.

83 Such as autobiographical, animated or testimonial documentaries.

84 In the field of cultural memory studies, Dagmar Brunow (2015, 2, 4–5) has signaled the lack of medium specificity. Documentary films in particular have often served in memory studies as mere evidence of historical events or sources of factual knowledge (ibid.). Brunow thus criticizes Anglophone cultural studies for having disregarded the aesthetic qualities of film and calls for studies where the formal elements of documentary and the filmmaking process would be looked at more closely (ibid., 16). In studies such as this one, documentary film studies can complement cultural memory studies while filling this gap.

6 *Mise-en-scène* – documentary remembering as a relational act where new things emerge

This is what the spectator sees and hears in the film: the stage, framing, composition, lighting, scene and action – a world perceived through and acted out for the camera.

The theoretical framework and findings of the research are interwoven into the next three chapters. I begin with a metatheoretical *Mise-en-scène*, which traces the undercurrents that run through the work and are present in all the articles.[85] Within them, documentary remembering can be understood as a relational act where new things emerge, and as an invitation to reimagine temporal engagements with films. These aspects contribute to the main research question, *how do documentaries remember?* which implies both subjective and non-subjective forms of remembering.[86] In the Establishing shot, the conceptual and methodological approach of the work is specified, and in Close-ups, the findings of the work are presented as responses to the research subquestions.

In her influential essay, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary", appearing at the time when subjective documentary was on the rise, Linda Williams (1993) writes about the evocative powers of documentary. Her essay coincided with a period when documentary film studies was also expanding as a research field, critically reflecting documentary's relation to reality (e.g., Nichols 1991). Williams focuses on Erroll Morris' film *The Thin Blue Line* (1987, US), which seeks to release a man after he was sentenced to death for a murder he did not commit by *intervening* with the past. The dramatized scenes and interviews in the film highlight the unreliable nature of remembering, particularly in the case of

85 Depending on the article's framing and context, this may be explicit or implicit.
86 These are examined in the next chapter with the central concepts of the articles.

trauma[87]. Williams (1993, 12) suggests that the traumatic events might not be "available for representation by any […] simple capturing", but they can be approached by conjuring a "receding horizon". In the film, events "are not offered as complete, totalisable, apprehensible", but as fragmented, and the original event "is never whole, never fully represented" (ibid., 15). Here, she points to the representational limitations of documentary.[88]

Referring to Fredric Jameson's idea of the postmodern as the loss of a sense of history, Williams notes how, "the postmodern suspicion of overabundant images of an unfolding, present 'real' […] has contributed not to new fictionalizations but, paradoxically, to new historicizations". According to her, these are "fascinated by an inaccessible, ever-receding, yet newly important past which does have depth". With "depth", she means that films of the time in fact contested historical "truths" in many ways through the "provocation of action".[89] She refers also to Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985, FR), where the Holocaust is remembered in interviews with the eyewitnesses and long shots of sceneries. Williams describes how Morris' and Lanzmann's favorite technique was "to set up a situation in which the action will come to them". In the performative interview set-ups, the filmmakers "ask questions, probe circumstances, draw maps". In these moments, she argues, we see "the power of the past" by finding its traces "in repetitions and resistances, in the present". (Ibid.) Similarly, all the documentaries in this study "provoke action" in their filmmaking processes by instigating a kind of a play with histories that intervenes with narratives of pasts.

6.1 A relational act

In the research process, three prominent aesthetic traits have emerged, which I call traces, gaps and constellations. They describe the *relational* nature of the cinematic acts of remembering, where memory is generated between traces, within gaps and temporal

87 In this work, trauma is used as a descriptive word, not a concept. It is worth bearing in mind that trauma may not always be the best term through which to think about violence or suffering. Michael Rothberg (2013, xvii) notes that it is equally important to examine the possibilities of resistance, healing and social change in the spaces where different forms of violence and power overlap. This topic of resistance will be further elaborated in the next chapter, which relates to subquestion 2 on the negotiation of agency in documentary remembering.

88 See also Daniels-Yeomans 2017, 4 on the limits of representations in documentary.

89 She mentions as an example Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love in the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation* (1985, US), where the director weaves together his own romantic quests with an exploration of the American Civil War events and the threat of nuclear war, using spontaneous interviews as his method.

constellations. Their function here is also to provide the reader with an overview of the typical expressions that remembering takes in the documentaries studied.

Traces refer to the remediated and material nature of remembering in the films. Traditionally, images are considered to find their expressive power in their relationship with the world and could be considered indexical, as they hold evidentiary power.[90] In this work however, they open up more dynamic relations with reality. For example, Dagmar Brunow (2015, 146–148) uses archival material in documentary as her primary example of traces that can remediate historical presences in the here and now. In this study, the idea of trace is transferred to a generative context, where traces can convey past experiences and knowledges that "release new possibilities for thinking" (Marks 2015, 173) and bring about alternative histories (see Wahlberg 2008, 34–41). Traces can "yield events from the past, to reveal what was thought to be lost or not to exist at all, to confirm a new historical narrative" (Marks 2015, 176).

Traces refer in this work to the presences emanating from objects, sounds, people and places that carry sensorial qualities. In this context, Laura U. Marks' (2000, 28) work on documentary as a sensorial mnemonic agent becomes relevant. She (ibid., 25–26) writes about situations where histories have been lost and the material traces that can project past experiences, referring to Walter Benjamin's writings on the aura of original art pieces. According to Benjamin (2007 [1968], 188), auratic objects receive their power from the presences and material practices that constructed them. The aura of an object enables our relationship with it to be similar to that with another human being; it is an object that speaks to us from the past, while still preserving its mystery (ibid.). As Marks (2000, 80–81) notes, an auratic object never fully satisfies "our desire to recover that memory", and simultaneously, "it hints that the past it represents is not over". Borrowing her vocabulary from Benjamin, Marks describes (ibid., 92–93) how the moving image itself can be considered "a fossil", not a representation but an "emissary" of the past, granting the viewer "access to the materiality of its original scene". Similar emissaries appear, for example, in archival scenes of the films studied, offering traces of pasts that carry the aura of the "original" life – their matter and presence – into the present moment.[91] This takes

90 For a reflection on this classical meaning of trace as evidentiary proof in documentary, presented as a record of the past or "a document" see, e.g., Winston 1995, 11.

91 Marks (2015, 172) elaborates this thought in her later work, where she writes about the role of the archives in relation to history and social memory: "And what do artists find in the archive? It is not an image that is found. It's not memory itself. It's a flash from the past that changes the present – a fossil, a combustion. A found image may stimulate the act of remembering, generating 'a cloud of virtualities', some of which actualize in the moment of viewing." Here, while reiterating Benjamin and Deleuze, Marks argues that images, when activated, have the potential to transform the present.

place, for example, by connecting traces in novel ways to (other) images and presences, objects or music, often with cuts and rhythms created in the editing.

In cinema, Wahlberg (2008, 35) claims, traces are thus subject to "creative strategies of *mise en scène* and narrative imagination". Documentary invites them to an "emplotment" that makes the traces "count as the past" (ibid., 40–42). It creates strategies and set-ups for traces that release new expressions, in relation with the film's other elements and temporalities. Ilona Hongisto also refers to the form of creative staging with traces when she remarks (2015, 27) that, "documents in documentary films do not necessarily offer a cohesive view of the past", instead, they "institute cuts, intervals and changing perspectives to the documentary composition". Documents, as "emissaries" of pasts, in fact appear in the films in various materialities and presences, not only as images; for example, as the ruins of an old Jesuit monastery amid the Argentinian jungle that serve as the background for a reenactment scene in *The Gold Bug*. The ruins institute a cut in the scene that raises critical reflection by conjuring up the uncanny presence of European colonialist pasts in the Americas. As Wahlberg (2008, 58) puts it, when writing about *Shoah*, the ruins represent the "scars and vestiges of the past", a past that hurts in this moment.

Gaps present another integral trait of remembering in the films studied, testifying to its elliptic nature. They invite the viewer to engage with the film-world through imagination. Documentary remembering happens in the present, and in the films researched, it often involves a significant temporal distance from the "original experiences", requiring a leap of meaning-making from the viewer. As Hirsch (2012 [1997], 22) argues, postmemory in this sense is a "powerful form of memory" because the "connection to its object of source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation". Trinh T. Minh-ha (2018) describes gaps as "spaces of representation" left open, referring to her theorization on "speaking nearby" (rather than about) a film subject. In these spaces filmmakers recognize their ethical stance and do not intend to speak on behalf of the film subject, which requires a deliberate suspension meaning making (ibid.).

Marks (2000, 31, 33) also points out, how the gaps left between official histories and private memories are the places where new memory is formed and, "when no image is available, […] archeology must be done in order to create images". In the articles, I explore the imaginative leaps that are teased out in the films, but also left unspoken, for example within the temporal and signifying gaps in archival montage, creating images where none are available (articles 1 & 3), in ethical distance built between the film subjects and the audience (article 3), and as reenactments, elliptic and partial in their historical references, allowing the temporal gaps to remain visible and inviting the viewer to discern them as results of historical fabulation (article 4).

In the researched films, one can feel the reverberations between different historical moments as *constellations* of temporalities, that is, non-linear reiterations

of time. With this idea, I wish to challenge the conception of temporality in documentary remembering as one-directional or compartmentalized, and to think of film as a time-space where overlapping and ongoing pasts, presents and futures interact. As Thomas Lange (2014, s.l.) notes:

> Constellations enable the understanding of the expanded and interwoven matrix of layers of time, revealing multiple connections to previous, present and future times. Constellations are configurations, montages, and interferences that enable us to better look at a specific historic place or moment in history.

Lange thinks of history as an "interrelation in being", where that which "has been" flashes in the present, ready to form new constellations (ibid.).[92] Similarly, remembering is considered in this work as a complex "tapestry" that constantly reforms and creates new ways of relating between pasts and presents.

The notion of constellation shares many qualities with the palimpsest, as it has been theorized by film scholars. Linda Williams (1993, 15) argues that past events are offered (in films such as *Shoah* and *The Thin Blue Line*) as fragments generated by memory. They are "not unitary representable truths", but "palimpsests" (ibid.). Here, she refers to Mary Ann Doane's (1990, 58) definition of palimpsest as "the sum total of its rewritings through time", remembered "in the reverberations between events". Similarly, Max Silverman (2013, 3) defines palimpsestic memory as a relationship between present and past that is not linear but "takes the form of a superimposition". Here, the interaction of different temporal traces constitutes "a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another" (ibid.). Silverman analyzes how the violent past of European imperialism "shines through" the narratives of the Holocaust, so that both bring new meaning to and affect each other.[93] He thus sees art works as open and dynamic spaces, where complex histories are constantly reframed and remediated in the present in relation to others.[94] Similarly, in this work, relations between historical and imagined pasts are created through traces, temporal and

92 See also Benjamin 2003 [1940], 390-391) on the past that flashes in the present, "appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger", threatening both "the content of the tradition and those who inherit it".

93 This idea is developed further on, under the subchapter 6.2.2 Temporal imagination.

94 Silverman's idea of the temporal constellation relies on Walter Benjamin (whose idea of constellational memory as a non-linear, spatial and poetic concept was already influenced by Henri Bergson's concept of "vertical memory"), Marcel Proust's concept of involuntary memory, Surrealism and film montage theory. In Benjamin's "dialectical image", past, present and future overlap, and memory is de-temporalized and spatialized. (Silverman 2013, 124.)

material fragments. The films researched move, for example, between myths, historical pasts and presents (articles 1 & 2), all while rearranging temporal relations in constellational film-worlds.

The acts of remembering in the documentaries studied activate constellations of temporal, spatial and affective relations between people, objects,[95] places and histories. In the film-worlds, these connections become visible, audible and tangible. In article 4, I develop the idea of cinematic memory as a living constellation of pasts, where fictional and historical narratives shine through each other. *The Gold Bug* composes its constellation from colonial pasts and presents, fabrications and historical events. Here, acts of remembering are non-linear and multidirectional,[96] and temporalities overlap in the time-space that the film creates.

The idea of constellation also refers to the conceptual approach in this research, which does not intend to work towards conclusive meanings given to notions such as remembering, but rather accumulates a vast network of connections. The research strives for a constellation, where differences and perceptions feed theorization of the films.

6.2 …where new things emerge

In acts of remembering, documentary *creates* realities, pasts, presents and futures, in addition to merely representing or conveying them. It generates memory in the process of filmmaking and makes something emerge that did not exist before. Similarly, Jacques Rancière (2006 [2001], 161) describes how the practice of making arrangements, extracting and selecting material, testifies to documentary's fictional capacities. He claims that documentary in fact has greater freedom than so-called fiction cinema, as there is more room to "play around" with narrative voices (ibid.).[97] Documentary can "combine meanings freely, to re-view images, to arrange them differently, and to diminish or increase their capacity for expression and for generating meaning" (ibid.). As Nico Baumbauch (2010, 57, 59) writes, referring to Rancière's thinking, documentary can become a site for "aesthetic experimentation" and contestation of "the common" in new arrangements of images and ideas. The articles present diverse means of making arrangements and magnitudes of fictionalization, which reaches a crescendo in article 4 with discussion of the fully dramatized *The Gold Bug*.

95 Specifically on remembering with constellations of objects, see Procopio Furtado 2015.

96 On multidirectional memory, see Rothberg 2009; 2010. I return to this concept in subchapter 6.2.2.

97 Rancière's idea also resonates with Benjamin's "playground", presented in the next chapter in relation to films and images remembering.

The research films undertake what Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990, 96) calls forms of "opening and closing". In these movements, films can emphasize "the interval between apertures" while "creating a space in which meaning remains fascinated by what escapes and exceeds it" (ibid.). In the research process, this has meant remaining open to the contingencies that the films put forth, while taking hold of the possibilities of framing reality that are presented by the film medium. As Trinh also claims (ibid., 90): "Filmmaking is after all a question of framing". This idea is consonant with Ilona Hongisto's work, where documentary is theorized as an aesthetics of the frame. In her Deleuzian approach, Hongisto (2015, 17–18) claims that, in documentary, based on real people and real events, reality has agency of its own (ibid.). For her, framing in documentary "performs a double movement that both captures the real and expresses it" as a sensation (ibid., 17).[98] Hongisto's (ibid., 21) theorization departs from the idea of indexicality, claiming that content is not "pre-formed" and merely conveyed by documentary, but "takes form and is expressed on the audiovisual plane of the documentary". In this work, I suggest that documentary remembering makes use of images as indexical traces, as well as their potentialities as expressions, in acts of remembering. Documentaries speak with both "languages" – while interacting with and immersing in the world, they create new meanings, new sensations and "apertures". And at times, one form of expression may outweigh the other.

