Views on gender in Paula Hawkins's *Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*

A feminist analysis of two novels

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Handledare: Lena Englund

Abstrakt:
 	
Syftet med avhandlingen var att ta reda på hur könsroller visar sig i *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl*. I ett större sammanhang var målet att genom denna studie få en förståelse för sambandet mellan samtida litteratur och könsroller, och på detta sätt även få en bild av hur samhället ser på könsroller.
 	
För att uppnå detta mål analyserades könsstereotypier i dessa två romaner. Som stöd för att uppnå målet skapades följande två forskningsfrågor:
 	
    1. Hur presenteras män i *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkins och i *Gone Girl av* Gillian Flynn?
    2. Hur presenteras kvinnor i *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkins och i *Gone Girl av* Gillian Flynn.
 	
Resultaten av studien baseras på data insamlat genom läsning av romanerna valda för denna studie. Utifrån datainsamlingen skapades sex kategorier, för att beskriva hur män och kvinnor presenteras i böckerna.
 	
Kategorierna är: *1. Förhärligande av män, 2. Objektifiering av kvinnor, 3. Nedsättande av kvinnor, 4. Kvinnor står upp för sig själva, 5. Negativa stereotypier om män* och *6. Progressiv syn på könsroller*
 	
Hur män och kvinnor presenteras i *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl* kan tolkas representera specifika faser I utveklingen av feminism i den riktiga världen, och därmed erbjuder böckerna en sammanfattning av feminismens historia. Detta betyder att romanerna visar en realistisk bild av feminism handlar om vad som krävs för att uppnå jämställdhet mellan könen i samhället.
 	
I analysen av romanerna hittas negativa sidor av både män och kvinnor. Dessa återkommande negativa representationer av bade manliga och kvinnliga karaktärer tyder på vilka utmaningar vi har med könsroller i både den litterära- och den riktiga världen. Det att dessa könsroller i böckerna oftas är negative visar att någonting är fel med hur kön representeras både i litteratur och i samhället. Genom att upptäcka och godkänna att det finns sådana problem i världen kan vi försöka ändra på dem.
 	
Som de flesta studier, har denna också sina begränsningar. Mänden data, det vill säga antalet böcker analyserade, är inte tillräckligt för att dra några allmänna slutsatser om sambandet mellan modern litteratur och könsroller i samhäller. Men romanerna i studiern representerar en specific genre och därmed kan det lättare dras slutsatser om denna genre. Likheten i resultaten av båda böckernas analyser motiverar till att göra fortsatt undersökning om könsroller inom andra litterära genrer.

Nyckelord: feminism, feministteori, litteraturteori, The Girl on The Train, Gone Girl, Paula Hawkins, Gillian Flynn, könsroller

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Abstract for master's thesis

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Abstract:

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The aim of this study was to find out to what extent gender stereotypes manifest themselves in *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl.* On a larger scale the intention was to, through this study, get a hint of the relationship between contemporary literature and gender, and thus also get a perspective on where society stands when it comes to views on gender.

In order to reach this aim I looked for what traits of male dominance and female powerlessness could be found in these two literary works. This is because male dominance and female powerlessness are characteristics that have traditionally been noticeable stereotypes about gender in literature, for instance in stories about princesses who are saved by knights. To support with this task the following research questions were constructed:

3. How are men viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*
4. How are women viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*

The results of this study are based on data gathered from reading the two novels chosen for this research. Out of this data six different categories have been created, based on patterns found in the data, to describe the findings about how men and women are viewed in *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl.*

The categories are: *1. Men glorified, 2 Women objectified, 3. Women denigrated, 4. Women empowered, 5. Negative stereotypes about men* and *6. Progressive views on gender.* The creation of these specific categories was mostly based on Elias´ (2011) questions about what to look for in a feminist literary analysis.

In conclusion, how men and women are viewed in The Girl on The Train and Gone Girl can be interpreted as representing specific phases in the development of feminism in real life and hence also giving a historical overview of feminism. This results in the novels presenting us with a realistic view of what feminism is all about and what we need in order to achieve a gender equal society.

In the introduction I mentioned I am looking for what traits of male dominance and female powerlessness can be found in these two pieces of literature. There were to be found traits of both, which highlighted some very negative depictions of both female and male characters. These repeatedly found negative stereotypes in the books clearly indicate the issues with gender found in both the world of literature as well as in real life society. The key term here being *negative* undeniably shows that there is something wrong with the current status of gender roles in both our society and in literary representations. By noticing and accepting the fact that there are these flaws in our world, we can try to change them.

As most studies, this study does also come with its limitations. The amount of data, i.e. the number of novels analysed, is not enough to draw any general conclusions about the connection between contemporary literature and gender roles in our society. The novels chosen for this study represent a very specific category, crime thrillers written by female authors. This makes it easier to draw conclusions of that specific genre, and the similarity in the findings of both novels encourages to look further in other genres

Keywords: feminism, feminist theory, literary theory, The Girl on The Train, Gone Girl, Paula Hawkins, Gillian Flynn, gender, gender roles

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Recently topics like sexism and feminism have become more and more commonly discussed throughout different media (Fernet, 2018). Many media platforms, especially social media, easily turn the discussion of such topics into debates (Cosslett & Baxter, 2013), which means that it is difficult to talk about feminism if you are not entirely sure what you are talking about, and many people avoid debates about topics related to feminism, because of the possible backlash resulted by it (Brown, 2018).

It is such insecurities of talking about feminism that has led to the writing of this thesis. The insecurities and, for some, the taboo surrounding the word feminism only show that we need to talk more about it and a literary analysis from a feminist point of view does not only show what our society thinks of the matter, but also invites and encourages to more discussions about feminism.

