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## Carl Snoilsky's *Svenska bilder* and Cultural Memory in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**Abstract:** This article presents the research project “Searching for a New National Identity: The Construction of Swedish Cultural Memory in Carl Snoilsky’s Poems *Svenska bilder*”, and functions as an introduction to the four subsequent articles in this issue of *Studia Litteraria*, which are the result of the project. The principal aim of the project was a comprehensive analysis of the construction of cultural memory in Carl Snoilsky’s cycle of poems *Svenska bilder* (Swedish Pictures) for many decades being part of the core canon of Swedish literature, but which remains largely forgotten today. In part one, the article outlines the complex process of the creation and publication of *Svenska bilder*. It also reviews the state of research on Snoilsky’s cycle, justifying the need for new theoretical perspectives. In part two, the article analyses ways in which national memory is portrayed in *Svenska bilder* at different intra- and extranarrative levels, arguing that cultural memory and its preservation are among the central themes of the cycle. In part three, the article illuminates the construction of cultural memory in *Svenska bilder* as an example of nineteenth-century European cultural memory. The article considers three features, typical of nineteenth-century collective memory culture, to be particularly important for Snoilsky’s poems: subjectivisation, historicisation, and nationalisation. In part four, the article discusses *Svenska bilder* as an attempt to democratise the model of Swedish national memory created by the Romantics. The article argues that the cultural memory in *Svenska bilder* in many ways reflects

the liberal ideas of the second half of the nineteenth century advocated by Snoilsky. In part five, the article examines the place of Polishness in the construction of Swedish cultural memory in *Svenska bilder*. Although Snoilsky considered himself a friend of Poland and an advocate for the Polish independence movements, in his cycle he assigns Polishness the role of the negative Other that serves to consolidate a positively characterised Swedish national identity. The article concludes with a short presentation of the four articles that are the fruits of the presented project.

**Keywords:** Carl Snoilsky, *Svenska bilder*, Swedish cultural memory

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł jest prezentacją projektu naukowego „Searching for a New National Identity: The Construction of Swedish Cultural Memory in Carl Snoilsky’s Poems *Svenska bilder*” i pełni funkcję wprowadzenia do czterech kolejnych artykułów niniejszego numeru czasopisma *Studia Litteraria*, będących rezultatem projektu. Głównym celem prezentowanego projektu była wszechstronna analiza konstrukcji pamięci kulturowej w cyklu wierszy *Svenska bilder* (Szwedzkie obrazy) Carla Snoilsky’ego, zaliczanego przez wiele dziesięcioleci do ścisłego kanonu literatury szwedzkiej, a dziś w dużym stopniu zapomnianego. W części pierwszej artykuł przedstawia skomplikowany proces powstawania i publikacji *Svenska bilder*. Dokonuje także przeglądu stanu badań nad cyklem Snoilsky’ego, motywując potrzebę nowych perspektyw teoretycznych. W części drugiej artykuł analizuje sposoby ukazania pamięci narodowej w *Svenska bilder* na różnych poziomach intra- i ekstranarracyjnych, dowodząc, że pamięć kulturowa i jej przechowywanie należą do centralnych tematów cyklu. W części trzeciej artykuł naświetla konstrukcję pamięci kulturowej w *Svenska bilder* jako przykład XIX-wiecznej europejskiej pamięci kulturowej. Za szczególnie ważne dla wierszy Snoilsky’ego artykuł uznaje trzy cechy, typowe dla XIX-wiecznej kultury pamięci zbiorowej: subiektywizację, historyzację i nacjonalizację. W części czwartej artykuł omawia *Svenska bilder* jako próbę demokratyzacji stworzonego przez romantyków wzorca szwedzkiej pamięci narodowej. Artykuł dowodzi, że pamięć kulturowa w *Svenska bilder* pod wieloma względami odzwierciedla liberalne idee drugiej połowy XIX wieku, których Snoilsky był zwolennikiem. W części piątej artykuł bada miejsce polskości w konstrukcji szwedzkiej pamięci kulturowej w *Svenska bilder*. Mimo że Snoilsky uważał się za przyjaciela Polski i orędownika polskich ruchów niepodległościowych, w swym cyklu przydzielił polskości rolę negatywnego Innego, służącego do konsolidacji pozytywnie nacechowanej szwedzkiej tożsamości narodowej. Tekst kończy krótka prezentacja czterech artykułów, będących owocami prezentowanego projektu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Carl Snoilsky, *Svenska bilder*, szwedzka pamięć kulturowa

One of the most important consequences of cultural memory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the development of historical fiction. In this special issue of *Studia Litteraria*, the introductory article will emphasize how Carl Snoilsky’s epic poetic series *Svenska bilder* (Swedish Pictures) is in essence a work of cultural memory – and this will be followed by four, cultural memory-related, detailed studies on *Svenska bilder*. All five articles were written within the framework of the international research project “Searching for a New National Identity: The Construction of Swedish Cultural Memory in Carl Snoilsky’s Poems *Svenska bilder*”,<sup>1</sup> conducted by the four authors of this introductory article, who are also literary scholars and specialists in Scandinavian literatures.

<sup>1</sup> This research was funded by the Priority Research Area Heritage under the program Excellence Initiative – Research University at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

## *Svenska bilder*: themes, publishing history, and literature review

Since nowadays both Snoilsky and his literary works are mostly unfamiliar to Scandinavian and foreign literary scholars, an initial overview of *Svenska bilder* might prove useful. Carl Snoilsky (1841–1903) began publishing poems in the 1860s and by the 1880s was already being celebrated as “Skandinaviens største nulevende lyriker” (Scandinavia’s greatest living lyricist) – as noted by Henrik Ibsen himself (Ibsen 2009, 334; cf. Snoilsky 1918, 21; Olsson 1981, 14; Böök 1926, 173). *Svenska bilder* is a series of 32 poems depicting events from early modern Swedish history. The oldest material dealt with refers to the last years of Gustav Vasa’s reign; the most recent episodes concern Gustav IV Adolf’s dethronement in March 1809 and Esaias Tegnér’s sojourn in Värmland during the summer of 1811, when he is said to have conceived the poem “Svea”.<sup>2</sup> The main emphasis for the selection of historical material centres on the Great Power era and its aftermath, which itself concerns 18 of the poems; four poems are devoted to the older Vasa period; the Age of Liberty and the Gustavian era are the focus for eight further poems; and the final two poems in the series concern events that helped to create 19<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden.