Hongisto examines films with a "particular curiosity towards the images", as their protagonists "wonder and remember *with* the documents, and allow themselves to be taken beyond what is readily available in them" (2015, 21). Here, remembering is about "engaging with past images in order to find surprising beginnings", and the ways in which past lives could "live on in cinema" (ibid., 29). Hongisto (2015, 49) also describes how these images can "speak with a new voice in the frame of the documentary". This attention to the "surprising beginnings" that are created by engaging with images and fragments of pasts approaches Marks' (2000, 71) formulation of "recollection-image". These images float loosely from history, enabling a multitude of relations to be formed, while embodying traces of past events (ibid.).[99] The idea of images "speaking with a new voice" while forming new constellations within films has been a recurring aesthetic interest in my research.

In sum, I have paid attention to how documentaries arrange acts of remembering, experiment with forms and functions of remembering and, at the same time, give life to new circumstances and relations. In their film-worlds, documentaries open up new

98 Relying on Spinozist understanding of capacities, Hongisto (2015, 18) links the idea of documentary operations to the question, "what can documentaries do?" She sees no limits to the potentiality of documentary as "an experimentation in the real" (ibid.).

99 The notion of recollection-image is addressed in the next two chapters.

ways to perceive, sense and act. They bring forth both subjective and non-subjective forms of remembering, as the next chapter shows. The evocative aspects of documentary remembering are explored in the articles primarily through the concepts of *performativity* and *performance*, elaborated below. Further on, I also raise the idea of *temporal imagination*, experimenting with historical and speculative temporalities, that is discussed in the articles.

6.2.1 Performativity and performance

The acts of remembering in the documentary films discussed in the articles involve *performative* aesthetics and filmmaking practices, working with traces, materials, bodies and objects, as well as *performances* as embodied practices that both create memory.[100] My interest lies in *how* the remembering takes place in the films and, also, what kind of *transformations* it strives for, relating thus to the politics of remembering.[101]

The articles resonate with Annette Kuhn's (ibid., 157) idea that, "memory work is a conscious and purposeful performance" involving an "active staging of memory". This performative attitude towards pasts is concretized in the filmmaking practices present in this research, in which special attention is paid to first person filmmaking (articles 1 & 2), testimonial documentary (article 3) and documentary as performance (article 4). All the articles also tackle cinematic techniques that actively reprocess pasts, such as editing and voice-over. The films are performative in the sense that they actively generate new conditions in real life circumstances and bring about ways to live in the present world or to think about the world to come.

Referring to language's capability to act out the things it names, J. L. Austin (1978 [1962], 60–61) suggested that "performative utterance" should characterize

[100] Mieke Bal (2000, 175–176) makes a distinction between performativity and performance, where – put simply – performativity refers to an ongoing action and performance to an event that has passed. In this strict sense, performativity is explored in all of the articles as aspects of cinematic expressions that "do things" or make new things appear, and performance only in article 4, as the constructed act of the documentary filmmaking process in *The Gold Bug*. Nonetheless, these two aspects are present in all of the articles, especially if one thinks of remembering as a form of reenactment, as Bal (ibid., 176) suggests: an act that has passed at the time of seeing the film.

[101] Remembering is in itself a performative act, as many authors have pointed out. For example, Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter state (2010, 7) that, "remembrance is performative. It is an activity, something that happens in time and place, and that on every occasion when we come together to do the work of remembrance, the story we fashion is different from those that have come before." This formulation also points towards the generative nature of remembering, which is central to this work.

statements that have direct consequences in the world (such as saying "I do" at a wedding), as it is the "performance of an action". Later on, Judith Butler (1988, 519–520) applied the notion of performativity to gender, claiming that gender comprises a set of acts that might evolve over time when they are repeated and "stylized". She thus widened Austin's idea of performativity to the embodied, gestural realm. In this research, I am looking into cinematic acts that "do things" by creating realities, by conjuring things. In many instances, they are embodied (such as in reenactments), but I am also interested in non-personified forms of remembering (such as the capacity of images to perform and rework pasts).

In the field of documentary film studies, performativity has been a widespread concept throughout the 2000s. The term is often used descriptively in relation to films that "inquire about their own construction", drawing attention to the process of mediating reality and filmmakers' techniques of provoking action (Rosas & Dittus 2020, 3).[102] Stella Bruzzi (2006 [2000], 185) sees the performative element as "an alienating, distancing device" while taking note of "the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation". She claims, in fact, that as a negotiation between filmmaker and reality, all documentaries are "at heart, a performance" (ibid., 186).[103] However, according to her, the underlying principles find their clearest expression in what she calls performative documentaries (ibid.). Bruzzi departs from Bill Nichols' (2001, 130-137) earlier, and somewhat vague, formulation of the "performative mode". This mode emphasizes the experiential, subjective and

[102] Documentary studies dealing with performativity and performance have looked into topics such as film subjects' self-conscious performances, their "acting out", so to speak (see, e.g., Winston, Vanstone & Chi 2017, 85–102; Hongisto 2015, 67–82; Marquis 2013), or "artivist" documentary as a type of interventionist or activist performativity (see, e.g., Møhring Reestorff 2013; Hongisto & Pape 2015). Many of these topics fall outside the scope of this work as they deal with other "genres", such as observational documentary. Likewise, research has also been published on specific performative documentary practices, such as those related to the Chinese Folk Memory Project. In the project, villagers were given cameras, and they began to chronicle memories in their home region in order to reclaim crucial memories from the era of the Cultural Revolution and to "school" the new generation in how to remember (see, e.g., Wang 2016; Pernin 2014). Other specific themes include, e.g., the performance of violence in documentary (ten Brink & Oppenheimer 2012). Discussions on performativity also stretch towards explicitly non-representational approaches, relating to fields of affect studies, Deleuzian studies and new materialist accounts of cinema (see, e.g., del Río 2008; Hongisto 2015).

[103] Bruzzi uses the terms performativity and performance interchangeably, which is somewhat confusing, as noted by, e.g., Jerslev 2005. In my work, performance is considered separately, as a form of performativity. However, the verb "to perform" complicates this distinction. As suggested, in this research, performativity is understood as an aspect of cinematic expression that "does things", or makes new things appear. Performance is tackled in article 4 through the fully dramatized performance of a documentary filmmaking process in *The Gold Bug*.

affective dimensions of documentary and underscores the complexity of knowledge.[104] Instead, Bruzzi (2006 [2000], 186) relies on Austin's and Butler's definitions of performativity, claiming that performative documentaries function as "utterances that simultaneously both describe and perform an action". Bruzzi (ibid.) states that a performative documentary:

> only comes into being as it is performed [...] although its factual basis (or document) can predate any recording or representation of it, the film itself is necessarily performative, because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality.

Here, she emphasizes the artificiality and constructed nature of documentary truths.[105] For Bruzzi, the prerequisite of performative documentary is "the inclusion of a notable performance component" into a non-fictional context, and she names two broad categories within this definition as "the intrusive presence of the filmmaker" and "self-conscious performances by its subjects" (ibid., 154–155, 163). The autobiographical *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, analyzed in article 2, exemplifies Bruzzi's claim that performative documentary produces meaning in the interaction between the filmmaker's "performances" in the film and reality.[106] I suggest that in

104 For a more detailed account of Bruzzi's critique of Nichols' modes of documentary, which she sees as simplistic, imposing a false, problematic chronology that suggests an "evolutionary" model of documentary filmmaking practices, see Bruzzi 2006 (2000), 3–5.

105 Bruzzi (2006 [2000], 194–196) names, as examples of performative documentary filmmaking, Nicholas Barker's *Unmade beds* (1997, US) for its "formalised use of camera, framing and self-conscious performances" by film subjects conveying a sense of alienation. She also puts forward Michael Moore, Molly Dineen and Nick Broomfield as "performer-directors" who exercise "overt intervention" in their films (ibid.).

106 In her extensive critique of Bruzzi's definition of performativity, Anne Jerslev (2005, 98) notes how Bruzzi does not include "intimate documentaries" in her categorization of performative documentaries, though it is a genre that explicitly performs in the act of filmmaking. Jerslev (ibid.) imagines this derives from Bruzzi's inclination to view performative documentary "as an oppositional and critical form that functions rhetorically like an explicit rejection of the strategies of invisibility in classical observational documentaries". I concur that positioning observational and performative documentaries as each other's opposites is not a fruitful starting point. Bruzzi's point of view has very specific theoretical roots in the documentary studies of the 1990s and early 2000s, when film scholars reflected critically on the American tradition of Direct cinema. This filmmaking practice was developed in the United Stated from the 1960s onward. The ideal was that filmmakers should remain as invisible as possible while filming in an attempt to record "reality as it is". Instead, performativity was valued in its French counterpart, *cinéma vérité*, where e.g. the "intrusive presence" of the filmmaker was thought to guarantee the documentary's authenticity. See Winston 2018 [2013], 1–29 for a comparison between these approaches.

the film, filmmaking becomes a performative-material act that molds reality as the director searches for her place in the Sámi community through cinematic experiments. However, in this work I have not wished to label specific documentaries as performative (or not) but, instead, I have looked into the performative elements of documentary remembering. In addition, I do not limit the notion of performativity to human subjects, as Bruzzi does, but extend it to images, voices and cinematic techniques. Nor do I consider performativity as a necessarily alienating or distancing device, as Bruzzi does, but perceive it as a force that can also create intimacy and empathy.

Art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann (2014) notes that, while every artwork could be called performative on the basis that it produces reality, interest in performativity implies a specific orientation towards the "contingent and elusive realm of impact and effect that art brings about" (ibid.). Thus, instead of using performativity to label certain artworks, here attention is paid to the situation that the artwork produces and the transformation that it creates. My interest lies mostly in the performative aesthetics in the films, their ways of creating remembering. Yet, performativity of the filmmaking practices is also explored as a field of experimentation with reality, where filming and living intertwine.

More specifically, the notion of performativity is applied in this research in three contexts. Firstly, in the cinematic practices where filmmakers interact or intervene with reality, as the filmmaker makes things happen on screen.[107] Here, acts of remembering produce realities through the embodied actions of the film subjects (such as the material-performative acts in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*) that would not have taken place without filmmaking. This function resembles Bruzzi's description of the filmmaker's "intrusive presence", though its expressions can also be more subtle and less personified (such as in the montage scenes of *Santra and the Talking Trees*).

Secondly, performativity refers to the "fictionalizing" aesthetic strategies that perform pasts. Here, film medium's function of remediation is highlighted. Fictionalization applies, for example, to the use of archival footage in montage that invites the viewer to imagine with images (e.g., in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*). Performativity, in this case, is considered as a generative aesthetic phenomenon, referring to the ways in which images and sounds themselves incite affects, experiences and critical reflection, and how they create new meanings that sometimes escape the intentions of the filmmakers. Taking this aspect into account

[107] Brian Winston (2018 [2013], 6–26) connects these interventionist and self-reflexive techniques to what he calls, "Vertovian Documentary Practice", following Dziga Vertov's style of filmmaking, with a pre-1960 branch named Kino Pravda and the later branch of *cinéma vérité*, including, e.g., Jean Rouch's participatory filmmaking practice. Both of these are assigned specific aesthetic characteristics in his theorization.

in the research process has meant remaining open to the range of possible meanings and sensations suggested by the films – of images and sounds as independent "emissaries" of pasts.

Thirdly, performativity refers to the ways in which documentary filmmaking becomes a performance of its own (in *The Gold Bug*), in this case creating new compositions of pasts in the act of filmmaking (this case is elaborated later on).

What connects these conceptions of performativity is the presence and agency of the body, when one broadens the idea of having a body to the film medium itself.[108] The filmmaker-protagonist's embodied agency may appear within the film-world, as a body on screen in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, or as a performative force whose presence is mediated. In *Santra and the Talking Trees*, the director-narrator Tervo acts mostly from behind the camera and through her voice-over – as a body who sees and speaks, and who operates her film-world dominantly off-screen – while appearing only occasionally (and partly, incognito) in images. Beyond that, the film subjects' bodies enact performative agency as "archives" (see Johnson 2020, 171), carrying histories and mythical stories within themselves and performing these through their actions, including singing, enchanting and telling stories, like Santra Remsujeva in *Santra and the Talking Trees* or Kaisa Gauriloff in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*. In *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, on the other hand, the women perform as silent bodies, and their mere "auratic" presence testifies of the original events.

To take the idea of performativity further, while trailing the second context, one can think of images (or practice of cinematography) as "bodies" that speak (to the corporeality of the viewer).[109] Here, images or sounds become performative gestures in the context of the film. The archival montage in *Santra and the Talking Trees*, which combines material from an old ethnographic film with contemporary electronic music, exemplifies the performative work of documentary editing. The music brings a sense of immediacy to the archival imagery, a feeling that the events are still unfolding. In this scene, the images themselves gain agency, a surplus of expressive intensity that extends beyond the context of the original documentary material. They animate traces of a past and call for imaginative investment from the viewer.

108 This idea refers to Vivian Sobchack's (1992, 164–258) theorization of the "film's body" that engenders an intersubjective relationship with the viewer. I elaborate on this connection in the next chapter in relation to my methodology. On the role of the body in performativity and performance see, e.g., von Hantelmann 2014; Johnson 2020.

109 I am here extending the idea of performativity in documentary to the realm of non-human actors, as, for example, Finn Daniels-Yeomans (2017) does in his non-representational, performative analysis on *sleep furiously* (dir. Gideon Koppel, 2008, UK).

The third context refers to the theorization of reenactments and voice-over as forms of *performance* in documentary, related to *The Gold Bug*. While discussing these in article 4, I rely on Diana Taylor's (2003, 16) notion of performance as a way of knowing that expands to the realm of embodied expression. The film celebrates "the capacity of performance to function historiographically – to record and relate aspects of the past in, on, and through the body", as Katherine Johnson (2020, 172) writes. I claim that the reenactments and voice-over narration in *The Gold Bug* quite literally grant to the historical figures of Victoria Benedictsson and Leandro N. Alem bodies through which to speak and take part in the events of the film. Performances of pasts in *The Gold Bug* involve several layers of referentiality in its intertextual acts of RE-telling and RE-presenting historical knowledge. They also raise questions about how embodiment in a performance relates to agency in historical remediations, as these performances call for substitute bodies (of the actors) to refer to historical embodiments, events and processes. The characters in the film, performing as themselves, "act out a documentary", as Bruzzi's (2013, 49) formulation states, while revealing the biased mechanisms of documentary performance and the impossibility of objective historical representation.