This thesis has its roots in Paula Hawkins's crime thriller *The Girl on The Train.* Already after reading a few chapters of the book the contrasts in the portrayal of the male and female characters are noticeable. At first sight, when you realize that the story is told from the point of view of three women, it might seem to be a story about strong female characters. But it does not take long before the reader notices that the three point-of-view characters are full of faults. Meanwhile, the male characters in the novel, who only appear more or less in the background of the narrative, are viewed as somewhat perfect by the female narrators. It is interesting that even when for once a crime thriller, which usually has a lot of male protagonists, includes women as main characters, it still pushes them down, while lifting up the men.

This realization inspired me to writing my master's thesis about it. However, the topic for the thesis later expanded to include not only *The Girl on The Train*, but also Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl,* which I found to be a suitably comparable novel for the purpose of the study, as it is also a crime novel centred around an unreliable narrator and written by a female author.

What I am interested in studying are feminism and gender roles in literature, and in this case especially in these two works, which both have female characters in important roles and are both also written by women. Several previous studies on gender roles in

literature have been made. One early instance of such study is found in *The Second Sex* by De Beauvoir (1949), in which we can find a perspective of viewing how female characters are represented in texts by male writers. According to Tolan (2006) De Beauvoir looked at appearances of female subordination in male-written works and concluded that all literature was impacted by social ideas of gender roles, thus being one of the first to make such a statement.

Another, somewhat more recent, study by Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) shows the difference in how boys and girls are depicted in children's literature. They analysed gender roles in 150 children's picture books from the last 50 years. What they found out was that even though the appearance of female and male characters had become more evenly placed, the female characters were still more passive than the male characters.

The passive view on women as agents is not only reflected in fiction but even how biographies about real-life females are written mirror this view. When writing biographies about men, writers focus on the accomplishments of the subject. Meanwhile, writers of female-biographies have to ask whether these women even have any accomplishments. (Wagner-Martin, 1994).

Traditionally it has been accepted that gender comes with its own assumed roles and people have failed to consider gender roles as a construction made by society, and further supported by members of our societies, such as our family members, teachers etc. Basow (1992) points out that the existence of evidence to support the justification of gender roles, either physically or psychologically, is very poor. Since this is the case, this notion supports the possibility of us one day seeing a society without gender roles.

However, a quite recent study about female characters in contemporary literature (Korhola, 2018) points out that we are not quite there yet. Korhola (2018) writes in her thesis about womanhood, with a focus on home and marriage, in *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on The Train*. She concludes her study by stating that both men and women are still controlled by the norms of society.

What Korhola (2018) leaves out however is that some see these works as satirical projections of our society (See for instance Osborne, 2017) and should thus maybe not be taken by face value, but could be interpreted in a number of ways. Also, Korhola (2018) herself mentions the possibility of *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on The Train* being works that are paving the wave for a more gender neutral future. Furthermore, she states that these two novels include a wide range of significant themes mirroring gender in our society and thus further research in the matter is called for.

I find it important to study gender roles, and feminism in general for that matter, in literature since it can work as an indicator of contemporary views on gender roles and how far we have come. By studying gender roles in literary works, we can understand how our society views gender in different contexts, which is why a thesis like this is needed.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

As mentioned earlier a recent study was done about the same two works, Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl,* that I am writing about. However, Korhola's (2018) thesis had the focus on the politics of home and marriage, and gender within these contexts, while my study moves a bit further away from these specific contexts and aim to find more general societal interpretations on gender in these novels.

The aim of my study is to find out to what extent gender stereotypes manifest themselves in *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl.* On a larger scale my intention is to, through this study, get a hint of the relationship between contemporary literature and gender, and thus also get a perspective on where society stands when it comes to views on gender.

In order to reach my aim I am looking for what traits of male dominance and female powerlessness can be found in these two literary works. This is because male dominance and female powerlessness are characteristics that have traditionally been noticeable stereotypes about gender in literature, for instance in stories about princesses who are saved by knights. To support me with this task I have constructed the following research questions:

5. How are men viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*
6. How are women viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*

As these questions are very open I am also going to use other supporting questions as guidelines to better know what to look for in the research materials. It is also worth mentioning that by *viewed,* I mean both how the characters are presented to the reader and how the characters view each other. I am going more into the depth of this in the third chapter, *Methods and Materials.*

The novels are analysed by categorization based on the supporting questions mentioned above, as presenting the findings of this study through categories will make the results clearer. The categories are: *1. Men glorified, 2 Women objectified, 3. Women denigrated, 4. Women empowered, 5. Negative stereotypes about men* and *6. Progressive views on gender.* The first category will focus on how male characters are seemingly depicted in a superior way compared to the male characters. The second and third category show how women are viewed in a negative way and are treated badly by the male characters. The fourth category will analyse female characters as more active agents and not depending on the male characters. In the fifth category I will look at negative stereotypes found about male characters in the *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl*. Finally, the sixth category will reflect upon the progressive views on gender in these novels.

1.3 Thesis outline

In this introductory chapter I have discussed the inspiration behind this thesis and what motivated me to go on with the study as well as my expectations and intentions with it. I have also given a glimpse of the theoretical background of the theme of the thesis. Feminism and gender roles include of course much more theories than what I have mentioned here in this introduction.

In the second chapter, *Feminist theory,* I will further discuss feminism in general, in order to provide a better understanding of its importance, as well as go more into depth about feminist theories; both their historical background and how to apply them when analysing literature.

The third chapter, *Methods and Materials,* will focus on my choice of material, with a justification for choosing these specific novels, and an explanation of how I am going to analyse them. This will be followed by a presentation of my findings in the novels, including descriptions of common themes and mentionable quotes.