*Svenska bilder* belongs to a more mature period in Snoilsky’s creative output and has a long and complicated history of creation and editions. The earliest poem is “Kung Erik” (King Erik), dated 1870 and published separately in a literary calendar two years later (Kjellander 1964, 131–132; Olsson 1935, 14). The second oldest poem in the series is “Stenbocks kurir” (Stenbock’s Courier), written in May 1880 (Warburg 1905, 261). During the summer and autumn of the same year, several more of the cycle’s poems were written, including “Gamle kung Gösta” (Old King Gösta) (Kjellander 1964, 132). Snoilsky first used the term “Svenska bilder” in his second collection of poems, *Nya dikter* (New Poems) (1881), which consists of five sections. The first, “Svenska bilder” (Snoilsky 1881, 1–114), contains twelve poems, including “Herr Jans likfärd” (Sir Jan’s Funeral), “Christina”, “Brandklipparen”, and “Den gamla Fröken” (The Old Maid). In the section “Tankar och toner” (Thoughts and Tones), Snoilsky placed the poem “En natt i Augsburg” (A Night in Augsburg), which thematically ties in with the collection’s “Svenska bilder” and which was eventually inserted into the cycle itself (Snoilsky 1881, 233–237; Snoilsky 1886, 17–19).

Most of the poems which eventually formed the cycle had initially been published in Snoilsky’s three other poetry volumes. The section “Svenska bilder: II”, which appeared in *Dikter: Tredje samlingen* (Poems: The Third Collection) (1883), contains six poems, including “Lützen”, “Olof Rudbeck”, and “På Vernamo marknad” (At Vernamo Market) (Snoilsky 1883, 1–61). Similarly, *Dikter: Fjärde samlingen* (Poems: The Fourth Collection) (1887) contains the section “Svenska bilder: Tredje serien” (Swedish Pictures: The Third Series) with four poems, including “Hvita frun” (The White Lady) and “En afton hos fru Lenngren” (An Evening at Mrs Lenngren’s) (Snoilsky 1887, 39–83). This volume also in-

<sup>2</sup> Svea – a metaphorical name for Sweden (transl. remark).

cludes “Aurora Königsmark” as a stand-alone poem, which was eventually incorporated into the cycle (Snoilsky 1887, 1–38; Snoilsky 1904, 80–105). The section “Svenska bilder: Fjärde serien” (Swedish Pictures: The Fourth Series) in *Dikter: Femte samlingen* (Poems: The Fifth Collection) (1897) brings together six poems, including “Djursholm”, “Frun på Salshult” (The Lady of Salshult), and “Svensksund” (Snoilsky 1897, 3–52).

*Svenska bilder* was first published as a separate volume in 1886, containing 25 poems (Snoilsky 1886, 1–132). The publisher had originally planned to bring out the cycle as an illustrated “praktedition” (deluxe edition). However, as the project failed to materialize due to economic uncertainty, Snoilsky, anxious to popularize his series, suggested publishing a cheaper “folkupplaga” (popular edition)<sup>3</sup> without illustrations (Snoilsky 1917, 281). This edition was a notable commercial success (Kjellander 1964, 152) and paved the way for multiple new editions. In 1894, for example, *Svenska bilder* was published in no fewer than three different editions. Firstly, the original edition from 1886 was printed in a newly expanded edition with four additional poems: “Djursholm”, “Regementets kalk” (The Regiment’s Chalice), “Svensksund”, and “Efter fyrtio år” (After Forty Years) (Snoilsky 1894, 1–152). Subsequently, the series was published as a magnificent volume in six instalments with 90 illustrations by Albert Edelfelt (Snoilsky 1894a, 1–166). The selection of texts in the deluxe edition was expanded with the addition of “Aurora Königsmark”, missing from the cheaper, popular edition (Snoilsky 1894a, 62–73). This edition became widely known, and was thereafter reprinted in several different versions, with distinctive designs and different prices (Kjellander 1964, 164–168). Then, in 1894, the first school edition of *Svenska bilder* was published (Snoilsky 1894b, 1–36), edited in consultation with the author by his friend, the well-known educationalist Carl von Friesen; simpler in its overall design, it was reprinted a dozen times before being updated in 1931 by Gustav H. Kökeritz (Snoilsky 1931, 1–160). In terms of content, Kökeritz’s edition corresponds to the first school edition – both adhere to the expanded popular edition’s selection of 29 poems. However, the explanatory notes were re-edited, and, for the sake of attractiveness, nine of Edelfelt’s illustrations were added (Snoilsky 1931, 5). In 1939, yet another school edition was published. This volume, compiled by Rolf Hillman, was part of the publication series of Modersmållärarnas förening (The Association of Mother Tongue Teachers) and contains, according to the preface, “de mest bekanta och beundrade och från undervisningssynpunkt bästa dikterna” (the most well-known and admired poems and those best suited from a teaching point of view) – a total of 15 poems with an introduction, notes, and suggestions for further study (Snoilsky 1939, 5–6). Another widely distributed, separate edition of Snoilsky’s cycle was *Svenska bilder: National-upplaga* (Swedish Pictures: National Edition), intended as a cheaper alternative to the illustrated deluxe edition (Snoilsky 1905, 1–192). The volume contains all of Edelfelt’s illustrations, produced using an inexpen-

<sup>3</sup> The term is used by Snoilsky himself (Snoilsky 1917, 281). As a principle, this article distinguishes between the terms *edition* (*utgåva*) and *print run* (*upplaga*), understood as another printing of an edition, with possibly minor revisions to the text, in so far as these are not quotes.

sive, black-and-white autotype technique. However, not one of these numerous separate editions is complete as far as the selection of poems is concerned. None of them contain, for example, the poem “Junker Ulf” (Junker Ulf), which was printed in Snoilsky’s fifth collection of poems (Snoilsky 1897, 11–1). The poem “Aurora Königsmark” is included only in the Edelfelt editions (Snoilsky 1894a, 62–73; Snoilsky 1905, 76–9), and “Frun på Salshult” only in Hillman’s textbook selection (Snoilsky 1939, 61–4). The complete corpus of 32 poems was finally published in 1904 as the posthumously issued third volume of Snoilsky’s *Samlade dikter* (Collected Poems) (1903–1904), and this is the edition to which the five articles in this issue will henceforth refer (unless otherwise stated).