It should be kept in mind, though, that the ways in which remembering is performed (referring here to both performativity and performance) are unique to every film, and always embedded in the devices of the film medium itself. The films studied build bonds between different temporal existences through the unique rhythms and patterns that the particular film sets in motion.

6.2.2 Temporal imagination

I suggest that the documentaries discussed in the articles challenge the linear narrative, while their film-worlds, many temporalities exist simultaneously, interacting with one other. In this way, the research contributes to the understanding of a cultural mode which Annette Kuhn (2010, 299) calls "memory texts" that complicate the conception of time as linear, and often "refuse to be easily anchored to 'historical' time". In these memory texts, events can be repetitive or cyclical, and times may merge into one another (Kuhn 2002 [1995], 162). These performances of memory foreground "formal devices" and metaphoric qualities of visual media, she claims (Kuhn 2010, 299).[110]

[110] As an example, Kuhn (2010, 299) mentions how, in memory texts, "events may […] telescope or merge into one another in the telling so that a single recounted memory might fuse together a series of possibly separate events, or follow no obviously logical or temporal sequence". This type of film narration, favoring gaps and free treatment of temporality, is present in most of the films in this research, yet the telescoping and fusing of different historical and fictional events is most evident in *The Gold Bug*.

In this context, Michael Rothberg's (2009) concept of *multidirectional memory* proves useful in thinking about the malleability of temporality. He writes that:

> [r]ecognizing memory as multidirectional entails understanding how all acts of remembering involve relays and ricochets between places and times that prevent the kind of arbitrary closure that would canonize events as unique or sacred (Rothberg 2010, 101). [111]

Rothberg (2009, 3) describes memory as productive, not privative, in the sense that remembering is not thought of as "competitive" – a "zero-sum struggle" where different historical events would battle over recognition. Instead, it is considered multidirectional, subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing (ibid.). Rothberg emphasizes the dynamic transfers between different spaces and times, solidarities across ethnocultural divides, as well as new possibilities for the negotiation of justice via the active working through of difficult memories (ibid., 5).[112]

Max Silverman (2013) complements this view with his idea of palimpsestic memory, introduced earlier. He writes that artistic works can make visible "the complex interaction of times and sites at play in memory", as well as their "[c]orrespondences, substitutions and transformations" (ibid., 28). The substance of literary (or, cinematic) imagination "can open up an alternative history […] which challenges the compartmentalized narratives that we habitually receive" (ibid., 29). In the performative acts of remembering, histories considered disconnected become connected. Similarly, Rancière (2006 [2001], 165) claims that cinema constructs memory "as the interlacing of uneven temporalities". In its arrangements, documentary's fictional capacities make it possible to produce imaginative links between multiple histories in the "virtual space of indefinite connections and resonances", where the images can "speak for themselves" (ibid., 167, 170).

In the films studied, the linear, chronological and teleological conceptions of history are challenged by fragmented, cyclical and assembled constellations of

111 In relation to the work of testimony, Rothberg draws an example from Jean Rouch's and Edgar Morin's *The Chronicle of a Summer* (1960, FR, *Chronique d'un été*). In the scene to which he refers, one of the characters, Marceline, walks through the streets of Paris, speaking directly to her dead father while reminiscing about her deportation to a Nazi extermination camp. Here, Rothberg (2009, 187) claims, the "productive encounter" initiated by the filmmakers forces a relation between different histories, between the everyday practices of contemporary 1960s Paris and the violence of the Second World War.

112 Rothberg (2009, 6, 8) suggests that, in Europe at least, the emergence of Holocaust memory contributed to the articulation of other violent events and fostered research on, for example, colonialism.

temporalities, including eventual forgetting. Yet, even when certain historical events have been suppressed, they have the potential to surge again (see Ricoeur 2004 [2000]). The films studied experiment with temporalities and compose dynamic dialogues between historical events, where memory can be "re-written and reconstructed" (Duarte 2018, 68). They also invite temporalities of imagined worlds, such as the "extra-historical" mythical world, to intermingle with the present. This is apparent in *Santra and the Talking Trees*, where the mythical Karelia appears as a "grey eminence" transforming the lives of the film subjects in the present, most radically the filmmaker-protagonist Tervo's own. Alternatively, they invite an overlapping of fictional and historical events, reminiscent of the malleability and speculative possibilities of temporal existence. By merging these possible modes of temporal being with contemporary and future timelines, the films also dismantle straightforward conceptions of time as a one-way road from the past to the present, with causes and effects. They offer a more dynamic understanding of temporality, where presents may also affect pasts and engage with historical synchronicities and repetitions. In the narrative of *The Gold Bug*, for example, the history of Swedish colonies in 19th-century Argentina and the financing policies of the contemporary transnational filmmaking industry appear as two facets of ongoing colonial history.

The films discussed in this dissertation thus summon temporal imagination that instigates multidirectional relations between pasts, presents and futures. They work actively with difficult pasts and evoke the possibility to negotiate justice and reclaim agency in situations of loss and displacement.[113] Documentary aesthetics and filmmaking practices offer a testing ground for the exploration of temporalities in acts of remembering. They allow the audience to engage with pasts in new ways and to extend the capability to perceive and sense the interconnected nature of multidirectional temporalities. The films welcome forms of elliptic, repetitive and fragmented cinematic storytelling that allow for non-linear and constellational relations between different times, historical and imagined, to be generated. Their engagement with pasts also functions on a speculative level, as they encourage to explore sense of the possible in the present and outline conditions for (future) life.

[113] For this reason, I have chosen to highlight the active verb "remembering" instead of the more static noun, "memory", in this work.

7 *Establishing shot* – concepts and methods

In the establishing shot, a greater distance enables one to establish relations between important characters, objects and figures in their settings.

In this research, I have looked into the means of expression through which remembering is generated in the films – the cinematic techniques and materials (e.g., animations, archival footage, reenactments), ways of addressing the viewer (e.g., narrational choices) and temporalities (produced, e.g., in the processes of editing). At the same time, an ongoing attention has been directed to what kinds of political and ethical stakes become expressed through these choices. Performative aspects of documentary aesthetics and filmmaking are present in all of the films, appearing as "provocations to act" or as other embodied means of intervening with pasts and creating new realities.

In this chapter, I introduce my methodological approach and present the central concepts used in the articles to offer complementary points of view on the films' aesthetics and filmmaking practices, expressing acts of remembering. The concepts also build up a continuum from acts of remembering carried out by film subjects to collective remembering and, finally, to non-subjective, or non-personified, forms of remembering.

7.1 Multidirectional methodology

In the research process, my methodological approach has been both *aesthetically*-oriented and guided by *concepts*. This means that I have engaged with the films as aesthetic beings that invite theorization.[114] I am interested in how acts of remembering are expressed in the films, and how these expressions can be perceived,

[114] As Dagmar Brunow (2015, 5) notes, documentary films can be regarded as "theoretical tools in their own right", or "a mode of theorization". This approach directs attention to constructions of reality through filmmaking, instead of thinking of documentaries as representations of historical events.

sensed and experienced. This view is grounded in the notion of aesthetics, from its Greek root (*aisthētikós*) that emphasizes sensory perception (Online Etymology Dictionary 2017). I also see aesthetics as an act of recreation and remediation. As Trinh (1990, 89) asserts: "Aesthetics allows one to experience life differently, or as some would say, to give it 'another sense', remaining in tune with its drifts and shifts". In that sense, I am looking into the "translations" that the films propose, their ways of molding life into a cinematic form.

In the films studied, acts of remembering often appear as embodied events that invite sensorial aesthetic analysis.[115] The sensorial, non-representational aspects of the films are considered side by side with the representations of remembering. The aesthetic orientation has been combined with a keen interest in the political aspects of remembering in the films, as well as the societal and cultural contexts of filmmaking involved in the practices of remembering, or memory work. Often, these aspects cannot be separated from one other, as representations are intrinsically connected to ways of being and doing, of entering into a relation with cinematic objects, bodies and events, both entangled with politics of remembering.

In the writing process of this dissertation, I have tried to retain traces of the energy and enigma of moving images and sounds – of their force and immediacy – whilst being translated into words and conceptual figures. This has meant paying special attention to the language and vocabulary I use. I have been working with what Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow (2015, 9) call the unique power of the documentary, which allows "us to know with or through the body (including our

[115] In what has been termed the experiential (e.g., von Hantelmann 2014), sensorial (e.g., Pink 2015) or affective turn (e.g., Clough 2008) in the humanities (or social sciences), the non-representational approaches that engage with film and other art forms have brought the body and its sensory capabilities to the fore (see also Daniels-Yeomans 2017, 4–7). Within film studies, these approaches could also be placed under the remit of feminist film theory, which has raised body, experience and affect to recognition (e.g., Thornham 1999; Smelik 2016). For an overview on feminist theory and documentary, see Waldman & Walker 1999. For an introduction to sensorial engagements with cinema, see Stephens 2012; Elsaesser & Hagener 2009. These approaches, placing emphasis on the embodied, aesthetic experience of cinema, have also extended towards phenomenology, new materialism and affect studies (e.g., del Río 2008; Hongisto 2015). Of these, my relationship to film phenomenology might be the closest. Though I have not followed a phenomenological method as such, my analysis is influenced in particular by Laura U. Marks' (2000; 2002; 2015) theorizations. She has explored the interconnections between memory and the material world, including the body. Her work is, in turn, indebted to Vivian Sobchack (1992; 2004), a central figure in the development of film phenomenology. She too has been a major inspiration throughout my early stages as a film scholar. For an overview of trends and developments in film phenomenology, see Chamarette 2015; Fuery 2022.

own, as spectators), through affect, empathy, and sensation".[116] I have not approached the films as "texts" to be read or as "code" to be deciphered, but have strived for an embodied and critical engagement with the films. I have immersed myself in the meaning-making process of the films "in the flesh", as Vivian Sobchack (2004, 64–65) describes the ways in which lived bodies become engaged with the film-worlds. In this "common sensuous experience" with the films, I have touched and been touched "by the substance and texture of images" (ibid., 65), their resonances and imaginings. This involves thinking and sensing, that is, engaging with the films sensorially and conceptually. "To engage" with something could be termed a co-constitutional relationship – "how we are involved with our research material" – as articulated by Sybille Lammes (2018, 145). The films I have engaged with have changed my perceptions and my ways of being in the world. Yet, my own position as a white, Finnish scholar, with a background in political science, art studies and practice,[117] has also affected the selection of the research materials and the ways in which I have engaged with them.[118]

In this context, *multidirectionality* refers to the reciprocity between the researcher, the films and the concepts. In this relationship, all counterparts are active participants in the theorizing process. I have approached the films with concepts that have opened up ways of seeing, listening, sensing and perceiving the acts of remembering. The discussions they usher in have also affected these orientations towards the films. I have chosen concepts that specific films have summoned, and films that specific concepts have attracted and conversed with in productive ways. Both have served specific tasks in the research as a whole, and in relation to the research questions.

116 What I came to notice during this research, was that the cinematic acts of remembering are often hard to verbalize. In the films, meanings, sensations and impressions overflow and often escape attempts to capture them with words. As David MacDougall (2006, 2) describes, "the encounter with visual images demands more of us than the mental facility that language has given us. There is a specificity and obduracy to images that defies our accustomed habits of translation and summation." In the encounters with the films, this immediacy and sometimes – in addition to obduracy – "obscuracy" of images. Films as artworks operate in the realm of the multisensorial forces, which cannot be translated into verbal language without losing something of their power.

117 My artistic practice includes video making and creative writing. I should also reveal here my Karelian roots, and a partner whose grandfather is assumed to be a German soldier.

118 These particular films open a field of analysis where questions of cultural memory's embodied and sensorial engagements are highlighted. By selecting other films, I would have ended with other questions, other concepts, and another research project altogether. The interrogative "how" in the main research question directed my attention towards films that pay serious attention to creative cinematic techniques.

Here, I rely on Mieke Bal's (2002, 5) idea of concepts as the methodological basis in interdisciplinary cultural analysis. While "groping" to define concepts, provisionally and partly, we gain insight into what they can do (ibid., 11). Bal quotes Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's idea of concepts as "centres of vibrations", each one in themselves and in relation to others, and how they resonate rather than cohere (quoted in ibid., 52).[119] As I see it, concepts create a space – a kind of a soundboard[120] – for exploring documentary aesthetics and the films in their environments. In the research process, the concepts have become interlocutors with me and the films. The films have also summoned concepts; they have invited a network of resonating concepts through which one can learn more about their ways of relating to the world. Here, documentaries become theorizing beings themselves.

I have explored the acts of remembering in the films through their aesthetics, the ways in which remembering operates in its sensuous, cinematic expressions, such as editing, cinematography, use of text and dialogue, sound and music. I have paid attention to how remembering is created in the films in specific scenes and moments, but also to the temporal and associative continuums, rhythms and flows between images and scenes, as well as within the film as a whole. I have also inquired into cinematic practices within which the aesthetics of a film have been born, both as these practices appear in the films themselves, but also through media texts such as film reviews and interviews of the directors. I have also interviewed filmmaker Katja Gauriloff twice on her films, filmmaking practice and the ecologies of Sámi (documentary) filmmaking.[121] These sources and meetings have concretized the ways in which the films participate in broader memory work in Nordic societies. In the research process, I have thus strived to outline societal and cultural bonds created by the acts of remembering.

The methodological emphasis has varied in the articles depending on their publication context. Yet, all the articles engage with the films aesthetically and conceptually, emphasizing sometimes their sensorial and, at other times, socio-cultural bearings. In article 1, the approach was aesthetically and sensorially oriented. In the first round of analysis of *Santra and the Talking Trees*, I concentrated on the embodied experience that the film generated with specific cinematic techniques. In the process of sensing, reading and writing with the film, the concept of cinematic *worlding* emerged, as it seemed to open a prolific (play)ground for

119 The original quote is from Deleuze & Guattari 1994 (1991), 23.

120 Referring to "a thin resonant board (such as the belly of a violin) so placed in an instrument as to reinforce its tones by sympathetic vibration" (Merriam Webster 2024).

