The purpose of the project was to study the depiction of sensory perceptions in contemporary literature and film. How are sensory perceptions depicted? What characterizes these depictions? And how do they relate to scientific, philosophical, and cultural theories about the senses and their functions? The ambition was furthermore to shed light on the question of whether any specific knowledge about human perceptions could be generated in literature and film. Could fiction teach us anything about sensory perceptions that is out of reach for modern science? A number of films and literary texts were analyzed in four sub-studies, each dedicated to a different aspect of sensory perception. Somewhat generalizing, the first study on pain could be said to focus on maximal sensory perception, while the second on the compensatory function of senses dealt with the absence of sensory perception. The third study, concerned with what is specifically human about our sensory perceptions, expands the scope by going outside of the human realm, and the fourth study about amnesiac flashbacks moves inwards, into human consciousness. Common for the four studies is that they all deal primarily with what could be defined as the border territories of sensory perception. In these border areas, the senses are put to the test, which means that their function (and dysfunction) becomes more pronounced, which, in turn, makes it particularly productive to study these areas in order gain potentially new knowledge about the senses.

The purpose of the project has remained the same throughout the project period. However, studies 3 and 4 have become more and more central, while study 2 has received less attention. The relationship between sense perceptions and memory has become more important to the project than initially planned.

Important results
Among the results that I consider most important, is that during the project, I have managed to confirm many of my hypothesises: a) that the visual aspects are crucial when it comes to fictional depiction of sense perceptions, in film as well as literature; b) that by stressing the importance of olfactory perceptions, not least in relation to memory functions, fiction could be used in arguing that increased clinical research in this area would most likely be productive; c) that the interdisciplinary research method used in the project is productive, and that the foundational thought behind the project – that fiction and science mutually inspire and influence each other – has proven to be true as well as a useful point of departure for this type of study.
My studies in literature and film have shown that amnesiac flashbacks in fiction are primarily brought about by correspondences between sensory perceptions in the present and in the past. This is even more common in fiction than in the more scientific literature, for example within Trauma Studies. In fiction, flashbacks are primarily evoked by visual similarities, something that could partly be explained by the depictive limitations of film and literature. Another explanation is that the vision is the sense that so far has been paid most attention by clinical research. The information about visual perception and about its role in memory processes is therefore more widely spread outside of the research community, and thus more easily accessible for authors, film makers and cultural mythology, than the knowledge about the other sensory perceptions is.

In discussions about amnesiac flashbacks (in the sciences as well as in Trauma Studies), it is often concluded that sense perceptions are more likely than logical thinking to evoke traumatic memories. This has also been confirmed in my studies of the fictional depiction of these phenomenons. Sense perceptions might activate memories in a way distinctly different from how conscious thinking brings about reminiscences. Furthermore, in fiction olfactory perceptions come across as a strong competitor to visual perceptions when it comes to evoking memories, traumatic as well as regular. The relationship between the sense of smell and memory functions has so far been underrepresented in clinical research. Today, however, this is a research field that appears to be growing, and my results could be used as arguments for this being a desirable development.

During the project, I have found more and more connections between the four sub-studies, even though their themes might appear as quite distinct and different from each other. To a great extent the studies contribute to and shed light on each other. My results have also strengthened me in the conviction that the research method used and the theoretical focus, as well as the choice of themes and research material, can generate potentially new and relevant knowledge about both the senses and their depictions in literature and film. In particular, the study of what I have called the border territories of sensory perceptions have proven very productive. This kind of interdisciplinary research grounded in the humanities comes across as a functional way to approach future studies in this and similar research areas.

**New research questions**

During my work on the project, I have come across many interesting questions concerning how fiction and science interact and influence each other in different ways in contemporary culture. During the project I have also realized that the popular fiction genres in general, and crime fiction in particular, often has more to contribute in this area than the more aesthetically acclaimed genres. In Hollywood movies as well as in most crime fiction genres, science is a central element. Crime fiction is one of the most extensively consumed genres today, and also one of the fastest growing. This implies that it reaches enormous audiences and that it might also influence general people’s attitudes
towards and knowledge of science more than other fictional (and perhaps also non-fictional) genres. Additionally, many of the contemporary crime writers have a background in science or medicine, which makes the scientific standard in fiction surprisingly advanced, also in seemingly simple narratives.

These two conclusions have been fundamental to the construction of my new research project, "Science in the Crime Genre", financed by The Swedish Research Council (VR) by a four year research position (forskarassistenttjänst). The aim of the new project is to study the integration, interaction, and depiction of science in contemporary crime fiction (literature, film, TV). More specifically: What function does science have in fiction? And how are fiction and science mutually influential?

**Publications**

I consider the articles “The amnesiac flashback: Theories, fiction, and trauma” (2008) and “Science vs. Fiction: Interaction, Integration, Depiction” (to be published in 2009), to be the two most important publications of this project. These are not the longest articles, or those published in the most prestigious contexts, but the article on flashbacks is representative for how I have worked throughout the project, and the article about the relationship between science and fiction combines results from the project with thoughts pointing forward. As always when it comes to articles, these two are just the top of the iceberg that constitute all the research done and all the text(s) produced during the project period. Initially, the project was intended to result in a book in English, in which the four studies were brought together and allowed to comment on each other to a greater extent than the article format allows. Currently I have a manuscript containing about 130 pages. Right now I do not have the means to finish this manuscript, but I intend to get back to it as soon as this is possible.

In popular science contexts, I have presented project results in 2005 when I discussed the relationship between literary fiction and medical science in the Swedish radio program. See also the article “Invasion of the clones” in _The Scientist_, <http://www.the-scientist.com/news/display/24249/>.