Its nationally oriented themes may explain why *Svenska bilder* is not more widely known abroad; only a few of the cycle’s poems have been translated into various foreign languages (Kjellander 1964, 148–149). In Sweden, however, the work soon became part of the national canon and as such has received a good deal of critical attention. In his notable study, *Carl Snoilsky: Hans lefnad och skaldskap* (Carl Snoilsky: His Life and Poetry) (1905), Karl Warburg devotes a great deal of space to the poems in the series. Elsewhere, *Svenska bilder* has been discussed in a number of important studies, including those by Per Hallström, Henry Olsson, Jacob Kulling, and Per Kjellander. All these studies adhere to traditional literary approaches and methods. The most recently published analysis is the chapter “De stora minnena” (The Great Memories) in Olsson’s monograph *Carl Snoilsky* (1981), based on his own *Ord och Bild* (Word and Image) essay “Snoilskys Svenska bilder” (Snoilsky’s Swedish Pictures), which was published in 1935. The first chapter of Olsson’s monograph is entitled “Den bortglömde skalden” (The Forgotten Skald) (Olsson 1981, 3–26). He also begins the chapter entitled “De stora minnena” by noting that *Svenska bilder* is no longer of interest to the general reader and has instead run into a reception-historical “motvind” (headwind) (Olsson 1981, 220). Snoilsky’s series, which, for many decades, was considered one of the central works of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Swedish literature and served as required reading in schools, has not been studied for the past 40 years. The research project “Searching for a New National Identity: The Construction of Swedish Cultural Memory in Carl Snoilsky’s Poems *Svenska bilder*” aims to help fill this gap. Our ambition is to shed new light on the work from the perspective of cultural memory and thereby, hopefully, expand our knowledge of the literature of the Oscanian period.

### *Svenska bilder* as a work of cultural memory

The common theoretical starting point we have chosen for our study of *Svenska bilder* is the broadly conceived concept of cultural memory. As defined by Jan and Aleida Assmann, among others (J. Assmann 2013, 48–56; J. Assmann 1988, 9–19; A. Assmann 1999, 11–23), the concept of cultural memory corresponds closely to the nature of the poem cycle. Snoilsky wrote most of the poems in the series during his exile from Sweden, when he longed to return home: as a result, he sought out a kind of inner recollection of his country’s past and gave his vision

a poetic form (Warburg 1905, 273–274). He responded to critics who argued that he should have taken up more modern themes for his poetry by referring to the importance of historical awareness for the existence of a nation:

Jag vet, att många högtbegåfvade andar, t. ex. Ibsen och Brandes, drifva fordran på *modern* innehåll ända därhän att vilja förvisa det historiska, det nationella från poesiers område, hvilket sålunda endast borde omfatta de rent personliga konflikterna eller erfarenheter från den nu pågående kampen för social omgestaltning. Jag kan i evighet aldrig gå in härpå. Lika litet som en individ kan förneka sina minnen, kan ett folk göra det. (Letter to Otto Borchsenius, quoted in Warburg 1905, 273)

(I know that many highly gifted spirits, such as Ibsen and Brandes, promote *modern* content to the point of wanting to banish the historical or the national from the realm of poetry, which thus should only include purely personal conflicts or experiences of the present struggle for social transformation. I could never ever go into this. Just as an individual can hardly renounce his memories, neither can a people.)

In *Svenska bilder*, Snoilsky wanted to portray what he called “de stora minnena” (the great memories) of the Swedish people: “de fosterländska minnena” (the patriotic memories), “historiska minnen” (historical memories), and “gamla svenska minnen” (old Swedish memories) (letter to Otto Borchsenius, quoted in Warburg 1905, 273; Snoilsky 1918, 113; Snoilsky 1919, 25). As Jan Assmann has observed, cultural memory is closely associated with both the canon and canonisation (J. Assmann 1995, 93–97). *Svenska bilder* can thus be interpreted as an attempt to establish the canon of notable Swedish memories.

That Snoilsky conceived *Svenska bilder* as a work of cultural memory is revealed not least by the poems themselves. The series thematizes not only recollection as a cognitive activity but also the cultural process that transforms personal memory into cultural memory. Based on Maurice Halbwach’s distinction between individual and collective memory, Jan and Aleida Assmann distinguish between individual memory and two different collective forms of memory: communicative memory and cultural memory. While communicative memory spans three generations, focusing on biographically anchored experiences, is usually transmitted orally, and is informal in character, cultural memory on the other hand thematizes the more distant past, is transmitted through fixed objectifications (writing, ritual performance), has an institutionalised form, and attributes a symbolic meaning to remembered facts, with a view to consolidating the remembering collective (J. Assmann 2013, 48–56; A. Assmann 1998, 13–18). In several places in *Svenska bilder*, individual memory and its endurance are brought to the fore. The intradiegetic characters of the poems “minns” (remember) the past “som hade det skett i går” (as if it had happened yesterday), succumb to “minnets envishet” (the stubbornness of memory), have their blood “värmt” (warmed) by old memories, regularly celebrate “en årsdag” (an anniversary) of their cherished memories, drink “minnesskål” (a memory toast) to their admired King, and experience how “plötsligt minne” (a sudden memory) captures the thought “i en magisk ring” (in a magical ring) (Snoilsky 1904, 208, 76, 100, 68–69, 200). But the cycle gives even more prominence to collective forms of memory. The very collectivisation of memory itself is docu-