121 In addition, during the research process I interviewed several Nordic producers and filmmakers, such as the Finnish producer Ulla Simonen and Swedish director Göran Olsson. These interviews served as background material for this research, as well as contributed to other texts I have written.

research into the sensorial aspects of remembering. By contrast, in article 2, the approach was concept-based, as the article was conceived in partnership with the research group "Arts of belonging" working with the concept of *belonging*. Here, the concept guided the choice of the research material, as the Sámi films *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* offered fertile perspectives on the complex aesthetico-political negotiations of belonging and non-belonging.

In article 3, my approach was guided by the anthology's (*Enemy in Contemporary Film*) overall focus, examining how cinematic mediations of enemy images have contributed to shaping cultural memories. Here, the analysis was driven by the socio-cultural and historical context of the film(s), emphasizing the creation of cultural memory. *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, as a film, suggested an ethical way of framing traumatic remembering in documentary, while connecting to the practices of constructing enemy images. In the concise aesthetic analysis, I focused on the framing of the interviews and applied the concept of *recollection-image* in relation to the evocative way that archival material is used in the film.

In article 4, my analysis concentrated on the cinematic aesthetic of *The Gold Bug* and its filmmaking process in the context of remediating colonial memory. Here, the idea of *memory as a living constellation* emerged in the aesthetic analysis of the film itself, yet in the article, the socio-cultural environment also plays a major role. The article complemented the analysis of Sámi films in article 2 with a distinct view on Nordic colonialism.

To summarize, article 2 was strictly concept-based, article 3 focused on a specific theoretical and socio-cultural context, and articles 1 & 4 weighed in on the sensorial research approach, where the concepts emerged from the films themselves.

7.2 Film subjects remembering

In the research process, two main forms of documentary remembering emerged. These accentuate distinct catalysts present in the aesthetico-political acts of remembering, while answering a key question: who or what remembers in the films? The first form deals with acts of remembering by *film subjects*, primarily in articles 1 and 2. The point of view shifts from filmmakers' personal mnemonic journeys, in *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, to communal acts of remembering,[122] implicating groups and collectives, even nations, in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*. The second case engages with non-personified forms of

[122] The work assumes a flexible approach to communal remembering and avoids, as has been done in the work of many others before me (e.g., Duarte 2018), the idea of a stable and shared "collective memory" that subsumes individual and dynamic forms of remembering, put forward by Maurice Halbwachs (1992, 38).

remembering, where *images and films* themselves become remembering agents. This form is investigated primarily in articles 3 and 4, with *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* and *The Gold Bug*. However, this form also appears in articles 1 and 2, within the processes of cinematic worlding and belonging. The connections between the concepts and articles can thus be connected in a circular manner in relation to the two forms of catalysts of remembering, presented in figure 2.

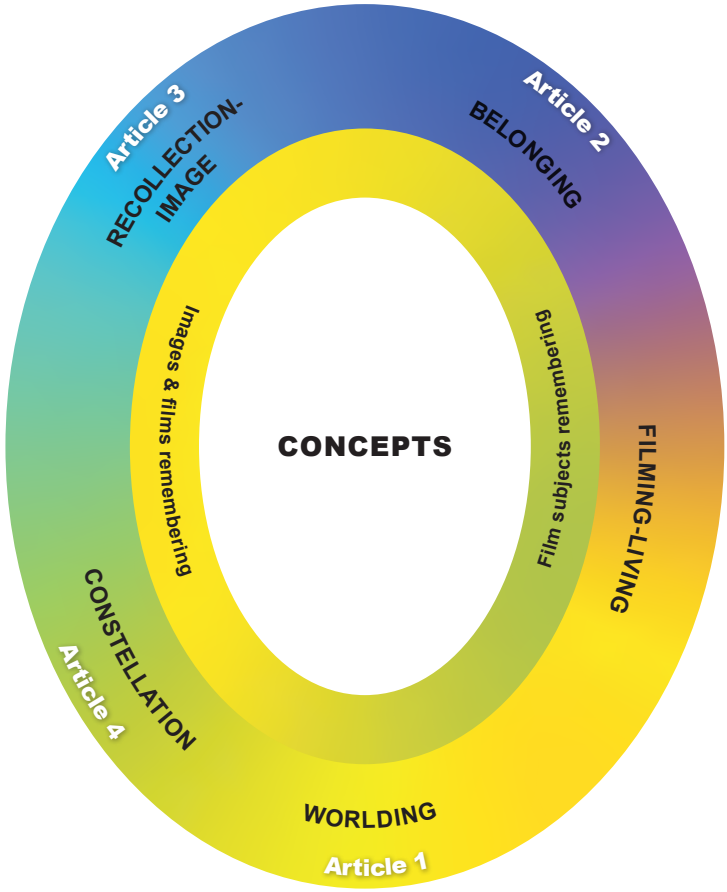

Figure 2. The circle of connections between the concepts, articles and forms of remembering.

To be precise, in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* (article 3), the film subjects also remember as an "affiliated" group sharing similar experiences. Here however, the article is inscribed under a form of non-personified remembering, as its main concept is recollection-image, studied in relation to archival montage. For this reason, there is overlap between film subjects and images remembering in article 3. In fact, one could take note of both forms of remembering in all of the films. Yet, in this chapter,

their placement depends on the concepts and theoretical approach chosen to the articles.

In the first form, the catalysts for acts of remembering are the filmmakers themselves in the films *Santra and the Talking Trees* (article 1) and *Sámi Daughter Yoik* (article 2). In these films, documentary remembering appears as a way to attend to the world of social and ecological relations, and as a way to change one's relation to the world.

The first article builds upon Inga Pollmann's (2013, 782–783, 778) notion of *cinematic worlding*, where film is seen as capable of creating worlds, or environments[123] within our world(s). I associate the concept with the filmmaker Tervo's aim to reconnect with the mythical Karelian past in the creation of the whimsical film-world in *Santra and the Talking Trees*. In the article, I introduce the idea of *filming-living* as an artistic attitude that freely crosses borders between the film-world and reality, and avoids strict separation of the real and the imagined, the magical world and life itself (see also Armstrong 2005). I suggest that here the filmmaking itself offers ways "to world", it becomes an act of remembering the mythical past.

Two conceptions widen the understanding of worlding in this context. Firstly, Martin Heidegger refers, in *Being and Time* (1927), to "being-in-the-world" (*Dasein*) that is an ongoing and generative process. It involves openness to the world, dwelling and involvement. (Wheeler 2011.) Secondly, for Donna Haraway (2016, 40, 58), worlding points towards the co-operative and dissonant ways of "world-making" and "storying" where different species, technologies and forms of knowledge interact in the act of sympoiesis, of "making-with". She stresses the importance of staying with the problems of today, to think with them, to reflect how we understand and act the world in this moment (ibid., 1–4, 10–13). These views emphasize the active and ongoing nature of worlding and support its use in this research: worlding is the creation of a film-world as a home to dwell in with all the senses, building relations between humans, other species and their environments. This resonates with the ways in which objects, non-human actors and spiritual places begin to "speak" in the films studied.[124]

In *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, filmmaking channels the filmmakers' longing to belong. The autobiographical documentaries set out performative quests to renew a connection with a wider tradition, community and environment. In article 1 to the mythicized Karelia, and in article 2 to the Sámi traditions, communities and the land of Sápmi. In the latter, the concept of *belonging*,

123 Originally a "surrounding world" (*Umwelten*). At the basis of Pollmann's theorization lies biologist-philosopher Jakob Uexküll's work on worlding in the world of insects.

124 See more on this aspect in the next chapter on findings.

and its counterpart *non-belonging*, thus open up critical aspects related to the political agencies present in documentary remembering in the context of Indigenous filmmaking. In *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, the Sámi filmmakers explore their place within the generational continuum that Nordic settler colonial practices have disturbed.

Elspeth Probyn (1996, 19) differentiates belonging from the more rigid concept of identity. According to her (ibid.), belonging captures:

> more accurately the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state.

Belonging as a notion emphasizes the spatiality, multiplicity and materiality involved in various social attachments (see Lähdesmäki et al. 2016). Marco Antonsich (2010, 645) distinguishes two levels of belonging: "a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness)", and belonging "as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)". These levels of belonging take various aesthetic expressions in the Sámi films. In article 2, I describe the filmmaker-protagonist Wajstedt's quest as a "moving state of confusion and becoming" that never reaches its final destination, that is never completed, but driven by the yearning to belong (see also Yuval-Davis 2006, 199; Probyn 1996, 19). In article 1, I also refer to bell hooks' (2009, 1–2) conception of belonging as a sense of direction. The past can offer a resource and foundation from which one can begin to renew a "commitment to the present" (ibid., 5). The film-world created in *Santra and the Talking Trees* intends to reconnect with pasts in the present through a film-world that becomes regarded as "home".

The concepts of worlding, belonging and filming-living are presented within the practice of *first person filmmaking* (Lebow 2012), where individual remembering merges with shared remembering. According to Lebow (ibid., 1–2), first person filmmaking entails a mode of address: "these films 'speak' from the articulated point of view of the filmmaker who readily acknowledges her subjective position", working either in first person singular or plural. Yet, the "we" is always included in "I", as these films establish the film subject as already in relation to others, as well as to histories and broad cycles of culture and society (ibid. 2–4). As Lebow (ibid., 1) notes, first person films can be autobiographical "in full, or only implicitly and in part". They can also be portraits of someone close (as in *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*) and, at the same time, speak about the

filmmaker herself, sometimes implicitly (ibid., 1–2).[125] In articles 1 and 2, the filmmakers trace their "worldly" relations within broader ecological, political and cultural settings. Following Lebow's theorization of the "cinema of me", in article 1 I outline a practice of contemporary Finnish documentary filmmaking that I call *cinema of me in the world*, where *Santra and the Talking Trees* connects individual lives to the partly imagined Karelian tradition. In *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, Wajstedt's performative acts are portrayed as an intention to rewrite the history of her loss in order to connect with her Sámi family and heritage.[126]

Though the self-narrated confessional mode of filmmaking in films such as *Sámi Daughter Yoik* is perhaps the most obvious example of first person filmmaking, other techniques for "inscribing" the self into film abound. In these forms, the self is not necessarily the one "seen" in the image but rather "the seer" of the film (see Dowmunt 2013). As an example, *Santra and the Talking Trees* presents instead a "me in the world" that diffuses into the aesthetics of the film-world. This takes place in scenes, such as the archival montages[127] or animations, where collections of objects transpire the material presence of the self. The self appears here as a seer and collector of "things that are or become embroiled" with the filmmaker's longing for the mythical Karelian tradition (Procopio Furtado 2015, 125). In the film, the animated and archival montages radiate auratic traces of past lives. These aesthetic techniques testify also to the performative, generative aspects of images themselves in the processes of worlding and belonging.

In the analysis of *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, studied in article 2, the concept of belonging is then detached from the personal point of view of the filmmaker, as the film as a whole attends to the histories and stories of the Skolt Sámi people as a community. In the analysis, I explore the aesthetics of belonging presented in the film. The film-world crosses boundaries between the non-human and the human, mythical and historical worlds, as well as between different temporalities. Here, I suggest that belonging is transferred to the realm of collective imagining, where everyday practices and the imagined, mythical realms are regarded as equally "real" ways of being in the world. The analysis also paves the way for more non-subjective forms of remembering as ways of dwelling in the worlds of the Skolt Sámi, where images themselves gain agency.

125 See also Russell 1999, 276; Renov 1999 & Rascaroli 2009, 106–114 for other takes on autobiographical narration in documentary.

126 See also MacKenzie & Westerståhl Stenport 2016 for a feminist analysis of Wajstedt's film.

127 For more on the use of archival montage in autobiographical documentary see, e.g., Rosas & Dittus 2020; Rascaroli 2009, 64–83.

7.3 Films and images remembering

In the cyclical continuum of concepts that describe ways of remembering in this work, we return to cinematic worlding, addressed in article 1, but from another angle. In this case, the concept brings out the role of the images and films themselves as catalysts for remembering. This form emphasizes also the non-representational aspects of documentary remembering.

Here, I draw attention to how cinematic worlding, as Inga Pollmann (2013, 782–783) describes it, refers to a process that engages all of the senses, such that "in this *spatiotemporal engagement* an environment emerges, however virtual it may be". Thus, what cinema presents is at the same time *of* this world and *a* world. Turning to Walter Benjamin's writings, Pollmann states how film can work as "a tool or a toy" through which the world reveals itself to the spectator as a "playground" (*Spielraum*), an open field of action (ibid., 808–809).[128] Benjamin (2002 [1972–89], 290) himself refers to Charles Baudelaire, when he describes how children's play "decomposes all creation; and with the raw materials accumulated […] it creates a new world – it produces the sensation of newness", whilst enabling "new engagements with our surroundings". According to Tara Forrest (2007, 15–16), this "room for play", as described by Benjamin – created with cinematic devices such as framing, close-up,[129] slow-motion and editing – opens "a space within which the possibilities and limitations of the current situation can be re-imagined and re-explored". Pollmann (2013, 808) writes that film can make spectators aware of "the force of their surroundings", to see our own environment in a different light. She thus sees cinema as a tool to claim back one's own, yet estranged environments (ibid.).

In *Santra and the Talking Trees*, the film-world acts as a playground in which to experiment with and begin to re-establish one's relation to the world. In the film, a new world of mythical Karelia is created within our world. Here, cinematic worlding relies on sensorial memory. In this line of thinking, my work is indebted to Laura U. Marks' (2000; 2002; 2015) theorization concerning multisensorial engagements with moving image artforms and sensuous aspects of cinematic remembering. Particularly

[128] See also Hansen 2004, 4–7 on the background of Benjamin's concept of the playground.

[129] In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin (2008 [1936], 29) describes the opening of these visions in relation to close-ups in film: "By choosing close-ups of from stock, accentuating hidden details of props with which we are familiar, exploring commonplace environments under the inspired guidance of the lens, on the one hand film increases our understanding of the inevitabilities that govern our lives, while ensuring, on the other hand, that we have a vast, undreamt-of amount of room for manoeuvre!"

Santra and the Talking Trees expresses her idea of memory that we carry in our bodies, and the ability of film to evoke it (Marks 2000, 5).

Marks analyzes experimental intercultural works by filmmakers in diaspora in search of new languages and new forms to express remembering. These films are, according to Marks, "marked by silence, absence, and hesitation" (ibid., 21). Cultural memory, according to her, is located in the gaps between recorded images, as remembering happens in-between what can be articulated with visual or aural representations and can thus be approached only partially, at the edges of knowing (ibid., 21, 30–31). This idea relates, for example, to the suggestive archival fragments used in *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*. Here, the images do not intend to portray directly the experiences of the film subjects or filmmakers but, as Marks (ibid., 30–31) writes, move at the outer edges of the "sayable", "seeable"[130] or "sensible".