I will conclude my thesis with a discussion about my findings and what conclusions can be drawn based on the analysis. The final chapter will also include thoughts on possible further research about the theme.

2. Feminist Theory

In this chapter I will first present a summary of the history of feminism and feminist theories, by focusing on explaining the different phases, also known as waves, of feminism and the two main approaches of feminist theory. This will be followed by a section viewing these two theories as approaches to literary works and describing feminism in literature in general. I will also go into more detail about theories applied in analysing literature with a feminist approach. The chapter is concluded with a summary, which will also explain how the theoretical framework is applied in this thesis.

2.1 Origins of feminist theory

When talking about feminism and feminist theories it is important to begin by stating that we should in fact not talk about them as a single theory, since there are actually various kinds of feminisms and likewise different theories surrounding feminism (Mills, 1995; Eagleton, 1996). Another reason, besides the existence of multiple theories, to why it is not recommendable to talk about only one feminist theory is that the term feminism in itself can sometimes be quite burdensome. As mentioned in the introduction, there are a lot of insecurities about talking about feminism without being entirely sure about what to say, since depending on the occasion used in, it can lead to lively discussions with varying kinds of opinions about it (Beasley, 1999), as people tend to be either agreeing or disagreeing with the idea of feminism.

The notion of feminism being a topic that people are not always sure what to say about is interesting in the context of the novels of this study as well, especially in *Gone Girl,* where at one point male characters are intentionally careful with what words they are using when talking about women. This is an example of how literature reflects real life issues.

Furthermore, it is not only the fact that people are either against or pro feminism, but even among feminists we can find quite a few differing views. For instance, people tend to have different interpretation of terms, such as the term feminine, which can mean a lot of different things for different people (Eagleton, 1996). Thus, it is not surprising that different feminist theories have emerged already at the end of the 1960's and kept on developing ever since (Elias, 2011).

Although feminism and women's rights movements got a great boost in the 1960's, and often many refer to this era as the beginning of these kind of movements, the

topics have been discussed already much earlier. In fact, the first women's rights convention was held as early as over a hundred years earlier, in 1848 in New York. However, despite the actions taken during that period, it did take quite some time before women gained equality with men in many matters, such as voting rights. (Elias, 2011).

As there are these moments in history when greater progress of women's rights and feminism have peaked more than at other times, it makes sense that the history of feminism can be divided into different eras, which are commonly referred to as waves. Usually three such waves have been recognized, with a possible fourth emerging.

The first of these took place between 1830 and 1920. Especially the suffragette movement can be remembered from this period, as it was one of the most important events of the first wave. (Tolan, 2006). The focus of the first wave was mainly on women's right to vote, but it changed with the World War I, when many activists changed their focus to the war instead (Sheber, 2017). After the war there was again time to notice what needed to be changed in gender equality.

The second wave started in the 1960's and lasted until the 1990's. One of the main features of the second wave has been Women's Liberation. (Tolan, 2006). As the first wave focused more on women's rights in politics, the second wave activists fought for equality in all aspects of society (Sheber, 2017). This was a result of many young women living amidst noticeable changes in society, which made them realize that changes could be made in their own lives as well, for instance regarding the relationship between men and women (Barber, Russell, Jolly, Cohen, Johnson-Ross & Delap, 2013).

The second wave can also be described as the time-period when the feminist movement split into two main groups; *equal rights feminism* and *radical feminism*. The first group's objective was to obtain equal rights with men in both political and social aspects of society, while the second group, the radicals, wanted to deconstruct gender roles. It was also the radical feminists who included women of all ages and minorities in their movement, whereas the equal rights feminists consisted at this point of mainly older white women. (LeGates, 2001).

The first and second wave succeeded somewhat in their goals. However, the activists were mostly white women and they did not really include women of other ethnicities in their agenda, except the radical feminists. This led to the birth of the third wave of feminism, which began in the middle of the 1990's, with the aim to succeed where the first two waves had failed. (Sheber, 2017). Those active in this wave, were people born in the 1960's and 1970's, who grew up in a very diverse cultural and

economic environment. Their aim was to finish what the first- and second-wavers had not succeeded with. The third wave feminist had the benefits of the foundation the second-wavers had laid for them, so they had better opportunities to carry on the movement. (Brunell & Burkett, 2016).

Though it is still debatable, some would argue that there is even a fourth wave of feminism, if not already established, at least emerging (for instance, Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013). The fact that feminism keeps getting these new forms could be explained with the *waves*-metaphor. If the different eras of feminism are the waves, then feminism itself would be the sea. Gurney (2015) explains that while the previous generation of feminists wash the beach with their wave, there are bound to be both treasures and seaweeds left after the wave. This then inspires a new wave to try to wash the beach. For instance, first-wave feminists succeeded in gaining more political rights, while the second-wave feminists noticed that there was still more to be done in the fight for equality.

What are the, so called, seaweeds that the fourth-wave feminists try to wash away? The main issue for contemporary feminists is that a lot of women are still marginalised, and these women should now be given a voice. Basically, fourth wave feminists are trying to make every woman heard. Thanks to the rise of the internet and social media this is now easier than before. (Munro, 2013).

According to Munro (2013) it is the internet that has allowed the shift from the third wave to the fourth wave. Feminism has gained an enormous global community thanks to the internet. Being online has made it easier for feminists to both encourage discussions and to lead activism. Munro (2013) references a study made by Columbia University's Barnard Center for Research on Women, which shows that in many countries young women are the main group using social media. Munro goes on to mention that many feminist websites have indeed gotten a large following.

However, this easy way of participating in the feminist movement might also result in slacktivism (Munro, 2013; Chen, Pain & Barner, 2018), meaning that people might click like or follow something feminist-related on social media, but never actually apply their online agenda in the real world.