mented, not least in the autobiographical poem “Den gamla fröken”, which is based on the poet’s own childhood experiences and depicts how, as “liten” (a little) boy, he was a frequent visitor at the home of an old Gustavian lady (Snoilsky 1904, 212; Warburg 1905, 268). The lady was herself the bearer of a multitude of self-perceived memories: “Från flydda vårar minnets doft fanns kvar / Omkring gengångerskan från Gustafs dar” (The scent of memories from bygone springs remained / Around the ghost from Gustav’s days) (Snoilsky 1904, 213). The boy, a representative of the grandchildren’s generation, urged her to share her memories – ““ack, berätta!”” (oh, tell me!), ““ack, tala om!”” (oh, tell me about it!) (Snoilsky 1904, 215) – requests she gladly granted. Through the lady’s stories, her individual recollections were transformed into communicative memory. In the next step, the adult poet transformed what he had heard from his grandparents’ generation into a poem about “vår sista svenska storhetstid” (our last great Swedish era) (Snoilsky 1904, 216), and as such, the communicative memory was transformed into a national Swedish cultural memory. A similar collectivisation of memory is documented in “Regementets kalk”, a poem which tells the story of a regimental chalice, buried by the regiment’s priest during the battle of Poltava, which he recovered after his liberation from Russian captivity and donated back to the regiment. Just as the chalice itself remained “rostfritt” (rustless), it kept the “[d]et dyra minnet” (the dear memory) of the regimental priest, which he passed onto “de unga leden” (the young ranks) during the presentation ceremony (Snoilsky 1904, 165, 161). By reworking the priest’s story, which afterwards had been handed over from generation to generation, into the poem’s “karolinska hjältesaga” (Caroline heroic tale) (letter to Carl Gustaf Estlander, quoted in Warburg 1905, 452), Snoilsky transformed the communicative memory of the 18<sup>th</sup> century into the national Swedish cultural memory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many of the poems in *Svenska bilder* thematize cultural memory itself. The intradiegetic characters of the series devote themselves to cherishing the Swedish “minnets hem” (home of memory), defending the national “minnenas tempel” (temple of memories), poetry about “[d]e friska fädernas kraft och mod” (the strength and courage of the healthy fathers), dreaming of “Svea”, who “tronar i ärans sken / Orubbligt i sönernas minne” (sits enthroned in glory / Unruffled in the memory of her sons) (Snoilsky 1904, 110, 112, 229, 137). The opening poem “Gamle kung Gösta” builds its extradiegetic narration on a fundamental pattern of cultural memory: the narrator is a national “vi” (we), who recollects the King “som vi hade själfva / Sett honom och känt” (as we ourselves had / Seen him and known him) (Snoilsky 1904, 8). The monarch, “levfande” (alive) in the collective memory, appears as the “fader” (father) of the nation, both past and present, who not only built Sweden “[f]rån grund och till tak” (from foundation to roof) but who also addresses succeeding generations and consolidates their cultural-memory-based community (Snoilsky 1904, 11, 7). In three of the poems – “Carolus Linnæus”, “En afton hos fru Lenngren”, and “Skogsvandringen” (The Forest Wandering) – the cultural memory context is revealed by paratextual means as the texts’ external, occasional poetical *Sitz im Leben*. The subtitle of the poem “Carolus Linnæus” reads “Ett hundraårsminne, den 10 Jan. 1878” (A centenary,

on 10 Jan. 1878) (Snoilsky 1904, 177). Such a marked, external commemoration is immediately translated into the extradiegetic narration. The narrator begins the poem by rhetorically apostrophising the kingdom and its collective memory: “Gamla Sverge, minns du ännu förra seklets morgonväkt?” (Old Sweden, do you still remember the morning watch of the last century?) (Snoilsky 1904, 177). In the final stanza, the narrator returns to the commemoration to have his narratee, Mother Svea, emphasize that the main character belongs not only to her own cultural memory, but to that of the whole world:

Skilda folk och zoner fira nu hans minnes sekeldag;  
Sveas gamla modershjärta klappar med allt högre slag,  
Och en stilla hviskning smyger ur ett rördt och tacksamt sinn':  
Minnet tillhör hela världen, men han var min son, blott min.  
(Snoilsky 1904, 180)

(Different peoples and zones now celebrate the centenary of his memory;  
Svea's old mother's heart is beating ever louder,  
And a quiet whisper creeps from a moved and grateful mind:  
Memory belongs to the whole world, but he was my son, only mine.)

### *Svenska bilder* and 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural memory

The significance of *Svenska bilder* for cultural memory studies is also due to the fact that the series forms a representative synthesis of the main trends in 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural memory. As Aleida Assmann, among others, has shown, cultural memory has undergone a continuous historical evolution in line with societal and ideological changes (A. Assmann 1999, 89–113; Oexle 1995a, 30–68). The 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural memory developed its specificity as early as in the beginning of that century (A. Assmann 1993, 366–382; Landry 2020, 96; Crane 2020a, 5–6). In *Svenska bilder*, one can find most of the traits that distinguish the ‘zero-point’ of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural memory. The historical factor which shaped the cultural memory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century more than any other was the industrial revolution (Matsuda 2020, 22; Gerson 2020, 162–163). In *Svenska bilder*, the process of industrialisation is kept out of the mimetic range of vision: the historiography of the poem cycle ends before the great industrial breakthrough in Sweden, and indeed none of the poems depict mechanized work. But the form cultural memory takes in Snoilsky's series could not have come about without the industrial revolution.

One of the most significant products of industrialisation from an ideological perspective is the modern, Kantian-based concept of the subject (Adorno 1996, 52–60). The industrial cultural memory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century rests on the notion of an individual, autonomous self, which cannot be reduced to an objectified non-self (A. Assmann 1999, 94–103; Oexle 1995a, 57–66). Snoilsky's memorial poems are very much about individuals. The fixation on individuality is already apparent in the poem titles: “Gamle kung Gösta”, “Kung Erik”, “Frun på Salshult”, and “Slotsherren” (The Lord of the Castle). The characters portrayed are constructed as subjects in the sense of 19<sup>th</sup>-century idealism: they make use of their reason,



enjoy freedom of choice, set a moral maxim as a rule for their actions, and are conscience-stricken when they feel they have betrayed their own sense of justice. In the poem “Hvita frun”, the main character, Duke Charles of Södermanland, suffers from continual pangs of conscience after having put the interests of his country before his deeper sense of humanity (Snoilsky 1904, 18–30).