In *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, the uncontextualized archival images invite the audience to confront the difficult past as a passing mood, flash from a past that has not passed. In article 3, I call these moments *recollection-images,* following Marks' (2000, 37) interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's concept. They are "floating dream-like images that cannot be assigned a connection to history" (ibid.). As Marks (ibid., 50) claims, "a recollection-image embodies a past event that has no match in the present image repertoire". Via "attentive recognition it may provoke an imaginative reconstruction, such as a flashback", making the image understandable (ibid.). The archival images in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* confront "what cannot be represented, attempting to bring them "into dialogue with memory" (ibid., 51). As Deleuze (1989, 113) notes, these kind of "independent, alienated" images do not present themselves as straight-forward "recollections" but as "hallucinations", "strangely active fossils". In the film-world of *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, these images are set free from their original context; they emerge as expressions of the difficult emotions, such as pain and trauma of the film subjects, that cannot be put fully into words, but only approached from a distance.

The archival images in the film testify to the incompleteness of remembering, the gaps that always remain, inviting the viewer to imagine with images. As Marks (ibid., 50) writes, paraphrasing Deleuze, the gaps "embody traces of an event whose representation has been buried" and as they cannot represent the event itself, require "imaginative reconstruction" from the viewer. They are "mediums of distant events that infect the present" (ibid., 53), as they are brought to life in dialogue with the testimonials in the film. These images work poignantly as elliptic traces of a past and, simultaneously in the affective experience, as images of the present.

[130] Marks paraphrases Deleuze, who follows for his part Michel Foucault's theorization.

In article 4, the film itself becomes a remembering agent. I suggest that *The Gold Bug* treats *cinematic memory as a living constellation*, where layers of history interact with one other in the performed space-time of the film-world. The overlapping pasts and presents are reminiscent of a star constellation, which the viewer observes as formations, standing in her current position, though the stars themselves might be temporally and spatially distant from one other. Here, I make use of Rothberg's (2009; 2010) notion of multidirectional memory, enabling dynamic transfers and "ricochets" across spaces and temporalities. This kind of remembering resists "the kind of arbitrary closure that would canonize events as unique or sacred" (Rothberg 2010). The concept of multidirectional memory allows an active reworking of difficult pasts, which in this case relate to histories of colonialism between Europe and Latin America. In the film, the concept also instigates dialogic, transcultural interaction between groups with diverse historical experiences. Here, remembering becomes an act freed from the linear, homogeneous space-time of nations, where events fall neatly into a culturally uniform historical timeline, respecting the borders of nation-states (see Anderson 1983).[131]

The cinematic space is considered in the article as a place of constellation-making. Here, Walter Benjamin's concept of constellation (or "an image"), as presented in *The Arcades Project* (2002 [1972–89], 463), proves useful:

> It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.

In my interpretation of the film's contribution to aesthetics of documentary remembering, fictional and historical pasts merge with the present, while attesting to the temporal and spatial continuities of colonialist practices. Similarly, in Silverman's (2013, 26) view, Benjamin's constellation brings together past and present, "not in a teleological way but through a superimposition of different traces in the same space". He interprets Benjamin's idea of constellation as "a weaving together of these traces", and montage as a "spatialization of time" (ibid.). As a cinematic technique, montage captures this weaving together of various temporal beings in the same space. In *The Gold Bug*, this takes place, for example, in reenactments of historical events and texts, as in the highly layered reenactment scene where the fictionalized Alem, played by one of the film's actor-characters,

[131] Anderson relies on Benjamin in his theorization of "homogenous, empty time". In this "time of the capital" no resistance to its free movement is allowed (Chatterjee 2003, 33). See Chatterjee 2003 for a postcolonial critique of Anderson's concept.

reads the *Testamento Político* from 1896, written by the original politician Alem,[132] in the middle of the ruins of the 17th-century Jesuit monastery, while the film crew from the 21st century listens and films the speech while sipping maté (as a reminder of Latin America's Indigenous past). The scene could be considered a performative montage of historical traces in the present (of the film-world), a living constellation that engenders new perceptions of historical affinities. It disturbs "objective" historical narration and enables a self-reflexive perception of colonial history, calling for temporal imagination.

[132] The real Alem in fact never publicly read this document during his lifetime but left it for others to find after his suicide. The scene thus conducts yet another reiteration of history.

8 *Close-ups* – findings

In the close-up shots, the viewer becomes acquainted with the main characters, their underlying desires, their instincts and thoughts – discovering what drives them as cinematic creatures.

To find out *how documentaries remember*, I have explored five Nordic documentaries in dialogue with concepts that offer complementary views on the aesthetics and practices of documentary remembering. On the political plane, documentary aesthetics appears as a way to negotiate one's relationship to the world – it is a deeply dialogical way of working with reality and engaging with memory work in the Nordic societies.

I have found that, in the aesthetico-political acts of remembering, the films *reanimate* (article 1), *reclaim* (article 2), *redeem* (article 3) and *derail* (article 4) pasts or historical narratives. These acts highlight the generative processes of remediation and the active reworking of memory. In the acts, the films commit to socially pertinent and potentially transformative processes of reconnecting to, or unsettling and recreating, pasts as well as reclaiming voice and agency while engaging with film subjects' remembering and non-subjective forms of remembering.

The research as a whole contributes to the field of documentary film studies by deepening the aesthetic understanding of remembering in documentary – how different cinematic devices are employed, to what effect, and what kind of political and ethical stakes they put forth. As a form of bridge-building between cultural memory studies and film studies, the work also attends to diverse conceptions of temporality in documentary by broadening the grasp of documentary remembering to non-linear and constellational directions. The research aims to create new knowledge and new vocabulary with which to discuss the ways documentaries take part in memory work of the Nordic countries in the early 21st century.

This chapter is organized on two overlaid structures, where the subquestions of the whole research are presented side by side with the articles' more specific questions. Consequently, the findings of the articles are set in dialogue with one another in order to trace the complementary ways the films express and perform documentary remembering.

8.1 Reconnecting with the world

The first subquestion, *how can acts of remembering change one's relation to the world?,* is tackled primarily in articles 1 and 2, where the films studied – *Santra and the Talking Trees*, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* – explore world-relations through specific documentary aesthetics and filmmaking practices.[133]

These films express documentary remembering as *a way to reconnect with the world*. They also bring out the personal and political complexities involved in the ambiguous negotiations of belonging and non-belonging. The aesthetic techniques in the films involve sensorial and performative aspects of remembering, inviting an embodied engagement with traces of pasts. The films reanimate and reclaim a relation to one's own but estranged tradition (Karelian and Sámi). These acts involve practices of first person filmmaking in *Santra and the Talking Trees* and *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and of biographical filmmaking in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*. I suggest that, in the process of *filming-living*, documentary filmmaking becomes a vital environment for remembering and for seeking connection.

Article 1 – Cinematic Worlding:
Animating Karelia in Santra and the Talking Trees

Act of remembering: ***TO REANIMATE***

In article 1, I explore how the filmmaker Tervo intends to reattune her relationship with the world through the act of *reanimating* her version of the mythical Karelian tradition. These sensorial cinematic techniques revive traces of imagined and historical pasts to accommodate the film-world as a home. In this act, the filmmaker-protagonist intends to reconnect with the world.

The article contributes to subquestions 1 and 3 while investigating *how to relate with a mythical past in cinematic aesthetics.* The film is seen as hybrid cinema (Marks 2000, 8), mixing traits of fiction with documentary narration, as well as auto- and biographical filmmaking practices. In the film, the filmmaker-narrator Tervo embarks on a search for her roots in Karelia – the land where her mother's family used to live, constructed as a myth within the Finnish cultural memory – and finds the rune singer Santra Remsujeva, who carries a vast treasure of oral history within her (also due to her incredible memory). I suggest that, by means of cinematic worlding – understood in the article as a creative practice and an aesthetic dynamic – Tervo forms intimate links with the mythical Karelian past that also affect her

[133] The act of relating to the world is discussed to a minor extent also in article 3, where *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* presents an intention to redeem a traumatic past.

personal future in the film-world. In the film, the past is understood as an ancient tradition of wisdom, and it offers a refuge, somewhere to find solace in a tumultuous world. Remembering in the film is first and foremost a sensorial project that reanimates pasts: it puts in motion the materially felt bonds between generations as well as between the mythical world and this world.

Tervo recounts in the film's voice-over how she gradually "begins to remember" after spending time in Santra's cabin. The film revives a connection to the world through its whimsical aesthetics including animations and sound effects merged with magical-realist hues. Its aesthetics envisions an emerging language where "objects, bodies, and intangible things hold histories within them", as Marks (2000, 131) describes it, while referring to Benjamin's (2007 [1936], 158) idea of memory present in material objects.[134] The playful reanimations invest Karelian objects, chosen to the stop-motion animations, with magical powers (Pollmann 2013, 814). The film dives into the material and haptic aspects of remembering, "excavating memory from objects" (Marks 2000, 77). In the animations, woolen mittens, lace cloths, berries and Karelian pies reconstitute memories of the touch, smell and feel of the wool through "attentive recognition" (ibid.).

I concentrate in the article on editing (in, e.g., archival montage) and animations as *traces* and *rhythms* through which the mythical past is rekindled as "cultural memory we carry in our bodies" (ibid., 29). Sensory experience offered by cinema is audio-visiogenic, and yet, it is not limited to the aural and the visual because perceptions relate to the person and the body as a whole and entail also trans-sensory perceptions, like rhythm (Chion 2013, 325, 330). *Santra and the Talking Trees* instigates a dialogue with the viewer's embodied being that creates knowledge at the edges of language. This knowledge situates in the realm of sensorial, embodied memory. Film aesthetics appears here as a life-giving act, reanimating traces of pasts and bringing attention to the animistic qualities of images while contributing to the discussions on non-representational aspects of documentary remembering (see, e.g., Daniels-Yeomans 2017).

Films can bring to life past worlds by reflecting them back to us in the new environment of the film-world, which collapses the gap between past and present. This makes us more aware of the ongoingness of pasts or, at other times, reminds us of the past's "pastness" by enlarging this temporal gap in moments of nostalgia that evoke a world that will never be again (Pollmann 2013, 809–810). This phenomenon

[134] In this context, Benjamin (2007 [1936], 202) refers specifically to Marcel Proust's "involuntary memory" in the novel *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*, 1913–1927). It refers to "spontaneous recollection", where a single object, such as a madeleine cake can trigger a flood of memories that one may not have remembered otherwise. See also Marks 2000, 64.

can be noted in articles 1 and 2. In *Santra and the Talking Trees*, the animations and juxtaposition of archival film material and contemporary music collapse the temporal gap between different historical periods, both of them partly fictionalized. In the last scene of the film, after the birth of her child, Tervo sings, in voice-over, an old Karelian lullaby while filming a graveyard, describing tradition in her voice-over as a form of love that "runs over graves". This scene brings about another facet of recollection-image as a time-traveling object in an aural form that effortlessly crosses temporal and generational boundaries (ibid., 71). By contrast, in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, studied in the next article, the temporal distance is enhanced by adding after effects in the post-production phase, such as flickers of light in the photographs in the archival material of the old dwelling places of the Skolt Sámi. These effects accentuate the pastness of the time of the photographs, observed in the film within a nostalgic framing.

If, in article 1, connecting with the world is mostly a spiritual and existential inquiry, in the next article it becomes also a deeply political matter. In the Sámi documentaries, filmmaking is entwined with contingencies of living in a world of settler colonialism. This context allowed me to dive deeper into the questions of political agency involved in documentary remembering.

Article 2 – Saamelaisuuden maisemissa: kuulumisen ylirajaisuus Sámi Nieida Jojk ja Kuun metsän Kaisa -elokuvissa[135]

Act of remembering: ***TO RECLAIM***

In the second article, I worked with two Sámi documentaries, Liselotte Wajstedt's fully autobiographical *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and Katja Gauriloff's biographical *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* while asking, *how does cinematic aesthetics express forms of belonging (and non-belonging)*? The filmmakers are both part of the Sámi postmemory generation (Hirsch 2012 [1997]), whose parents attended boarding schools where they were estranged from their cultural traditions and languages and,

135 My translation: "In the landscapes of Sáminess: belonging that crosses borders in *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*". The article's original title resonates with Sámi researcher Veli-Pekka Lehtola's (2022, 42) remark that Sámi remembering is often connected to the environment. In Finnish, the word "maisema" can, in fact, refer to at least two things: to a landscape, where nature & culture comingle and layers of history are present in the same space and time, such as in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, and to a setting, a kind of *mise-en-scèce* – in this case, scenes of Sáminess and the questions of being or becoming Sámi, relevant to the performative approach in *Sámi Daughter Yoik.*

as a result, neither Gauriloff nor Wajstedt had learned their mother tongues as children. As Gauriloff has described it, the Skolt Sámi language had been her "mute mother tongue" (Kinnunen 2023). Both filmmakers later studied their native languages as adults, in an intent to reconnect with their family background. Article 2 contributes to discussions on the transformative nature of Indigenous documentary, while addressing subquestions 1 and 2.

The films guided me towards thinking of belonging as a social phenomenon and a feeling that crosses borders of time and space, of the real and the imagined. It is at the same time ambivalent, highly political and intimate. In the article, I investigated belonging and non-belonging as embodied *material-performative acts* in the filmmaking process (in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*), as well as an *aesthetic* that creates a film-world attuned to ancestral life (in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*). Wajstedt's active reworking and negotiating of her sense of belonging forms the core of *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and includes acts such as visits to the site of a sacred stone, *seita*,[136] taking part in the separation of reindeer herds, attending a yoik workshop and a Northern Sámi language course, having a Sámi *gákti* (dress) made for her as well as wearing it publicly, which socially indicates belonging to a specific family line. *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* works with belonging through more subtle aesthetic techniques, such as by adding visual effects and foley sound in post-production to the archival recordings, cinefilm material and photographs, making the images speak of the longing she feels. An animated Skolt Sámi myth seeps into the film's main narrative about the friendship between the filmmaker's great-grandmother, Kaisa, and Crottet. Both films aim to reconnect with pasts through traces of Sámi heritage, appearing as an object of longing.