This brief overview of feminism already shows that there are several different agendas related to feminism, which certainly makes it difficult to explain what a feminist is. One simplified way of putting it is presented by Adichie (2014): "A feminist is a person who sees a problem with gender and wants to fix it." This view represents the main goal

of this study as well, as this study attempts to analyse how contemporary literature deals with problems recognized by feminism with gender and society.

Since the goal of this thesis is to compare the findings of the study with the real world, it is necessary to know not just where feminism stands today, but also to be aware of its past and what its different phases have looked like. The history of feminism will be important in the discussion part of this thesis.

Whichever interpretation of feminism is used, the fact still is that we have gone a long way since the first days of feminism and women have now realized the power they actually have, for instance in their bodies and sexuality, which were things that men used to accuse women of manipulating them with. When talking about feminist theory, it is this reclaiming of women's bodies for themselves and taking control of it that has been one of the most significant moments. Thus, topics of women's priorities consist for instance of questions about their choices of whether they want to become mothers or not, if they want to get married or not and choosing whom they marry or have sex with. (Elias, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, there exists a variety of different feminist theories. Possibly the two most popular ones are Anglo-American Feminist Criticism and French Feminist Theory. These two views have ever since the 1960's been the main approaches into which feminist theories have been divided (Elias, 2011).

These theories differ mainly in the areas their interests lie in and in what they are focusing on within various topics, so they are often viewed as entirely opposing theories and one is not expected to be a follower of both. However, Gambaudo (2016) argues that the different ideas identifying both theories should not be interpreted as reasons for rivalry, but rather as motives for an open discussion between theories, inspiring one and another.

How do Anglo-American feminism and French feminism differ from one another? Eagleton (1991) portrays Anglo-American feminism as focusing on women in this very time in history, as real biological beings with both shared experience and needs. Meanwhile she states that French feminism is not concerned with the idea of *women*, but rather focuses on *woman,* and how she is depicted in discourse. In other words, the focus lies in the constructed woman rather than on the real, biological one. This also gives an explanation to the different terms used in the names of the two theories, as why Anglo-American feminism is called a criticism and French feminism a theory. The different

terms make sense with the view that French feminism focuses on the theoretical woman and Anglo-American feminism has a critical view on how women are treated in society.

Differences in the two theories can also be found in their use of terminology. For instance, Anglo-Americans use the term *feminine* as referring to the cultural stereotypical behaviour of women. The behaviour that is patriarchally viewed as the appropriate female behaviour. (Eagleton, 1991).

Tolan (2006) explains that despite what feminist theory is applied, a single theme above all other themes can be noticed in every feminist discussion. This common theme is the view on essentialism. It builds on the question whether there is naturally a difference between men and women or not. In other words, what is it that makes a woman a woman? Is it the fact that she was born female or is she a woman because she acts like a woman?

Those who agree with the essentialist view do indeed consider women as being biologically distinct from men. Thus, they see women as also being both psychologically and emotionally contrasting to men. The main point of the essentialists is that a woman should be proud for being one, and not ashamed for being different from men, but rather embrace these differences. Essentialist feminists view the goal of feminism as being to liberate women from the male-centred values and to discover their own identity as females. (Tolan, 2006).

Meanwhile, Tolan (2006) explains that anti-essentialists consider the differences between men and women being an outcome of cultural conditions. They argue that it is society that has made women different from men. Anti-essentialist feminists view the aim of feminism as having to dispose the means, by which society has created the gender-based differences, so that women can thrive and accomplish the status of being equal to men.

2.2 Feminist Literary Theory

One fundamental problem with women and literature is that the criticism of literature in the past has mainly been a privilege of men, which means that also the creation of literary canons has been in the hands of men. Thus, it has been male critics who have chosen which literature is important. The result is that women writers are not involved in literary history to the same degree as male writers. (Morris, 1993). This is one reason why literary researchers should focus more on female writers as well, making female authors more noticeable in the world of literature. This can also be used as a justification for writing a thesis like this.

Furthermore, this does not only apply to the gender of writers but also — as was noticed in the study by Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993), mentioned in the introduction — to the gender of the characters depicted in literary works, considering that female characters have traditionally played more passive parts in literature. This brings us to the justification of Jacobus's (1996) claim that the most important question for feminist critics is as simple as this; is there a woman in the text? As both TGOTT and GG have several female characters in central roles, they fit well in to be compared with previous theories, like those of Jacobus (1996) and Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993), that have stated that women are underrepresented in literature. Since both TGOTT and GG pass the question whether women are included in the text at all, this study is motivated to take the analysis further, to look at *how* women are included in literature.

Feminist theory was brought into the analysis of literature by early second wave feminists. They were faced by limitations in their attempts to analyse literature with the fact that there was a huge lack of accessible texts written by women. So, instead of analysing female-authored works, they started studying how female characters were represented in the works of male writers. (Tolan, 2006). In this field the Anglo-American critics focus on how realistic the portrayals of female characters are (Eagleton, 1991), making it a reasonable approach in this study considering that the research questions reflect on stereotypes.

These second-wave feminists who began the fashion of viewing literature from a feminist perspective, revolutionized the field of literary criticism by conveying a suspicious mind towards established ideas. They focused on how literature could be used to maintain or create belief systems. As already stated, until this period the recognized canon of so-called *great works* was mainly consisting of male-authors and even though basically all of culture had been mainly male-centred until this point in time, it was still considered gender-neutral, as no one had really questioned this. Hence, there was neither any questions about how fairly literature was judged being equally representative for both men and women. It was simply considered that if there were less women attaining high statuses in the literary word, it was because women did not write as much as men, and if they happened to write it was not just as good as the writing of men. The aim of the first feminist literary critics was to disprove this explanation and find another more believable cause for the underrepresentation of women within the field of literature. (Tolan, 2006).