Moreover, subjective in 19<sup>th</sup>-century memory culture are not only the individuals who are remembered but also those who remember. The activity of remembering and its outcomes are understood as expressions of the self-conscious acts of the sovereign self (Siegmond 2001, 618–623). The recollections of the Gustavian lady conveyed to the young storyteller in “Den gamla fröken” have a strongly personal character. She obeys not just the objective chronology but rather the spontaneous, self-perceived “minnets makt” (power of memory):

Och stundom bortom barnets trånga sfär  
Berättelserna ofrivilligt rycktes,  
Som på det stilla vattnet, vid ett kast,  
Allt större ringar vidga sig i hast.  
(Snoilsky 1904, 215)

(And sometimes beyond the narrow sphere of the child  
The stories were involuntarily torn,  
As on the still water, with a throw,  
Ever widening ripples quickly form.)

The narrator of the poem himself is also individualized: he is characterized as a “ensam gosse, tyst och blyg, / Som ej fått tumla i den gröna hagen” (lonely boy, quiet and shy, / Who has not been allowed to tumble in the green pasture) (Snoilsky 1904, 213) and serves as the poet’s alter ego. Olsson notes the poem’s “rent subjektiva art med skalden själv hela tiden stående i förgrunden” (purely subjective nature, with the poet himself always in the foreground) (Olsson 1935, 22). According to Olsson, the other poems in *Svenska bilder* strive for a more objective narration. However, it can be argued that a personal tone is constantly felt in the memorial discourse of the series. Having seen with his “inre öga” (inner eye) the entry of Gustav II Adolf into Augsburg, the extradiegetic narrator of the poem “En natt i Augsburg” feels “ej / Som främling mer” (not / As a stranger anymore) in the Bavarian city (Snoilsky 1904, 32–33). Similar subjectivizing devices are to be found in the majority of the poems. Through his mother, Snoilsky was related to some of Sweden’s most influential families and had a personal opinion on many of the historical figures he depicts. As previous research on Snoilsky has meticulously demonstrated, the cycle’s numerous autobiographical elements are not limited to “Den gamla fröken”; “Djursholm”, “Hvita frun”, “Herr Jans likfärd”, “Aurora Königsmark”, and other poems also process personal material (Olsson 1981, 232–239; Hallström 2010, 172–173, 198; Böök 1926, 135–136, 151–152).

Another defining feature of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century’s construction of industrial cultural memory is temporal linearity. Memories are subject to the passage of time, which is perceived as a constant flow of transient moments that can neither be halted or reinstated. As Aleida Assmann has highlighted, the cultural memory of

the century, particularly in the field of literature, suffers from “die Wunde der Zeit” (the wound of time), which manifests itself through a depressive experience of emptiness, impermanence, and incurability (A. Assmann 1999, 89, cf. 53–55, 96–103). In *Svenska bilder*, the stories are charged with a painful notion of the irreversibility of time. One of the key words in Snoilsky’s series is “sist” (last). Junker Ulf is “den siste af släkten” (the last of the family). A half-burnt church hides “Sverges sista styrka” (Sweden’s last strength) (Snoilsky 1904, 43, 48). An awareness of the irrevocability of time evokes a sense of sorrow, which is reflected in the consistent use of compound words containing “sorg” (sorrow): “landssorg” (national mourning), “sorggemak” (state room arranged for mourning), “sorgegök” (sinister cuckoo), “sorgedag” (day of mourning), and “sorgebud” (mourning news) (Snoilsky 1904, 104, 54, 154, 179, 218).

The construction of linear time at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the creation of a more scientific concept of history, which, in the first decades of the century, was expanded upon by the Prussian School of History. The cultural memory of the century quickly embraced this new, historical outlook, and invested its representations with a non-repetitive, epochal identity (Landry 2020, 96–100; Iggers 1975, 10–31). Snoilsky himself is very aware of the historicity of being. In his letters he constantly mentions “historiska förutsättningar” (historical conditions), “historiska traditioner” (historical traditions), “historiska ögonblick” (historical moments), and “den tänkande historikern” (the reflective historian) (Snoilsky 1918, 93, 158, 169, 154). Formulations of this kind are based on a heightened conception of history, which in turn reveals many points of contact with the Prussian School: the opposition of history vs. nature, the hermeneutic understanding, the idea of progress, and the emphasis on the importance of the nation-state (Schieder 1965, 137–140). This historicizing way of thinking clearly characterizes the recollections of Sweden in *Svenska bilder*. The narrator often assumes the role of a historian and highlights past events with reference to the specificity of the epoch in question. In “Olof Rudbeck”, for example, he explains Rudbeck’s Atlantis speculations from the intellectual horizon of the Great Power era:

Du nya tid,  
Som hånar hans drömmar, glöm ej därvid  
Att namnets klang var en annan,  
Då än från Leipzigs och Warschau dar  
    Den minste bar  
Af gloria liksom ett skimmer på pannan.  
(Snoilsky 1904, 107)

(Thou, new times,  
Who mock his dreams, do not forget  
That the sound of the name was different then,  
Than from the days of Leipzig and Warsaw  
    The smallest man still bore  
Of glory a kind of a shimmer on his brow.)

Although the moral ideals of the cycle are presented as immutable – they do not perish “[i] tidens ström” (in the stream of time) (Snoilsky 1904, 33) – nevertheless they are endowed, as for the Prussian historians themselves (Hünemann 1967, 82), with the capacity to generate ethical progression. In “Slottsherren”, the post-Caroline hardships lead to the maturation of the social classes as they search for a deeper consensus in the name of social solidarity and humanity (Snoilsky 1904, 167–172). A corresponding historical progress is documented in many of the poems. As an amateur historian, in *Svenska bilder* Snoilsky consistently utilizes a more professional historical expertise. Previous research has noted that he mainly used Anders Fryxell's *Berättelser ur svenska historien* (Stories from Swedish History) (Warburg 1905, 271–272; Olsson 1935, 12–14; Kjellander 1964, 137–138). “Redan som gosse” (even as a boy) he had, according to his letter to Ernst Gustaf Palmén (quoted in Warburg 1905, 272), “lyckan” (the good fortune) to make the acquaintance of Fryxell and had “den äran att kopiera somliga dokument åt honom” (the honour of copying some documents for him). “Kung Erik”, “Djursholm”, “Brandklipparen”, and “I Svedenborgs trädgård” (In Swedenborg's Garden) are just a few of the many poems in the series based on Fryxell's historical work.

