

MÄRKT AV DET FÖRFLUTNA?

*Minnesproblematik och minnesestetik
i den svenska 1990-talsromanen*

Cecilia Pettersson

Institutionen för Litteratur,
Idéhistoria och Religion

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ABSTRACT

University of Gothenburg,
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Cecilia Pettersson

Märkt av det förflutna? Minnesproblematik och minnesestetik i den svenska 1990-talsromanen (Marked by the Past? Memory Intricacies and Aesthetics in the Swedish Novel of the 1990's)
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Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion, University of Gothenburg, PO Box 200, SE-405 30, Gothenburg.

In Western civilization memory has always attracted much interest. In the last decades, however, this interest has intensified at the same time as it has taken other expressions than before. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the narratives of memory manifested in the Swedish novel of the 1990's and in a number of theories of memory central to the late 20th and the early 21st centuries. What concepts of memory are predominant when approaching and entering the new millennium? Do the same conceptions of memory appear in the novels as in the scholarly discourse, or are these genres in conflict? Among the numerous contemporary novels having memory as a crucial complication, the dissertation concentrates on five: Per Olov Enquist's *Kapten Nemos bibliotek* (1991), Niklas Rådström's *Medan tiden tänker på annat* (1992), Bodil Malmsten's *Nästa som rör mig* (1996), Marie Hermanson's *Musselstranden* (1998), and Cilla Naumann's *Dom* (2000). The theories of memory investigated are principally taken from two of the areas in which memory has been debated most intensely during the last decades: trauma studies and memory psychology.

The investigation begins with focusing on a paradox manifesting itself both in the novels and in contemporary memory research; At the same time as there is an urgent need to remember, the difficulties with memory are emphasized. Chapter 1 shows that this paradox is at least partially illusory. By analyzing statements about memory explicitly formulated in the novels, it is revealed that these statements are connected to two different questions. The first one concerns the problematic aspects of memory, and the second one the significance of memory and its function. Chapter 2 analyzes the memory-aesthetics in the novels and direct attention on the fact that the theories of memory also are based on unarticulated aesthetic assumptions. By placing the novels' and the theories' conceptions of form side by side, a number of similarities and differences are discerned. This discussion are deepened and elaborated in Chapter 3, which deals with conceptions concerning traumatic memories. The chapter shows that the novels and the scholarly literature have many points in common in how to view traumatic memories, although the novels have a more contradictory and nuanced approach. Chapter 4 focuses on conceptions of memory authenticity, and here another difference is brought to the fore. In both the novels and theory memory is perceived as consisting of a combination of "real" information and fantasy, but in contrast to the theories the novels highlight the possibilities contained in this composite. This more positive valuing of memory lays the ground for Chapter 5. In this last chapter, memory's significance for questions of identity and ethics is discussed. The chapter also explores the metaphors of memory displayed in the novels and in the scholarly literature. By adopting these perspectives a tendency discernable throughout the dissertation is emphasized: whereas the greater part of contemporary memory research one-sidedly focuses on memory's instability, the novels stress memory's constancy as well as its volatility.

Keywords: *memory, memory aesthetics, the Swedish novel of the 1990's, trauma theory, memory psychology, episodic memory, traumatic memory, narrative memory, memory and fantasy, memory and identity, memory and ethics, metaphors of memory, Per Olov Enquist, Marie Hermanson, Bodil Malmsten, Cilla Naumann, Niklas Rådström*

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