The fact that there has been a lack of proper representation of women in the literary canon, both author-wise and character-wise, leads to the idea of establishing a

separate literary canon for women. Arguably it would make sense to balance things out by having both a male-centred canon and a female-centred one. However, Morris (1993) warns about the possible obstacles such a canon might have to face. Strictly speaking, if another literary canon — a so called women's canon — would be introduced and established as an alternative to the male-centred canon we now have, it would not occur without its own complications. Already referring to it as *women's* canon, would give it some form of a special case status, which might turn out problematic for its own good.

The thing with special case statuses within literature is that they will always be treated as *special*, as something differing from the norm. For a women's literary canon this could mean that it would only be viewed as *women's writing*, rather than just writing, and thus teaching about it might be restricted to special literary courses about women's writing or courses within women's studies. As a matter of fact, a great number of female writers actually oppose the idea of labelling their works as *female writing,* as it proposes that their writing cannot be seen as anything else than female. That kind of label would also suggest that works by male authors would be the norm. (Morris, 1993).

Another example of putting male and female authors in different categories can be found in Penguin Books' foreword to the 1994 edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1994), where they call Austen one of the greatest English *women* novelists, instead of just calling her one of the greatest English novelists, period.

Morris (1993) further argues that by including female-centred writing as part of, so called, mainstream courses in literature, women's literature would risk being subject to tokenism. Courses might be advertised as being modern for including women's writing, or they might include women's writing just because they feel that they have to. In conclusion Morris points out that there is a need to create a gender-free criteria in the study of literature.

A term worth mentioning is *gynocriticism,* a term coined by the second wave feminists. This term is relevant for this study, since gynocriticism is all about female authors and female characters, both of which are included in this thesis. Eagleton (1991) explains that the theories and methodologies used by gynocritics revolve around female experiences. Likewise, this study relates to that, by analysing what the female protagonists of TGOTT and GG go through.

According to Eagleton (1991) gynocritics try to find in the authors and characters they analyse a female identity, which is shown through actions that demonstrate the autonomy of the female characters. Both the author and the reader are also included in

the analysis in the sense that gynocritics compare reality, author and reality. This means that authors are portraying a truthful picture of reality in their works. The readers then relate this depiction of reality to their own lives. This is relevant for this study since the aim of the study is to find connections between literature and real life.

Moving on from a historical perspective to a more present one, the basic idea of a feminist approach in the study of literature is to consider two aspects of the reading process. The first one is about what is happening in the texts. The second one is taking a look into the readers themselves and what is going on in their heads while they read. (Mills, 1995). What exactly we view in the reader and the text and how we view them depends then again what feminist literary theory we are basing our analysis on, depending for instance on whether we follow the Anglo-American approach or the French approach.

The main concerns of Anglo-American feminism involve the material, ideological and institutional structures of women's oppression, while French feminism tries to understand women's oppression by relying on earlier established theories of the unconscious, language and materialism (Rich, 2016). As mentioned in the previous section, we can also point out the different terms used about the two ways of thought. One uses the term *criticism*, while the other uses the word *theory*. This reflects the main differences in the two theories.

Anglo-American criticism can be seen as more practically-oriented, compared to the more theoretical approach of French Feminism, as it tends to focus on literary works about women's experiences. These works are usually also written by women. It is also about what female readers might learn from these texts. French feminist theory then again is more about how language is used in the literary works. For instance, keeping in mind the fact that there are experiences that only women can go through, such as giving childbirth, which would mean that only women are capable of accurately describing these experiences, giving women the opportunity to use a language of their own. (Elias, 2011).

However, in contrast to this, Stevensson (cited in Morris, 1993) argues that a talented writer should have an imagination capable of transcending gender-based imagination and be more bisexual, or even trans-sexual. In other words, women should not need their own special female language to successfully portray experiences of women. This is important to keep in mind, because more often than not do we tend to see written language merely as a device for our ideas, when in fact sometimes written language, or language in general for that matter, can actually be shaping our ideas. (Mills, 1995).

Finally, it is also noteworthy to mention the fact that while we discuss different feminist theories, some feminists oppose the use of the word *theory* itself when talking about this field of study, due to the fact that historically speaking theory in the realm of academics has often been something laid out by men. As an alternative it has been suggested that we should instead view feminism as cultural politics. (Selden & Widdowson, 1993).

2.3 Gender Roles in Literature

The focus of this study is on gender and how it is viewed in the context of certain literary works, but before talking about gender and gender roles in literature, it is worth clarifying what is meant by gender. The idea of *gender roles* and *gender identity*, or at least as terms, are relatively new. Even though the word *gender* itself has been around for a long time, with earliest uses being found in texts from at least as early as Chaucer's era, the word in contexts such as gender role and gender identity, has not been used until the second world war (Glover & Kaplan, 2000).

Traditionally gender has been considered to mirror the biological sex we are born to. However, it is not that simple. Culler (1997) refers to Butler's *Gender Trouble* when pointing to the idea of gender not being a certain status one is born to, but rather something performative, as it should not be determined by what one is, but what one does. In other words, one's gender is the product of one's actions.

Since what is expected of people based on their gender is constructed by our society and for a greater part of history gender roles have been an accepted fact, people tend to ignore that there is really no evidence to justify stereotypes about our sexes. The fact is that most of the differences that can be noticed in today's society are actually just results of the stereotypes and gender roles, rather than the other way around. (Basow, 1992).