In addition, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* problematizes the possibility of *becoming Indigenous*. Wajstedt reflects on the ambiguity of always having "been Sámi", but without the cultural attributes of belonging, such as language. In the film, her attempts to practice "Sáminess" mostly fail; she feels like an imposter wearing her newly-made Sámi dress in a bar and like an outsider when meeting her relatives at a reindeer separation, where they begin to speak Sámi that she does not speak or understand. In the film, Wajstedt's feelings of non-belonging are emphasized with experimental aesthetic techniques, such as superimposed animated "speech bubbles". Her quest to belong is presented as an indefinite process in the film – it

[136] On the first time visiting the stone, Wajstedt is not sure whether she is allowed to film it, or if she is exploiting it. By raising this question, the film also refers to the long tradition of Western people exploiting Indigenous people for artistic, scientific or commercial interests. On her second visit, she asks for a permission from the *seita* and receives it.

does not reach a conclusion but remains ambivalent and continues outside the film frame.[137]

In *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, the longing to belong takes on a more indirect form and the director's personal connection to Kaisa Gauriloff is revealed only in the last image, as recounted earlier. In the film, Kaisa, another storyteller appearing in this research, is presented as a fairytale-like figure, communicating with animals and the wind, crossing borders between human and non-human worlds, between generations, and between myths, dreams and reality. The animation of Viktoria Bessedina acts as a vehicle to touch this mythical space-time, when aurora borealis was born. As Jonathan Rozenkrantz (2016, 190) claims, animation can widen the epistemological boundaries of documentary and reach experiences and phenomena that would be hard to encounter otherwise, such as dreams, memories or subjective experiences. The film's narratives – on Kaisa's and Robert's friendship, the fate of the Skolt Sámi people, Kaisa's connection with the natural world and the myth that Kaisa recounts – transcend temporal, cultural and political boundaries. They entwine mythical and historical events as all of these (his)stories live side by side, equally truthful, equally magical.

The acts of remembering in *Santra and the Talking Trees*, *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* aim to form transgenerational bonds by listening to the former generations – quite literally in these cases.[138] The aesthetics of belonging unfolds in *Sámi Daughter Yoik* as a yoik, which has no beginning or end, crossing temporal borders.[139] Yoik, as a form of expression, is based on repetition, and in her film, Wajstedt always returns to the same places and people. In the Sámi tradition, yoiking presents a cyclical and collective form of remembering, where a yoik belongs to the one being yoiked about – be it a place, an animal or a person, not the one yoiking (see, e.g., Gaski 1999). Similarly, remembering in the film is presented as a communal project, where Wajstedt, with her material-performative acts, makes aspects of reality emerge. Her own path of exploring what "Sáminess" might mean is intertwined with the process of filmmaking, in the spirit of filming-living. As she recounts in an

137 Wajstedt has pursued the themes of belonging and non-belonging also in her other films, as elaborated in article 2. As Dagmar Brunow noted in her pre-examiner's report, one could interpret the film as problematic in its pursue of a some form of "original Sáminess" through its cultural attributes. Yet, while this is true, I value the ways in which it ambiguates and brings forth the complexity of the notions and emotions related to belonging and non-belonging – and also the absurdity of the filmmaker-protagonist's own quest.

138 Curiously enough, in Finnish the verb to belong is "kuulua" which, in addition to belonging, can refer to a sound that is heard or that emanates from somewhere or something – in the case of these films, from the past.

139 Other researchers have also paid attention to the emphasis Wajstedt places on the form of yoik in her film, see Fish 2017, 247; Moffat 2018, 56.

interview: “The camera became my filter to face the world. Without it, I would have never told my story.” (Strömberg 2014.) For Wajstedt, the camera and the act of filmmaking – which have long served as means of objectifying Indigenous people – thus appear in the documentary as means of questioning, resisting and contesting what belonging means to her (see also Hirsch 2012 [1997], 7–8).

The materials that Katja Gauriloff found, that eventually became *Kaisa’s Enchanted Forest* – archival material such as photographs, 16 mm reels and original manuscripts written by Robert Crottet with Kaisa – constitute another kind of emergence. These material, emanating “relics”, along with recordings in Kaisa’s own voice, initiated the filmmaking project, and they are brought together in the film-world as traces of embodied presences that strengthen the bonds between Skolt Sámi generations. In the film, the aesthetics of belonging relates to the film’s polyphonic temporal and material ecology. Furthermore, it shows how film can exceed its technological means of expression (sound and image) to invoke sensations, experiences and memories. As Vivian Sobchack (1992, 165) describes it, film technology enables a way of being in the world and of perceiving the world that would be otherwise hard to attain. The film reconnects imagined and historical pasts through sound design and visual (post-production) effects that revive old photographs and archival footage, creating a possibility to imagine these places and people as existing, living and breathing. The motif of storytelling connects, in the film, to a way of living, wrapped up in both Kaisa’s and Robert’s lives. In the film’s narrative, Robert strives to gather money for the Skolt Sámi community after the war by writing books with Kaisa, who carries the tradition of storytelling. Here, an individual is merely a medium, one that becomes part of the world by writing, telling stories, or, making films.

The films researched under the first subquestion project documentary remembering as an act that works with embodied performativity and material traces, such as objects, recordings, photographs and cinefilm material, but also make new imaginings emerge in the process of filmmaking. Through them, *documentary remembering becomes a way to reconnect with the world*. In addition, the Sámi films raise critical questions concerning agency in documentary remembering, to which I will now turn.

8.2 Regaining agency

In terms of political acuteness, articles 2 and 3 contribute most directly to the second subquestion, *how to negotiate agency through acts of remembering?,* though matters

of agency are dealt with to some extent in all of the articles.[140] The films in question – *Sámi Daughter Yoik, Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* and *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* – all bring to light marginalized pasts, though the groups they represent also differ in significant ways.[141] Retrieving agency in relation to "latent" histories takes two distinct forms in articles 2 and 3, in the acts of *reclaiming* and *redeeming* pasts. These acts bring forth the potentially transformative aspects of documentary remembering.

In *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest,* the filmmakers attempt to reclaim their agency, their own voice, as they vie for a place in the tradition of Sámi storytellers in a situation where the settler colonialist practices continue to prevail. Both films touch upon the effects of colonial settler politics and cultural assimilation of the Indigenous Sámi culture. Both also employ filmmaking in the negotiations of belonging. The films challenge dominant national narratives while reclaiming "lost memory" in the documentaries.[142] Faye Ginsburg (2002, 51–52) notes how vital it is for Indigenous people to regain the right to tell their own stories, to create representations of themselves in order to recuperate marginalized histories, and to produce what she calls "screen memories". In contrast to Sigmund Freud's (1965 [1901], 247) original use of the term which described how people intend to protect themselves from traumatic past by obfuscating memory, Ginsburg (ibid.) sees that Indigenous people use screen media "to recuperate their own collective stories and histories – some of them traumatic – that have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture and are in danger of being forgotten within local worlds as well".[143] If the past has been plagued by settler colonialist filmmakers and dominant media cultures imposing their own representations of Indigenous people, attitudes are

140 In article 1, filming-living could be thought of as a way of regaining agency for the filmmaker-narrator of *Santra and the Talking Trees*. In article 4, *The Gold Bug*'s voice-over narration and reenactments contest linear historical narratives of colonialism, as told by the former colonial empires themselves, drawing attention to the struggles over narrative power.

141 The women in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* have been ostracized from their families and from the society, but their cases are mainly presented as individual tragedies (though the same treatment was directed at, perhaps, thousands of women, whose offspring were also affected). In the case of Sámi, the marginalization refers to a systematic process of cultural, political and land colonialization that has lasted for many centuries and has affected the Sámi nation as a whole. The settler colonialist project has aimed for the assimilation of the Sámi people, meaning the annihilation of Sámi culture, languages, land rights and livelihoods.

142 As Faye Ginsburg (2023) has acutely stated on the history of Indigenous engagements with visual anthropology, "images were not only taken, but they were also taken away" from Indigenous people.

143 For Freud, "screen memory" described instead how people protect themselves from their traumatic past with layers of obfuscating memory (quoted in Ginsburg 2002, 52).

gradually changing and awareness improving, though there is much still to be done.[144] Within their independent film production and distribution structures, Indigenous peoples have moved from being "given a voice" to reclaiming their own voice through cinematic expression.[145]

Sámi Daughter Yoik and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* construct, with distinct aesthetic means, a film-world as a transgenerational home in a situation where Indigenous land has been occupied and cultures are in danger, due to settler colonial practices. The films create new cinematic language while the filmmakers reclaim their position as Sámi storytellers. As Gauriloff stated in an interview with me, "we can finally tell stories about being Sámi with our own language and with the cinematic language" (Oisalo 2020).[146] She has asserted in several occasions how, for her, filmmaking is linked to a desire to become part of the Sámi line of storytellers, to connect with her ancestors and ancestresses.[147] In *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, Gauriloff continues the tradition of storytelling in her family by creating the film itself in the form of a fable.

The power of the fairytale is greatly indebted to the archival material she received from Crottet's partner Enrique Méndez, who found them in his attic (Lehtola 2016). The original recording of Kaisa Gauriloff narrating the myth of the birth of aurora borealis was discovered from the National folk poetry archives. These traces of pasts lend the film its auratic quality, a sense of being in touch with ancestral life. In this film-world, the dead reside in the same world as the ones still alive – as expressed in the film's animated myth: "The dead dance in the aurora borealis, to give light to the living".

144 See Kallioniemi & Siivikko 2020 for an overview of the history of representation of the Sámi in Finnish audiovisual media. For a Norwegian point of view, see Mecsei 2015; 2019.

145 For an overview of the politics of sovereignty in Sámi film, see Kääpä 2015. See also Raheja 2010, on the concept of visual sovereignty, referring to the ways in which "Indigenous filmmakers and actors revisit, contribute to, borrow from, critique, and reconfigure" dominant narratives on their cultures (ibid., 194). Pamela Wilson's (2016) work extends the concept into cinematic techniques beyond the visual realm.

146 In her recent film *Je´vida* (2023, FI), Gauriloff was finally able to use her own language in filmmaking. It was the first Skolt Sámi-language feature film (Kolttola 2024). *Je'vida* recounts the tragic consequences of losing one's own culture due to forced cultural assimilation. The film was based on Gauriloff's life-long research, family histories and encounters with other Sámi people as well as impressions from her childhood. The film's aesthetic continues along the lines of magical realism, introduced in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*. Gauriloff has lamented in an interview that the first Skolt Sámi feature may also be the last, as there remain only 300 speakers. Many of the actors are in fact her relatives, amateurs in acting. (Kinnunen 2023.)

147 E.g., when *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* won the Jussi prize for the best documentary, awarded by the Finnish film professionals' association Filmiaura, Gauriloff thanked her foremothers in her acceptance speech (Wesslin 2017).

In the second article, I kept on working with the idea of filming-living as material-performative memory work in relation to the experimental *Sámi Daughter Yoik*. In the performative acts of the film, Wajstedt manifests takes part in the negotiations of belonging on her own terms, using filmmaking as a medium in the process. Wajstedt herself exemplifies the goal of assimilation policies, as she does not speak Sámi language, has a Swedish name, resides in Stockholm and has lived most of her life separated from the Sámi family and traditions. In this sense, Wajstedt's journey from Stockholm to Kiruna, her hometown in Northern Sweden, is also symbolic. The act of reclaiming pasts can only take place in the land of Sápmi. In the film, formal experimentations draw attention to the contradictions, tensions and ambiguities of what being Sámi means in contemporary society. The film thus challenges any straightforward conceptions of belonging, but at the same time it forcefully asserts the right of the Sámi people to conduct these discussions themselves.

Sámi researchers Veli-Pekka Lehtola and Jorma Lehtola (2015, 253) write that the "search for one's own roots" has been a popular theme in contemporary Sámi documentary. These mostly autobiographical films often take the form of a "spiritual trip, where a young person learns how to see her/his own special character within the chain of generations and the changes in Sámi cultures" (my translation, ibid.).[148] Similarly, the films studied here touch upon concerns that are critical for the future preservation of Sámi cultures, for passing on and reclaiming Sámi identities in the chain of generations. In the researched films, the Sámi filmmakers compose histories of their families out of material traces, fragments of archival material and presences conveyed by places and objects.

In the recently renewed main exhibition at the museum of Sámi culture Siida in Aanaar, a quote by the Sámi musician and writer Jalvvi Niillas Holmberg has been written on the wall: "It has been said that the former way of living of the Sámi did not leave any traces. But it did, the traces lie beneath the skins of their descendants. The body remembers things that mind does not." (Quoted in Koskela 2024, my translation.) In *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, embodied connections between the land, ancestors and Sámi bodies are expressed with an animated map of the Sápmi, where roads are presented as pulsing red veins.[149] Here, the land lives and pulsates like a

148 Examples of these kinds of films include, in addition to *Sámi Daughter Yoik* and other films by Wajstedt, Ellen-Astri Lundby's *Suddenly Sami* (2009, NO, *Min mors hemmelighet*), Yvonne Thomassen's *My Family Portrait* (2013, NO, *Familiebildet*) and Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers' *Rebel* (2014, CAN, NO, *Bihttoš*). Scott Mackenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport (2016, 170) frame the first and last of these as experimental feminist films that "problematize questions of identity, inclusion and exclusion".

149 MacKenzie & Westerståhl Stenport (2016, 174–175) also compare these pulsing red routes to the strings of a *gákti*, adding another material layer to the analogy.

human body, and Wajstedt treads the same paths as her predecessors before her, engaging with embodied traces of the Sámi tradition, such as the *gákti*. In her somatechnic[150] analysis of the film, Kate Moffat (2018, 54) interprets the film as a "cinematic play" with the form and representation of the body, where Wajstedt uses her own body and the landscapes as textures interspliced with experimental cinematic techniques such as superimposition and animation.[151] In my analysis, I also emphasize how the material-performative acts complicate cultural constructions of belonging and "Sáminess", and bring forth more ambivalent ways of being and becoming within the process of decolonization.

If questions of performative memory and embodied, material-performative acts of remembering were central in *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, discussed in article 2, in article 3, performative aesthetics is transferred to a more detached context. In *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, the performative cinematography frames testimonials of war trauma from a distance.

Article 3 – Enemies within: Reimagining the 'Fallen Women' of World War II in Finnish Contemporary Documentary

Act of remembering: ***TO REDEEM***

In this article, I asked *how to ethically approach a traumatic past* in documentary, by examining the interview scenes, archival montage and dramatizations in Virpi Suutari's *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*.[152] The film recounts experiences of four women who fled Finland with Nazi soldiers in the final stages of the Second World War. Some of the women had fallen in love with German soldiers, some worked for

150 Combining *soma*, the body, and *techné*, as technique or technology.

151 Moffat (2018, 51) frames her analysis with Sweden's dark history of the pseudo-scientific eugenics, or "racial biology", in the early 20th century, that aimed to legitimize the oppression of Sámi people on racial grounds. According to Moffat, the somatechnics in *Sámi Daughter Yoik* rejects this "imagined and homogenised sense of identity" often cast upon Indigenous bodies (ibid., 59–60). The history of colonizing Sámi bodies has been tackled in many recent Sámi films, such as in Amanda Kernell's *Sámi Blood* (2016, SE, *Sameblod*), based on the life of the director's grandmother who faced "racial examinations" at a Swedish boarding school.