As an outcome of capitalism, cultural memory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is conceived as a productive force. It tries to compensate for the entropy of time by working towards a new future (A. Assmann 1999, 93–4, 138; Oexle 1995a, 56). The opening poem of *Svenska bilder*, “Gamle kung Gösta”, is already clearly proleptic. Gustav Vasa turns “ur grafven” (from the grave) with “varnande ord” (words of warning) to future generations and gives them strength in their efforts on behalf of “vårt land” (our country) which “vi älska” (we love) (Snoilsky 1904, 7–8). In the final poem “Skogsvandringen”, the forthcoming entreaty to “vak upp, o folk!” (awake, oh people!) culminates in a vision of the impending glory of the “ädla” (noble) Svea (Snoilsky 1904, 229–230). This proleptic orientation recurs in most of the poems in the collection and is realized through a variety of narrative devices. In “Hvita frun” and “Djursholm”, for example, the perspective of the future is implemented through intradiegetic child figures – Gustav II Adolf and Johan Banér as youths – whose innocence and energy inspire hope for the kingdom's bright future. In “På Värnamo marknad”, the narrative culminates in reportedly rendered speech, in which the male protagonist links his faith in the future to typically capitalist qualities (Snoilsky 1904, 155).

One of the most prolific capabilities of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century self is imagination. While the *memoria* of premodernity was based on a mimetic reproduction of the past, industrial cultural memory feeds on the creativity of imagination (Siegmond 2001, 619; A. Assmann 1993, 361–377). In his letters, Snoilsky emphasizes how he considers his poetic production to be a “fantasiverksamhet” (activity of imagination). Even his historical creative work, he admits, ends up being “misslyckat” (unsuccessful) whenever it suffers from “fantasiens strejk” (the imagination on strike) (Snoilsky 1918, 85, 121–122). In *Svenska bilder*, many intradiegetic characters indulge in their dreams and fantasies: Eric XIV calls himself “vackra drömmars kung” (the King of beautiful dreams), Erik Dahlbergh dreams

“luftig storhetsdröm – på svenska” (an airy dream of greatness – in Swedish), Olof Rudbeck is a “svärmare” (dreamer), “[b]erusad af drömmen om sagans land” (intoxicated by the dream of fairyland), the captive Stenbock “drömmer och snider” (dreams and carves) (Snoilsky 1904, 13, 77, 109, 132). The extradiegetic narrators of the poems are endowed with a similar power. In “En natt i Augsburg”, the narration is based on “en syn / Från svunnen tid” (a sight / From a bygone era), as seen by the storytelling self with his mind’s eye. In “Den gamla fröken”, the storytelling boy practices “[d]en unga fantasiens alkemi” (the alchemy of the young imagination) and transforms “den värld, jag lefde i” (the world I lived in) into captivating images of times past (Snoilsky 1904, 32, 212).

As noted above, the literary form particularly suited to 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural memory imagination is historical fiction (Landry 2020, 96; Maurer 2020, 128–132). Yet in his letters, Snoilsky defends the poem’s capacity to depict an epic sequence of events. While today’s poetry, he writes to Pontus Fahlbeck, seeks “omedelbara känslouttryck” (immediate expressions of feeling), he wants to base his own poetry on “[e]n på vers berättad *händelse*” (an *event* told in verse) (Snoilsky 1918, 155). In a letter to Edvard Klemming, he describes *Svenska bilder* as “en grupp stycken med mera episkt underlag” (a grouping of items with a more epic underpinning) (Snoilsky 1919, 25). Snoilsky makes an equally strong case for literature’s right to mix history and fiction. “Enskilda drag” (individual features), he argues in a letter to Verner von Heidenstam, may be “ohistoriska eller alltför moderna, det fäster jag mig icke så mycket vid, när blott totalintrycket är mäktigt” (unhistorical or too modern, but that does not concern me so much as that the overall impression should be powerful) (Snoilsky 1918, 149: cf. the letter to Estlander, quoted in Warburg 1905, 302). In *Svenska bilder*, the narrative form is marked not least by the importance given to the expressions *berätta* (tell), *tala om* (talk about), and *berättelse* (story) (Snoilsky 1904, 215). Snoilsky himself admits that the poems contain several invented components, and defends himself with comments such as: “Den anakronismen måtte väl vara tillätlig för diktaren, eller hur?” (Such an anachronism must be permissible for the poet, mustn’t it?) (Letter to Edvard Klemming, quoted in Warburg 1905, 296, cf. 391).

One of the key features of industrial cultural memory is nationalisation. Capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century promotes the nation-state as its optimal societal form of organisation. The cultural memory of the century takes on national characteristics in order to consolidate the unity and identity of the nation (Crane 2020a, 2–4; Yablon 2020, 40). In many of his letters, Snoilsky makes it clear that he considers nationhood to be the highest of the “yttre” (external) values of the human self. One of the greatest dangers that can threaten a nation, he points out, is “att kasta alla historiska traditioner över bord” (to throw all historical traditions overboard). For his part, he wants to proclaim “*svenskhet* i dikten” (*Swedishness* in poetry) as far as his “krafter stå bi” (powers will allow) (Snoilsky 1918, 116, 158, cf. 101, 149). In accordance with this declaration, he gives the construction of cultural memory in *Svenska bilder* a distinctly national profile. The ethical norms on which his presentation of the remembered past is based, are rooted in the idea of the nation-state as the primary imperative of the individual. Significantly, he

begins the historiography of the cycle with Gustav Vasa, the founder of the Swedish nation-state. The notion of good in the poems is that which consolidates and elevates the “Svears och Göters uråldriga ära” (ancient glory of the Swedes and the Geats), and evil that which brings “vanära” (dishonour) to the kingdom (Snoilsky 1904, 109, 104). Despite their different vices, Duke Charles of Södermanland, Aurora von Königsmarck and Gustav III are seen as positive figures, because their actions are driven by patriotism. The whole series ends with an appeal to the sons “af vårt tidevarf” (of our time) to cherish the “arf” (heritage) of great Swedes and to make Sweden their supreme ethical standard: “Säg, är du färdig att offra allt, / Om frihet, fosterland så befallt?” (Tell me, are you ready to sacrifice everything, / If freedom, fatherland so commanded?) (Snoilsky 1904, 234).