The view that gender, and the roles assigned to a certain gender, are constructed is a major theme within feminist theories. One aim of feminist theory is to clarify the fact, and also change the fact, that views on how a woman and how a man should be are results of social systems. (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). In feminist analysis of literature this means that critics try to both highlight and change how gender is represented in literary works. This is not only meant to serve women, but also men, considering that many literary representations are neither in the interest of women or men. (Mills, 1995). To take it even further we can also point out that feminist criticism has not only raised questions about

gender in literature, but also related it to subjects of, for instance, race and class (Wolfrey, 2002).

With there being so many different representations of men and women in literature, some of them being negative and others more positive, it can certainly become difficult to tell which representations are acceptable. Especially when keeping in mind that the quantity of men and women represented in literature has historically been unbalanced. This is further complicated by the idea that gender is determined by our actions (Butler, 1990), meaning that it is difficult to say who is represented by what in literature. As readers tend to associate themselves with some characters in literature we can raise the question whether association has to represent the gender of the reader.

Minogue (1990) asks the same question as she wonders if women always associate themselves with female characters, and likewise if men always associate themselves with male characters. She warns us that a danger of feminist criticism is that this exact categorization might take place. The danger here being that if women always associate themselves with female characters, the female readers might ignore what kind of woman the character is. The question this raises is if female readers always should associate with the woman in a story, just because she is a woman, rather than considering her other characteristics as well?

Both *the Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl* are possibly conforming to this, by creating characters women readers associate themselves with, regardless of their characteristics. For instance, Rachel, the protagonist of TGOTT, is an alcoholic and unreliable, and Amy, the protagonist of GG, is viewed by some (see for instance, Osborne, 2017) as a "psycho bitch". Some would even go as far as to call GG a misogynistic work (Grossman, 2014).

It would not be unexpected if the reality would actually be that female readers always associate themselves with the female characters in literature, regardless of what type of women they are, since even women who can be classified as having some great characteristics or being successful in some manner tend to have a hard time to be recognized for their worth. For instance, Elias (2011) points out that successful women are always judged by people in power positions. The consensus is often that the success acquired by women is pure luck, in opposite of it actually being an accomplishment worthy of celebration.

It is common that the balance in interaction between male and female characters is uneven. Women seem to have a tendency to have a somewhat unfulfilled, or even

hopeless, part in relationships with men. It tends to be the women who will struggle with their parts in the interaction, rather than, for instance, getting a chance to show some self-determination. For instance, marriage has traditionally been mainly protecting aims of men (Shaw, 2010). Both *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl* show cases of this imbalance in relationships, as women in both novels seem many times to be at the mercy of their husbands' intentions.

Some studies about religious narratives (Shaw, 2010) show for instance how women have only accomplished individual freedom by entirely avoiding attachment to men. Likewise, the women in both TGOTT and GG seem to only be able to follow their own choices when they are not bound to any male character.

2.4 Summary

This chapter began with a brief overview of the history of feminism. The history of feminism is important for understanding the different theories that have emerged. However, presenting the various phases of the feminist movement conveys another important aspect in the context of this thesis, as the waves of feminism will be revisited in the analysis of the novels.

As stated earlier in this chapter, feminist theory cannot be discussed about as merely one single theory. Instead we should recognize the various kinds of feminisms and theories revolving around them. Also, as Gambaudo (2016) states the different theories should rather be seen as inspiring each other rather than opposing. These principles will also be applied in the analysis of this thesis. I will not simply look at the material through one type of lens, but I will apply different theories in my analysis of the novels. Theories that will be present in my analysis include, gynocriticism, Anglo-American feminist criticism and French feminist theory.

However, as Anglo-American criticism is considered the more practical approach of the two main schools of feminist literary theory, I will use it as a starting point for my analysis. This is mainly because it tends to focus on literary works about women's experiences (Elias, 2011), which describes both TGOTT and GG, since they are mainly told from the perspective of women. In addition, the works analysed within Anglo-American criticism are usually written by women, which also applies to both of the chosen novels.

Even though I have chosen to combine different theories, they still have something in common, which is that they focus on the fact that there are issues with gender equality.

This is of course the core idea of feminism in general, but in feminist analysis of literature this means that critics try to point out how gender is depicted in a text, which is exactly the purpose of this thesis as well. Literary analysists should then further try to use the findings in attempt to change gender misrepresentations in literature. This is not only in support of women, but also men, since literary representations of both tend to be limited in a negative manner. (Mills, 1995).

This could be argued to be complicated by the idea that gender is determined by our actions (Butler, 1990), meaning that it is difficult to say who is represented by what in literature. As readers tend to associate themselves with some characters in literature we can raise the question whether association must represent the gender of the reader. This question is especially relevant in the case of TGOTT and GG, since there are many similarities among characters of the same gender in these novels, making representations of one's own gender limited. It would thus make sense to find characters to associate with based on their characteristics, rather than start by finding a character of representing a specific gender.

However, it does not matter which characters in literary works readers associate themselves with, if the stereotypes are still noticed in the real world, which they will be if literature keeps enabling the stereotypes of society. The mention of society is important, because this thesis aims to compare gender roles in literature with reality. That is also why the theoretical framework of this thesis includes an overview of the history of feminism. Feminism and its different phases will be an important part of the discussion later in the thesis.

As a conclusion to this chapter it is important to keep in mind that even though this study focuses on works written by women, feminist theory in general is not bound to this realm but should focus on representations of gender in literature by both women and men (Wolfreys, Robbins & Womack, 2002).

3. Methods and Materials

In this chapter I will present the methods and materials, including an overview of the novels and the characters, used in my study. I will discuss the design of my study and the process of choosing my materials and collecting the data from them. The chapter will also include a description of the steps I have taken in my analysis of the material, as well as an overview of how to take a feminist approach in a literary analysis.