152 What about the Sámi films then? Why not speak of the traumatic pasts they infer, particularly as the films do touch upon the traumatic effects of colonialization? One could of course do so but, in these films, trauma is not situated at the center of the narrative, as it is in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*. *Sámi Daughter Yoik* focuses on building a future within Sámi culture, and *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest* dwells in other realms of experience. Gauriloff's *Je'vida* would, however, be relevant to study from the point of view of traumatic remembering.

the Germans and some just wanted to escape the anticipated Russian invasion. The women were ostracized from their families and from society, and denied a sense of belonging due to their decision. In the film, four of them finally agree to speak out after almost 70 years have passed. The film also follows the journey of Frans, who is the son of one of the women, Roosa, and a German soldier. In the film, he travels to Germany to look for his father. The article also offers an overview of the socio-cultural atmosphere in Finland during the Second World War, related to the country's cooperation with Nazi Germany and the women who associated with the Nazis.

The article addresses the act of redeeming a traumatic past – understood as a sense of relief and liberation from the burdensome past. In terms of documentary aesthetics, focus is on the elliptic use of archival imagery and dramatizations that both complicate and deepen the viewer's emotional engagement with the testimonials of the women. *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*'s point of view disassociates from what has been called as the "victim motif" and moves towards ways of "imagining differently" (see Helke 2016a, 187)[153] – a version of "trauma art" (Bennett 2005) that re-visions traumatic pasts and creates new ways to engage with such.

Victoria Fareld (2011, 238–239) raises the point that in order to mourn a painful past, such as the one presented in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland,* it sometimes needs to be detached from the present. Here, history is resurrected as "a presence of absence", a kind of haunting. Resonating with this idea, silence plays an important role in the film. The shame that the women experienced, and the contempt cast upon them, is made tangible in the film through narrative gaps and distanciation. The film also touches indirectly upon the construction of national memory, purged and guarded after the war, at whatever cost. Here, memory politics dictated that some people be omitted from the grand historical narrative if they did not fit into the story of "a heroic nation defending itself". These women were reminders of the notorious military alliance with Nazi Germany that was to be forgotten as quickly as possible. The filmmaking in this case is an act of re-membering the past by restoring the denounced parts of history in order to destabilize the dominant, nationalist narrative of the war. Cinematic memory work in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* creates new layers of cultural imageries and imaginaries related to women's wartime experiences. The film contributes to

[153] These discussions can be related to a wider shift in documentary filmmaking, where focus has moved from the filmmaker "giving voice" to the marginalized to more complex ways of retelling trauma and conflict. Helke (2016a, 185) connects this change to the rise of performative and subjective strategies in documentary filmmaking.

debates on the Second World War, where the postmemory generations (Hirsch 2012 [1997]) have been active in providing new interpretations of the war by means of filmmaking, denouncing from processes of forgetting.

The film uses elliptic narration, presenting interviews, dramatized scenes and archival footage, where the viewer must take an active role to interpret and "fill in" the gaps to imagine what the film subjects might have been enduring. In the film's interview scenes, an aesthetic strategy of distancing takes place, detaching the speaking bodies, mostly heard in voice-over, from the on-screen bodies, mostly silent. In this setting, the image of the speaker and the voice-over sound do not coincide (apart from the beginning and end of the film). The women are filmed in their homes, often within highly staged framings, performing their daily activities, such as listening to the radio, exercising or just sitting on a bed and looking out of the frame. The separation of the past experiences, heard in voice-over, from the images of the women, who occupy the visual present, emphasizes also the temporal gap between the traumatic experience of "then" and the "now". This performative aesthetic strategy creates a gestural gap between the one who speaks and the one who remains silent, distancing the women from the shame they may have experienced. It highlights how particularly traumatic memory is always fragmented, "ever-receding" from the present moment and cannot be fully represented. With this discovery, the article thus contributes to discussions on the ethics of documentary's engagement with traumatic pasts.

Further on, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* presents a montage of black and white archival imagery of bombers, burning cities, bodies in gutters and, poignantly, a bruised woman on a roadside. Her image appears in slow-motion and with no sound, the expressions on her face changing quickly from defiance to distress. The fact that the viewer knows nothing of her situation – who she is, where she is or what has happened to her – punctuated by the temporal and experiential gaps and the mystery lingering over the image and the silence, accentuates the affective impact of her presence. To connect her to the context of the film – to the testimonies and the gaping in-betweens in the stories told – the images call for an imaginative investment from the viewer (Hirsch 2012 [1997], 22). This associatively compiled archival sequence is considered in the article as recollection-image that, according to Marks (2000, 50), is situated in an ephemeral "then" and offered as a flash of vision, or hallucination, that call for affective engagement. The images radiate embodied knowledge, "a bodily repository that can only be understood in its own terms", as Marks (ibid., 71) describes it. The evocative use of archival footage and hazy, fragmented dramatizations, alluding to the women's experiences on their journey to Germany, approach the traumatic past with sensitivity, as elusive moments. As Jill Bennett (2005, 7) writes, images in trauma-related art often invite a direct engagement with the *sensation* in the artwork, not necessarily with a single character or, in this case,

a film subject. As such, they invite the viewer to make imaginative leaps over the temporal and signifying gaps.

The testimonies in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* are also left purposefully sporadic, while the film subjects are given respectful distance and freedom to tell just as much – or as little – as they wish. This relates to Janet Walker's description (2005, 19) of "trauma cinema", where fragmentation and disturbances are practiced, inviting the viewer to engage in self-reflexivity. According to Walker (ibid.), these types of documentaries often attempt to "disremember" traumatic events by using aesthetic strategies that "represent reality obliquely". In traumatic contexts, forgetting can also be a necessary relief that individuals or communities need in order to move on and build a future, it can even be a "precondition for survival", as Aleida Assmann (2016, 35) describes it (see also Bigelow 2020). This is exemplified by one scene, towards the end of the film, where Roosa stops the conversation with her son Frans when it gets too uncomfortable, saying "let's not talk anymore". The scene ends in a heavily grained freeze frame, where the two look at each other, mute. Here, the film subject's autonomy, her right to remain silent, is respected.[154]

In the article, like in the film, the question of redemption from traumatic experiences is raised, yet left open. What does it mean to redeem the past? One could also ask, whether redemption is even possible through filmmaking? And if so, who would be redeemed in this case – the women, or the society, who wanted to cast aside their stories? In the article, I suggest that redemption can only take place through confrontation with the past. I refer to the last image of the film (i.e., the cover image of this dissertation), where a woman in a dramatized scene confronts the viewer. This gesture, as implied earlier, could be thought of as an act of returning the gaze to the audience and, at the same time, reminding them of the necessity to remember.

If redemption means to be freed "from what distresses or harms", such as release from blame (Merriam-Webster 2024), then the term would be awkward in this case, as I do not have access to what the film subjects are experiencing.[155] In an interview, the director Suutari has talked about her preference for wide angle shots over close-ups that aim to "extract tears from the viewers by showing people crying" (Blåfield 2016). This choice, according to her, steers attention towards the circumstances around the main subjects, such as the way in which people stand, sit or move,

154 Lanzmann's *Shoah* provides an example of an opposite approach. In a scene where the director interviews a barber who had worked against his will at a concentration camp, the barber at one point becomes silent in his emotional turmoil, but Lanzmann insists on him to keep on talking. The man repeats several times that he cannot. This goes on for several minutes, until the barber continues to speak, reluctantly.

155 Though some of them have spoken in interviews about the sense of relief brought by the filmmaking (Blåfield 2016).

showing "the wounds that life has left in us" (ibid.). In *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, these wounds can be sensed in the silent embodied presence of the women. Their experiences are approached indirectly, in the highly performative settings and stylized camerawork by Heikki Färm – in the scenes of the film, the women are positioned as if on a theatre stage.[156]

As in Suutari's other films, *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* demonstrates great sensitivity and confidence between the film subjects and the film crew. One could describe the film with Jill Bennett's (2005, 2) words, claiming that instead of "opening up" or symptomizing the trauma, the film concentrates on the question of what art itself might convey about the lived experience and the act of remembering. The film does not attempt to "salvage" anyone from a traumatic past, or to offer a faithful translation of testimony, but calls upon art's own capacities to contribute to the politics of testimony (ibid., 3). I suggest that, in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland*, the traumatic experiences are reimagined and re-visioned with cinematic means: associative, intimate dramatizations, staged interviews and elliptic archival montage. In the gaps of meaning-making, they preserve a mystery around the acts of remembering, inviting the viewer to engage with the images and experiences.

In fact, these archival and dramatized images themselves could be thought of as a form of redemption in the present moment, engaging the viewers through the affective response to which they give rise (see Marks 2000, 53). They cannot be ascribed to any single person's memory but are harmful to official histories, "because they falsify it or reveal it to be incomplete", as Marks (ibid., 51) describes it. Susanna Helke notes that documentary can serve as "a place for collisions of differences", causing "ethical transformations" that the filmmaker did not necessarily have in mind (2013, 254). The suggestive images in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* could be thought of as a form of reenactment, where the initial "script" of the images is changed in the context of the film, allowing for a more direct, embodied engagement with them.

In articles 2 and 3, agency created with cinematic aesthetics can be connected to embodied acts of remembering with political and ethical commitment. In the films, agency is seized by the filmmakers and film subjects making films and telling stories from marginalized perspectives to reveal the transformative potential that documentary remembering holds.

[156] Suutari's background in photography is visible in the staged style of cinematography in her films, which have for a large part been codirected with Susanna Helke (Römpötti 2018, 130).

8.3 Recreating pasts

The third subquestion*, how do acts of remembering recreate pasts?*, is addressed mainly in articles 1 and 4, dealing with mythical and constellational memory composed of fictional and historical experiences.[157] As discussed earlier, article 1 focuses on the ways in which *Santra and the Talking Trees* creates sensorial memory within the process of cinematic worlding. Following Benjaminian idea (2007 [1936], 29) of film as an "open field of action", the imagined, Karelian tradition is approached in the film as an experiment, resulting in a fantastical film-world.

By creating sensorially and culturally meaningful rhythms through patterns of repetition, juxtaposition and variation in editing – "a rhythm that remembers" – the film composes a mythical Karelian world within our world. The montages combine archival footage, animations and contemporary film material in rhythmic patterns that create synchronicities and dynamic movements with images and sounds, emotions, ideas and storylines (Pearlman 2009, 83–87). These rhythms are analyzed in the article by making use of Karen Pearlman's (ibid., 91, 111, 131) concepts of "physical rhythm", "emotional rhythm" and "event rhythm". Documentary materials are considered as traces of pasts that converse between the film-world, historical world and the viewer's body-world, while making tangible the objects, environments and temporalities that are absent (see also Wahlberg 2008, xiv, 42, 150). The film revives its version of the mythical Karelia by animating it as a magical environment.

From article 1 to article 4, the focus of the research gradually shifts: from personal remembering to its collective forms – memory of a family, a group or a nation – and also, to non-personified remembering. Here, images and the film medium itself emerge as catalysts for remembering. Article 4, as an example of the latter, thus addresses directly the main research question.

Article 4 – How does a film remember?
Cinematic memory as a living constellation
in El escarabajo de oro, or Victorias Hämnd

Act of remembering: ***TO DERAIL***

The article examines *The Gold Bug, or Victoria's Revenge* to tackle the questions, *how to remember colonial pasts with cinematic aesthetics*? and *how does a film*

[157] Although in more limited ways, this subquestion is also tackled in articles 2 and 3. For example, the animations of *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, after effects in *Kaisa's Enchanted Forest*, as well as the use of archival images and dramatizations in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* all contribute to reimaginings or revisions of pasts. The act of recreation, however, achieves its most pervasive form in article 4.

remember? The film is directed by Alejo Moguillansky and Fia-Stina Sandlund, and it explores present (neo)colonial relations between Nordic countries and South America, as I argue, by *derailing* historical narratives. The quarreling narrators and characters in the film accentuate the dissonant nature of remembering. My analysis focuses on the use of reenactment and voice-over narration as means to intervene with and problematize remediations of colonial history. Article 4 contributes to discussions on the relevance of fictionalization, disturbing dominant narratives in documentary remembering that deals with difficult pasts, such as colonialism.

Like *Santra and the Talking Trees*, the film embraces Marks' (2000, 8) understanding of hybrid cinema, mixing documentary and fiction with an experimental mindset, although it takes the fictionalization even further. As in Marks' own research on migrant filmmaking, the acts of remembering in the film can also be placed in a politicized, intercultural setting. In this context, hybrid cinema cannot simply be contemplated, Marks (ibid.) argues, for one has no choice "but to be implicated in the power relations upon which it reflects". *The Gold Bug* invites the viewer to follow its character-subjects into the deep muds of transnational power struggles within neocolonialist structures, in which all are implicated one way or another. The film is a performance based on the actual circumstances of its filming, where two directors, one from "the Global South", Argentinian Moguillansky, and one from "the Global North", Swedish Sandlund, are commissioned to make a film together. Through these circumstances, the film reveals the unequal neocolonial power relations within the transnational filmmaking industry.