### *Svenska bilder* and the democratisation of cultural memory

*Svenska bilder* thus exhibits virtually all the features that characterize the century's cultural memory ‘point-zero’. What makes Snoilsky's series fascinating for cultural memory studies is that it also reflects the evolution of cultural memory across the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the second half of the century, both cultural memory and ideas of tradition in general, became the subject of a long cultural war between progressive and conservative forces. While the conservative camp defended the established cultural memory of the century, the radicals pursued ideological modernisation in terms of democratisation, liberalisation, and secularisation (Borutta 2010, 349–355; Maurer 2020, 128–132). In his letters, Snoilsky offers numerous testimonies attesting to his view of himself as a “liberal” (liberal), “reformvän” (reformer) and “demokrat” (democrat) (Snoilsky 1918, 167, 81, cf. 49, 84, 95), noting that he wants to integrate progressive ideas into his commemorative poetics. He writes to Otto Borchsenius that his patriotic memory pictures

icke få urarta till ett ockrande på en osund chauvinism. Jag har en gång trott mig sammanfatta min mening om kulten för de stora minnena och gränserna för dess berättiga[n]de i följande strof:

Svenska folk, o lär, att minnet  
*Börda* innebär,  
 Om det ej odödligt verkar  
 In i det som *är!* (Quoted in Warburg 1905, 273)

(must not be allowed to degenerate into a usury of unhealthy chauvinism. I once thought I summarized my opinion regarding the cult of great memories and the limits of its justification in the following stanza:

Swedish people, oh learn, that memory  
 Means *burden*  
 If it does not eternally act  
 Upon that which *is!*)

“[D]et som *är*” (that which *is*) is understood by Snoilsky in terms of liberalism and social commitment. In a letter to Carl Gustaf Estlander (quoted in Warburg

1905, 271), he makes it clear that in his view of history he would rather identify with the suffering masses than with those in power:

Det svenska folkets pinohistoria griper mig ibland med en så obetvinglig makt, en så hjärteblödande medkänsla, att jag själf vid författandet är mera upprörd än någon läsare torde blifva

(The history of the suffering of the Swedish people sometimes grips me with such invincible power, such heart-bleeding compassion, that I myself at the time of writing am more upset than any reader should be.)

The cultural memory in *Svenska bilder* is strongly influenced by the author's progressive ideas. Based on Fryxell's liberal historiography, Snoilsky reshapes the traditional cultural memory of the century within a liberal historical way of thinking. Relatively few of the poems in the series deal with the affairs of kings. In particular, in the poems about Charles XII's wars and their aftermath, such as "På Värnamo marknad", "Brandklipparen", and "Hemkomsten" (Homecoming), Snoilsky distances himself from the romanticized historiography of the Swedish Empire and instead focuses on the common people and their hardships. The intention of the poems is not only to demonstrate social oppression but also – in line with the future orientation of the industrial cultural memory – to formulate a positive social program in the spirit of equality and common responsibility. In "Slotsherren", the impoverished peasants offer to rebuild the ruined castle for their noble lord. But the owner of the castle refuses the peasants' offer with a similar degree of equality and common responsibility, and shows himself ready to work with plough and sickle "[f]ör själfbestånd och bröd" (for self-sufficiency and bread) (Snoilsky 1904, 172). However naive the poem's social program may sound (cf. Olsson 1981, 219), it rests on a basic democratic principle articulated by clear narrative, figurative, and rhetorical devices: the lord of the castle adopts the "plog" (plough) as his noble coat of arms, shows respect for the "folkets svett och blod" (sweat and blood of the people), wants to move from the "gyllne högsal" (golden high hall) to "furuvägg" (walls of pine) and "lägre loft" (lower ceilings), and declares war "[m]ot ogräs och mot nöd" (against weeds and against want), etc. (Snoilsky 1904, 171–172).

### 19<sup>th</sup>-century Swedish cultural memory and the Polish

For Polish scholars of Scandinavian literature and culture, Snoilsky's series is of particular interest because it provides insight into Poland's place in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century construction of Swedish cultural memory. A lover of freedom and a democrat, the young Snoilsky championed Poland's cause during the January Uprising (1863–1864), when Poles in the Russian-controlled part of the country rose up against the Tsarist rulers. In "För Polen!" (For Poland!), "På Polens dag" (On Poland's Day), "På Polens graf" (On Poland's Grave), and other poems of the 1860s, which he read in public and published in the press, he tried to increase public opinion in favour of the Polish struggle for freedom (Snoilsky 1903, 47–54; cf.

Olsson 1981, 48–58). In a letter to his youthful friend Herman Wikblad, he commented on his strong empathy with the fate of Poland, which was the driving force behind the poems:

i mina polska dikter står jag i alla avseenden på egen botten, det må vara beröm eller tadel. Jag kan bliva en politisk poet, som skall höras i rätt vida kretsar, det vet och känner jag, var gång mitt hjärta erfar en smärtsam sammandragning, då jag hör namnet på detta döds-invigda folk – det är med tårar och hjärteblod man skriver om Polen – och jag har gjort det. (Snoilsky 1917, 84)

(in my Polish poems I stand in all respects on my own ground, be it praise or blame. I can become a political poet, who will be heard in fairly wide circles, I know and feel that every time my heart experiences a painful contraction when I hear the name of this doomed people – it is with tears and heart-blood that one writes about Poland – and I have done so.)