3.1 The novels

While many crime novels tend to be about *men* trying to solve a murder mystery surrounding a dead woman, *The Girl on The Train* is about a *woman* who takes the matter into her own hands. In addition to this there were some occurrences of other things that I found to differ from the norm. These were things that, even though seeming to be progressive, put female characters in a bad light. For instance, the main character is a woman, which is good news from a feminist point of view, but she is also an unemployed alcoholic, which, besides being a negative characteristic, is a characteristic usually assigned to a male character. So, I wanted to study this book because it seemed to be a feminist work, but still somehow managed to show men in a brighter light than women.

As recommended by some (Frantti, 2014) a master's thesis should not include too much material and in the case of a literary analysis even three books might be too much to include in a study of this scope. Thus, as I wanted to analyse more than just one book, as it would offer a more varying analysis, I still chose to limit my material to two books.

The novels I have chosen to analyse in my study are Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* and Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train.* The decision to include The Girl on The Train was an obvious one, since it was while reading this specific novel that I came to the conclusion that I wanted to do a feminist literary analysis for my master's thesis. The reason was that I noticed some interesting feminist aspects in the story of this novel.

The choice of including Gone Girl in my thesis came later. It was, however, a result of deciding to analyse The Girl on The Train, since after having decided to write my thesis about The Girl on The Train and trying to find different articles and reviews about it, many seemed to make comparisons between these two novels. So, I started to look into this and ended up including Gone Girl in addition to The Girl on The Train.

I find these two novels to be convenient choices also in the sense that they are both quite modern novels and they have some easily noticeable similarities, which make

them interesting for comparing to each other. For instance, they both are telling the story of a mystery surrounding a missing woman and both make use of an unreliable narrator. Also, they have both been published in the first half of the 2010's, with GG being published in 2012 and TGOTT in 2015. Most importantly, however, they both include both female and male characters, which makes it possible to analyse gender roles in them. It is important to study gender roles in modern novels in order to see how far our society has come in matters of gender equality.

The novels share a similarity also in the sense that the main characters of both novels seem to mirror their authors in some way. For instance, the male protagonist of Gone Girl, Nick, has a past as a writer, which comprises a big part of his identity. The same goes to his female counterpart in the novel, Amy, and they both mention it quite a lot throughout the novel. For instance: "I used to be a writer. I was a writer who wrote about TV and movies and Books." (Gone Girl, p. 23). And: "Now I like a writer party, I like writers, I am the child of writers, I am a writer. "(Gone Girl, p. 30).

Now, the main character of TGOTT is not a writer, but she does still mirror the author in a sense. Rachel is unemployed and has to get support from her mother. Likewise, while writing the novel, Hawkins had financial difficulties and had to get financial aid from her father (Han, 2016). This phenomenon can also be found in GG, even though the author herself did not go through the same kind of financial difficulty, both her main character Nick and his sister Margo have had to deal with being without a job which result in them both moving back to their hometown.

> "My twin sister was on the other end. Margo had moved back home after her own New York Layoff a year before - The girl is one step ahead of me in everything, even shitty luck." (Flynn, 2012, p. 24).

Finally, there is an obvious similarity between the novels, which is the fact that the titles of both novels include the word *Girl*. This is something I am going to look deeper into in my analysis of the novels, since the choice of using the word girl instead of woman might mean something. For instance, Eszter (2015) writes that being called girl instead of woman has traditionally meant that one is passive, vulnerable and in the need of protection. This raises the question if the characters in GG and TGOTT are also like this, or are they depicted in some other way, which is what I will try to find out.

3.1.1 *The Girl on The Train* by Paula Hawkins

TGOTT is told from the perspective of three female point of view characters. The reader is introduced to the story from the perspective of Rachel. Rachel is an unemployed alcoholic who commutes to London everyday, even though she does not have a workplace to go to. She keeps on commuting in order to cover up that she has been fired. She lives with a roommate who does not approve of her alcoholism and believes that Rachel is trying to get her life back on track. Rachel's life consists of a web of lies, starting with her having to lie about her alcoholism and unemployment.

On her daily commutes Rachel likes to drink Gin and Tonic and observe people through the train window. She likes to especially look at her old neighbourhood, from the time she was married to Tom. Tom still lives in the house, but with his new wife, Anna, who also is one of the other point of view characters, and their daughter. One of the houses near her and Tom's house lives a couple Rachel starts paying attention to. In her mind this is the perfect couple. In reality this couple is Megan, the third point of view character, and her husband Scott. They are far from the perfect couple Rachel views them as. Megan is the babysitter of Tom's and Anna's baby. In addition to this she also has a secret affair with Tom.

One day on her commutes Rachel notices that Megan is kissing another man. A short time later Megan goes missing, making Rachel suspect that the man she saw kissing her has something to do with it. Rachel wants to solve the mystery and gets involved in a lot of things she should have stayed away from. For instance, the police start questioning her since she starts appearing at suspicious places.

Even Anna begins to wonder what Rachel is up to, although she suspects that Rachel is jealous of her and Tom's happy life and tries to ruin it in order to win back Tom. Soon Anna notices that something is not quite right about Tom. Her suspicions lead to her following similar patterns as Rachel has done, for instance she also starts drinking more often.

In the end both Rachel and Anna find out that Tom was having an affair with Megan and she got pregnant, which Tom did not approve of. This led to Tom killing Megan. When facing Tom, Rachel and Anna end up killing him in self-defence.

3.1.2 *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn

GG is told from the perspective of its two main characters, Amy and Nick, with their own point of view chapters. The book is divided into two parts. In the first part Nick's chapters are telling what is currently going on in the story, while Amy's chapters are told through her diary, presenting what has happened before the beginning of the book. In the second half of the book both characters' chapters are told in present time.