One of the film's several narrators, the feminist writer Victoria Benedictsson notes in her voice-over, taking over Leandro N. Alem's narrator: "Perhaps there is another plot". In this twist of the storyline, the film begins again, retelling the events as highly satirical feminist "her-storiography". *The Gold Bug* presents several plots, narrators, enacted (fictional) and re-enacted (factual) pasts affecting Nordic – Latin American colonial relations. At first glance, it could sit at the end of Brian Winston's (2018 [2013], 8) continuum for documentary expression, according to their level of, what he calls, "intervention/reconstruction/imagination" as a total intervention within a fictional account. At the other end, he places total non-intervention and observational documentary (ibid.). Yet, Winston's definition of "imagined action" (ibid.) does not correspond with *The Gold Bug* as such. Though the film subjects play themselves while performing imagined actions for the camera, they still hold "documentary value", as the film's narrative is based on the real situation of the transnational filmmaking alliance between Moguillansky and Sandlund. *The Gold Bug* could thus be placed in the former category, where the film subjects perform "unwitnessed action" whilst "filming the possible" – what could have happened (ibid.). This orientation comes forth, for example, in the narrator-Benedictsson's reference to "another plot" as a possibility to tell otherwise, to revise and derail

histories. The article shows how fictionalizing in documentary can serve as a way to highlight the hierarchies present in remediating pasts. In this case, self-reflexive strategies of fictionalization can perhaps also attain a greater truth, revealing aspects of reality that would remain otherwise hidden.[158]

My analysis of the film emphasizes documentary remembering's performative and constellational nature. Inspired by Rothberg's (2009; 2010) concept of multidirectional memory, I suggest that remembering is conveyed in the film as a living constellation of overlapping plenitudes of pasts, each with its own inherent biases. The film is reminiscent of Benjamin's approach to history in *The Arcades Project*, as depicted by the book's translators, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. They take note of the "cunning" behind *The Arcades Project*'s constellational and fragmentary form:

> [I]t was not the great men and celebrated events of traditional historiography but rather the "refuse" and "detritus" of history, the half-concealed, variegated traces of the daily life of "the collective"; that was to be the object of study, and with the aid of methods more akin – above all, in their dependence on chance – to the methods of the nineteenth-century collector of antiquities and curiosities, or indeed to the methods of the nineteenth-century ragpicker, than to those of the modern historian. (Eiland & McLaughlin 2002, ix.)

Similarly, *The Gold Bug* gathers its collection of curiosities from the "detritus" of histories – such as the Swedish colony's tradition of midsummer festivities, the adventures of colonial gold, mixing fictional with factual – recycled and re-composed from the "pirates' point of view" (see Oubiña 2019). It creates a maze of competing narratives led by tricksters with guile and treason, in constant movement within the film-world and in relation to *the* world.[159]

The performative gestures of voice-over narration and reenactment are analyzed more closely in the article. In voice-over, the historical figures (and, in the film, also the motifs of filmmaking) Benedictsson and Alem argue over the film's narrative, both trying to exercise their narrative power in mischievous ways – with mockery,

158 For more on the relationship between fictionalization and documentary see, e.g., Rhodes & Parris Springer 2006; Brix Jacobsen 2019; Slugan & Terrone 2021.

159 As Eric Weitz (2014, 776) notes, the trickster is a character who "throws cultural boundaries into relief by crossing them in sly and audacious ways". They display "clever thinking, pursuing gratification in an almost infantile manner even as their cravings remain decidedly adult". Such as the narrators in *The Gold Bug*, constantly changing their perspective, they "illuminate the centers of culture by carrying out their exploits from the margins" (ibid.), and disclose discrepancies and biases involved in historical remediations.

harassment and agitation. They offer a decentralized approach to the traditional "voice of god" narrator, with rivalling voices that are inherently unreliable. Both voice-over narration and reenactment are also essentially embodied practices, working in the present, in the flesh. In *The Gold Bug*, these performances give Benedictsson and Alem living bodies to gesture with, and to intrude into the film-world's events. Through the bodies of the actors, they can speak and act in the present while opening historical contingencies – exploring, what could have happened? (see Johnson 2020, 172).

The film's reenactments make tangible the necessarily biased cinematic processes present in remediating history, while putting forth postcolonial and feminist critique of documentary practices. As Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (2010, 7) note, reenactment includes both affirmation and renewal, as it addresses the old but also engenders something new. In the film's voice-over and (other) reenactments, the contemporary world is not erased, but accentuated. In the film, the past is not offered as "illusionistic" representations of historical events or people that would erase the means of their production. Instead, the film's aesthetic techniques draw attention to the role of the film medium in the act of remediation. These reenactments thus "bear the device" of filmmaking within them, as Bill Nichols (2008, 85) states. *The Gold Bug* creates new, unsettling understandings in its unruly aesthetic and temporal constellation which, I propose, generates space for self-reflexive postcolonial critique in the present while derailing the hierarchies involved in remembering colonial pasts.

Consequently, in articles 1 and 4, pasts are recreated in the present in an effort to challenge the ways in which we perceive the world, as well as live and act in it. Here, the film-worlds themselves become catalysts for remembering where novel relationships to the world can be engendered.

In the aesthetico-political analysis, I have paid attention to how acts of remembering in documentary engage with the work of imagination and recreation while *reanimating*, *reclaiming*, *redeeming* and *derailing* pasts and historical narratives. In the films, the hidden, lost, forgotten and haunted, as well as the mythical sides of reality are revived or heightened, and new perceptions and ways of sensing the world emerge. In sum, the cinematic acts of remembering engage with embodied, material-performative aesthetic strategies in order to find ways to reconnect with the world and reclaim agency. While recreating pasts, the films challenge linear understandings of temporality and draw attention to the power struggles involved in acts of remembering, while offering new ways to think about the ongoingness of pasts in the present. The study also shows how the film-worlds and our worlds become intertwined in processes of cinematic worlding, belonging and filming-living.

These findings emphasize the active role of audiovisual media in the formation of memory cultures, and reveal how different aesthetic techniques open up new ways of thinking about and experiencing Nordic pasts, related to specific places, histories, events and groups. In the films, pasts are not considered to be distinct from the present but intertwined with it, in complex and intricate processes of rewiring where new relations and conditions for living unfold in the here and now.

9 *Researcher's note* – conclusions

In the director's note – or researcher's note – she encapsulates the backbone of the work; what she wants to (be) remember(ed), what she hopes the impact of the work will be and where it might lead.

Documentary aesthetics creates specific conditions for engaging with reality. It evokes thinking and feeling with the audiovisual through cinematic techniques, such as close-ups, dramatizations or manipulations of time, juxtaposing, layering material traces, images and sounds, creating new meanings, new sensations and new relations between historical and contemporary agents. Documentary as a mnemonic device teases out, is fascinated by, idealizes, distorts, shields, reveals, mocks and longs for pasts. Documentary practice offers room for manoeuvre, a "playground" even, where pasts become matter to be molded. Cinematic remediations of pasts entail a need to understand the contemporary world, and to prepare for a future one.

Here, at the latest, one must note how slippery the acts of remembering in documentary are to study. They are events, always mediated – and remediated – by people, places, stories, images, textures and affects.[160] They are necessarily processual and dynamic, as memory itself is (Plate & Smelik 2013, 3). Acts of remembering are performed and re-performed, re-visioned and re-enacted – reiterated by techniques and practices of filmmaking. Researching them is a volatile mission, where one has to work with flickering traces, obscure gaps and complex constellations – the ambivalence of remembering. Concurrently, the researcher must pay attention to the ways in which the films show sensitivity towards the political and ethical agencies at work in documentary remembering.

[160] Although for stylistic reasons I have sometimes shortened this expression in the work, it is in order to emphasize, that documentary film remediates acts of remembering (expressed for example through reenactments, archival scenes, animations and performances of oral histories), not the past itself. Yet simultaneously, the remediation that documentary film *is* takes part in the acts of remembering in society at large. Documentary thus both collects and creates acts of remembering and works as an act of remembering in itself.

My interest in the shadows of Nordic memory cultures has influenced the framing of this work, delving into issues such as colonialism and war experiences, painful and shameful memories. The films selected for the research often speak on the edges of meaning, with moods and atmospheres, subtle movements in thought and emotion that are sometimes difficult to put into words. Using cinematic techniques, such as archival montage or enacted voice-over performances, the films create perceptions and sensations that speak of embodied experiences, latent sides of cultures and histories of emotions.

The four original articles, one published in Finnish[161] and three in English, focus on the ways in which acts of remembering are expressed in the documentaries studied, and how cinematic techniques are employed to give form and life to these acts. I identified three aesthetic phenomena central to these acts from the documentaries studied: traces, gaps and constellations. In these films, remembering operates with *traces* as ways to reconnect with the world and with absent things (relating closest to SQ1), with *gaps* that invite the viewer to reimagine pasts (as well as presents and futures) with the films (relating to all SQs), and with *constellations* as non-linear ventures that call for multiple layers of relational temporalities, present in the films (relating to SQ3). These three phenomena also reflect the central thematic that traverses this work, emphasizing the creative work of documentary remembering. The "conjoined forces" of pasts make something that has not existed before to express itself in the films.[162]

How do these conceptions then contribute to the field of documentary studies and discussions on cinematic remembering?

The concept of "traces", as used in this work, expands the idea of documentary trace from working as Peircean index "of the real" as "certainty of referentiality" with "a physical, material connection to its object" (Doane 2007, 1–2), always pointing outside itself, towards thinking cinematic traces as immanent, productive events in themselves – here, documentary films (and documentary filmmaking) are seen as platforms where historical and material traces acquire new powers – they gain significance in affect and meaning, transpire presence in this moment.

161 As the English language has become the lingua franca of academia in the Western world, one is often left to wonder what gets lost in the translation, in writing and in speech. Though most of my research articles were published in English, I found it important to also include one in Finnish, as the depth that one attains while using the mother tongue is unparalleled. In hindsight, however, it is rather paradoxical that this article deals with the Sámi postmemory generation, who had to first learn the language of the colonizers (Swedish/Finnish), before discovering their mothers' languages as adults.

162 I have been inspired here of Jukka Sihvonen's use of Deleuzian vocabulary to accentuate the dynamic nature of the acts of remembering, considered as lively, "emanating" events. See Sihvonen 2013, 9.

Similarly, “gaps” are not seen as a deficiency in acts of remembering, but the work develops them as sites of emergence which invite the viewer to imaginative leaps, at the same time contesting to the inherent ruptures and contingencies in acts of remembering. ”Constellations” bring forth the convoluted nature of temporal intertwinings taking place in documentary, and point towards this fertile understanding of acts of remembering where new perceptions and relations grow. Together, these ideas fertilize the theoretical understanding of cinematic remembering as a “playground” within the documentary.

The research outlines how remembering appears in the films as material, performative and embodied acts, where not only film subjects but non-subjective agents – such as images or films – can become active catalysts for remembering. *Sámi Daughter Yoik*, analyzed in article 2, makes visible the subtle, affective exchanges and practices related to belonging that are transgenerationally and materially remediated. In the film, these tie into, for example, the *gákti*, the Sámi dress. Histories are carried in images, sounds, objects and bodies (see Marks 2000, 29) and they are made tangible in the act of filmmaking. On the other hand, the archival montage in *Auf Wiedersehen Finnland* invokes remembering that is not attached to any single person’s memory, but speaks through its own motive powers.

I suggest that documentary can generate new ways of embodying a relationship to the world in situations of trauma and displacement. Remembering in documentary does not only convey pasts in order to “transmit history” but creates pasts in relation to the present. In the acts of remediation, of re-writing histories, the film-world enables a play with different temporalities. Remembering, like making a documentary, is a creative act that generates new ways of thinking, feeling and living. The films make use of forces of pasts in the traces summoned and the gaps invited into the film-worlds that continue to resonate in the contemporary world. In the folds of cinematic constellations composed in the films studied, historical and imagined events and figures fall into a co-constitutional relationship with one other. The present moment affects how we imagine pasts.

Documentary remembering also entails a struggle over narrative power, raising questions such as, who is given agency in the acts of remembering, for whom is memory created and for what purpose, as well as, what is forgotten and why? The study brings forth aesthetico-political operations that aim to decolonize existing (neo)colonial narratives, such as when the Sámi filmmakers strive to reclaim their own pasts as a resource in building more balanced memory cultures. The films complicate linear understandings of temporality and challenge dominant Nordic historical narratives. I thereby suggest that the acts of remembering in the films also propose new ways to perceive societal and cultural structures in order to sense what is possible. Related to this, further research would be needed on the ways in which Nordic documentaries take part in contemporary political struggles over history, for

example related to processes of decolonization. The cinematic remediations of Nordic colonial history by and large would also need to be researched more.

This dissertation serves its double role as a focused study on the forms and techniques that remembering takes in documentary film, as well as a culturally specific account on documentary remembering in the Nordic context at the beginning of the 21st century. In the first role, I have applied concepts from memory studies while outlining the temporal arrangements and performative approaches that remembering takes in the films. This interdisciplinary approach will hopefully further the liaisons between the fields of documentary films studies and memory studies. In the second, I have mapped out the ways in which the films studied are involved in memory work in the Nordic societies, tackling difficult pasts that some would rather forget. The research shows how documentary can offer an important place for memory work, as the films call upon histories that shape the presents and futures of these societies.

Yet, remembering in documentary is a vast field of inquiry, and many issues have thus fallen outside the scope of this dissertation project. These include wider theoretical questions related to trauma and witnessing, or specific aesthetic traits, such as the central role of photographs in documentary remembering. Yet, I have chosen an ample theoretical and thematic approach in this study to delineate documentary remembering as an aesthetico-political phenomenon that involves numerous ways of being and doing. Had I concentrated, for example, on a more specific aesthetic trait, such as archival montage, the research would have had the opportunity to delve deeper into discussions on that particular area of research. Due to its wide scope, this dissertation offers instead a critical overview of the aesthetic traits and societal themes related to remembering in contemporary Nordic documentary. It testifies to the active and generative nature of remembering in documentary and, as such, contributes by and large to the understanding of documentary's role in memory work.

Documentaries take part in imagining alternative pasts, presents and futures and in building conditions for living with hope and despair. The documentaries studied yield affirmative conditions for contemporary life by reconnecting with histories, engaging with material traces, objects and events, but also by contesting hegemonic historical narratives of pasts that have contributed to the marginalization of other narratives (and peoples). Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, Adrian Ivakhiv (2013, x) writes that cinema can "revivify our relationship to the world". Here, he refers to the living, breathing connections that cinema, its viewers and the world share. In this work, I have delineated how documentary can create a revived connection with the world by engaging with pasts, temporal durations and historical layers in the present. It can relate to the world as an open field of action, where many possible futures and many possible pasts can be outlined.

Relying on Jacques Rancière's theorization, Susanna Helke (2017, 198) notes how documentary film gives "the shreds of memory and experience left by the "slow explosion of history" the ability to speak. This ability transfers the shreds, or so-called documents, into the realm of the imagined. Remembering is a form of fantasy and, thereby, documentary films and historical narratives rely on our ability to imagine "the lost form, context and part" of these remains "in the digestive system we call *reality* or *history*, to which they have belonged". (Ibid.)[163] Documentaries in this research show how to create new realities based on traces, gaps and their reverberations in the present. By using the force of imagination to make pasts present in this moment, documentaries also make us realize the depth of the present.

[163] My translation.

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