Snoilsky's contemporaries confirm that his Polish poems “slogo an på den tidens studenter” (struck a chord with the students of the time) and aroused “ett stormande jubel bland de unga” (a stormy cheer among the young) (Pelle Ödman's note, quoted in Olsson 1981, 49). However, there is nothing left in *Svenska bilder* of the empathetic image of Poland that the youthful poems convey. One of the key maneuvers that consolidates the 19<sup>th</sup>-century national cultural memory is the contrasting of the domestic with the Other (Berger & Olick 2020, x; Matsuda 2020, 21–28). Snoilsky's series assigns that very role to the Polish. Two reasons explain why Polishness was particularly suitable to play the part of the Other of Swedishness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish cultural memory. Firstly, the fates of Poland and Sweden were intimately – if not dynastically – intertwined in the early modern era. Poland stood in the way of Swedish dreams of *dominium maris baltici* and was perceived as one of Sweden's arch-enemies. Secondly, the early modern Polish state, with its Catholicism and its noble-democratic state system, contrasted with the Protestant, confessionally and politically cohesive formation of the Swedish state, and with that which was valued by the leading Protestant historians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wagner 1960, 25–33; Iggers 1975, 23). Lutheran, anti-Catholic views were also dominant in liberal circles during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Borutta 2010, 355–356; Koschorke 2013, 249–252). As a typical incarnation of the Other, in *Svenska bilder* Poland becomes a negative counterpoint to the positively charged Swedish national virtues. In triumphing over the Polish, the Swedishness of the series is able to define itself and confirm its lofty ethical, historical, and memory-cultural value. In “Hvita frun”, it is none other than the “land” (country) of Sweden itself that thanks Duke Charles of Södermanland for defending its “egenart” (uniqueness) against the papist Poles:

Från knappa tegar och låga tak  
Bär natten drömmande tack:  
Du, endast du, tog dig an min sak  
Mot påfveträl och polack.  
Min spirande tanke, min egenart  
Du värnat med svärdet skarpt och bart. (Snoilsky 1904, 25)

(From scanty fields and low ceilings  
 The night dreamily carries its thanks:  
 Thou, only thou, took up my cause  
 Against papish thralls and Poles.  
 My budding thought, my uniqueness  
 Thou defended with the sword sharp and bare.)

In “Aurora Königsmark”, Augustus II the Strong, “Polens valde monark” (Poland’s elected monarch), stands for insidiousness, ruthlessness and oppression. He is a false “titel-monark” (title-monarch) and his Polish crown a flimsy, fake “guldpapperskrona” (gold paper crown), which he lays at the feet of Charles XII (Snoilsky 1904, 80, 99, 88). Within the cultural memory of the series, Poland and the Polish serve as a backdrop with which to showcase the meritorious achievements of the Swedes. In “Erik Dahlberg”, the army of the Swedish Empire plans to conquer “[f]rån Pommern in i Polen” (from Pomerania into Poland). In “Stenbocks kurir”, Charles X Gustav is victorious “vid Warschau” (at Warsaw). In “Aurora Königsmark” Charles XII fills “Polens hed” (the heathlands of Poland) with “dunder” (thunder) (Snoilsky 1904, 77, 125, 91).

Significantly, Poland and Polishness, frequently thematized in the poetic pictures of the Great Power era, are rendered completely invisible in the poems concerning the Age of Liberty and the Gustavian era. This is not only because Poland largely loses its role in Swedish history, but also because in these poems Swedishness itself is constituted by different means. In “Carolus Linnæus”, the narrator notes that wartime is now over, and Sweden now affirms its “ära” (glory) with “oblodiga triumfer” (bloodless triumphs). In “En afton hos fru Lenngren”, it is not war but cultural feats that now create “vår sista svenska storhetstid” (our last great Swedish era) (Snoilsky 1904, 180, 216). Along with the image of Sweden, the construction of the Other also transforms itself, no longer linked to foreign countries, troops and confessions, but rather to intellectual darkness, weakness of will, and moral indifference. This internalizing concept is particularly evident in the final poems of the cycle, featuring martial themes. “Svensksund” speaks of “moskovitiskt öfvermod” (Muscovite overweening pride), but on the other hand, the Russian admiral is called “[d]en tappre Nassau” (the brave Nassau), possibly an echo of the respectful treatment the Russians received in Johan Ludvig Runeberg’s influential epic poem *Fänrik Ståls Sägner* (The Tales of Ensign Stål). Instead, as the Other, the poem identifies the inner shortcomings of the King himself and the Council of War: hesitancy, “vekheth”, (weakness), “fladderlynne” (fickleness), and pleasure (Snoilsky 1904, 189, 195, 190–191). In the concluding poem “Skogsvandringen”, the enemy, the Other, is likewise no longer the aggressors of Sveaborg but instead the native vices:

Är detta Svearne, denna släkt  
 Så småsint, afundsam, glitterströdd,  
 Till nesligt ok på den torfva född,  
 Som fostrade Englbrekt?

(Is this the Swedes, this family  
 So small-minded, envious, glitter-strewn,



Born to bear the ignominious yoke on the turf,  
Which had reared Engelbrekt?)

The triumph over the Other takes the form of an inner victory over one's own "svaghet" (weakness) (Snoilsky 1904, 227–228), and as a result negative images of the Polish are no longer needed for these types of cultural memory negotiations.

## An overview of the issue

Ultimately, cultural memory in *Svenska bilder* is a complex and exciting object of investigation, which can be highlighted from a variety of literary-scholarly perspectives. The following articles explore in more depth some selected questions, which fall within the broadly conceived concept of cultural memory. The articles encompass methodological diversity and combine the cultural memory perspective with approaches from, among others, gender and reception theory, ecocriticism, myth and intertextuality studies, narratology, and depth psychology. Krzysztof Bak's article starts with relevant myth and archetype theories and discusses the series' combined demythicisation and remythicisation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Swedish cultural memory. Drawing on current gender studies, Dominik Dziejdzic analyses the nationally oriented memory discourse in *Svenska bilder* with gender and sexuality-related tools. Elżbieta Żurawska makes use of an ecocritical conceptual apparatus in order to explore the national semantisation of landscape in the cultural memory organisation of the cycle. Erik Zillén utilizes categories of reader-oriented criticism to examine the reception of the cultural memory series in Swedish schools. Our hope is that the following articles will revitalize research on Snoilsky and his historical poetic series, which through its modernisation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Swedish cultural memory has in turn helped to shape the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's cultural memory of Sweden.

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