The story begins when Nick gets home one day and finds signs of a struggle; broken furniture, blood… This leads to the conclusion that something has happened to Amy. Nick tries to help the police find out what happened to Amy. They find several clues. These clues are actually left by Amy herself, as it turns out that she has staged her own kidnapping and possible murder. She has made up a scheme to avenge Nick for being a bad husband.

This leads to Nick having to struggle to prove himself innocent, which is hard since Amy has planned everything to point that Nick wanted to murder his wife. In the end, Nick finds out what Amy has done and learns to use it to his advantage. He succeeds in clearing his name but is manipulated by Amy to stay together with her, even though she framed him for murder.

3.2 The Characters

In order to better understand the material and the results of this study it is well motivated to give a brief overview of the characters in the novels. They are not presented in any particular order when it comes to specific characters, but the main characters of TGOTT are presented before the protagonists of GG, because TGOTT was the first novel chosen for this study. Also, the protagonists are presented before the alleged antagonists, i.e. the female characters are presented first.

Whether or not the female characters are interpreted as the protagonists and the male characters as the antagonists, the female characters are still the ones deserving to be looked at first, since they are central to both narratives.

By giving an overview of the main characters a summary of the main plot points will also be presented. This will help understand the context of the characters and their actions, possibly making it easier to understand how they are presented in the results section of the study.

3.2.1 Rachel

Rachel is the first character encountered in TGOTT. She is also the one the reader spends most time with, so she could be argued to be the main character of the novel. This argument makes also sense as she *is* the *girl on the train,* referred to in the title of the book. The title gets its name from the fact that Rachel rides the commuter train to and from London every day. On her train rides she puts a lot of focus on what she sees through the window along the way. One of the things she especially likes to observe is a house inhabited by a couple. This couple is Megan, one of the other point of view characters, and her husband.

The main events of TGOTT begins to take place when Rachel one day notices that Megan is kissing another man. Soon after this Rachel reads in a newspaper that Megan has been announced missing. All this makes Rachel try to take action as she has her own theories of what might have happened.

The problem here is that Rachel is a very unreliable narrator. For instance, the reason she is on the train every day is not that she is commuting to her work place, but she has actually gotten fired and just tries to make her roommate think that she still has her job. So here we have a first example of her lies, making it difficult to know when to believe her.

Furthermore, not only is she unemployed and trying to hide it from the people in her life, but she is also an alcoholic. It turns out that she always drinks on the train, making it difficult to know what really happens on the train rides, compared to what actually happens. It is revealed that she for instance can get angry and even violent when she is drunk, and often these occasions are followed by a blackout the next day when she cannot remember anything of what happened the previous night. This is what makes her narrative interesting as the reader has to try to separate drunk Rachel and sober Rachel and try to pick out what is really going on. This is made more difficult by the fact that Rachel spends most of her time drinking, so it is hard to differentiate when she is sober.

Other aspects that complicate this character are things from her past. She used to be married to Tom, who now is married to Anna, one of the other point-of-view characters. Rachel's and Tom's marriage ended due to a couple of factors. First of all, they were trying to have children, but apparently Rachel was not able to get pregnant. This led to her drinking, which further complicated their marriage.

The present moment in the book shows Rachel being obsessed with Tom and when she is drunk, she often tries to call him or then even goes to visit Tom's and Anna's house. Tom and Anna have a child, and on one of her visits to their house it seems almost like she attempts to take their child. Tom is very protective of his new family and often threatens to call the police if Rachel tries to contact him and his family.

Rachel has really no control of her obsession. This is a result of a number of things. First of all, she is unemployed, so she has too much time on her hands. Secondly, she spends most of her time drinking, making her more prone to do things like harassing her ex-husband. She is also very jealous of Anna. Anna got the man Rachel wanted to spend her life with, and not only that, but Anna is actually capable of getting a child with Tom, which is something Rachel herself was not capable of. So, Rachel is a wreck at the start of the book. Her entire world has fallen apart, and she is just trying to find some meaning in her miserable life. Her getting involved in the mystery of the disappearance of Megan is just what she needs to find a purpose

3.2.2 Anna

Anna is at first glance maybe the only stable one of the three point of view characters in TGOTT. Rachel has her delusions and drinking problems, and Megan lives a double life, but Anna seems to be just another housewife. This is not too far from reality either. Anna seems to live her dream life. She has a child and a loving husband, whom she is very proud of. It does not either disturb her how she got her husband. The fact is that she was actually Tom's mistress when he was still married to Rachel. This actually only makes her more excited of her situation. "Being the other woman is a huge turn-on." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 235). she says at one point in the novel. She enjoys that Rachel has to suffer for her stealing Tom from her.

This is what shows the reader that Anna is more than meets the eye. She is not just an ordinary housewife. She is comfortable doing what it takes to get what she wants, even if it is lying and betraying other women. She is also very self-concerned, which of course is shown by how she enjoys that she stole another woman's husband, but this is further fleshed out when she notices that Tom has been lying to her and she begins to suspect that he is cheating on her. She reacts to this by being concerned of the fact that it is *her* he is lying to, not the general fact that he is lying.

Anna has however one obstacle, which is Tom, or possibly men in general. She wants to protect her family and her own interest, and this usually involves keeping the

wrong women out of her life. She never even thinks of the possibility that a man could be causing her problems. For instance, when she finds out that Tom is cheating on her with Megan, she reacts to this by concluding that it was not Rachel that she should have been worried about, but Megan, rather than thinking that Tom is the one she should be mad with. She herself even states that it was the wrong *woman* she has been hating, not the wrong *person,* leaving out the possibility of a man causing her any trouble:

"I've been hating the wrong woman, and yet knowing this doesn't make me dislike Rachel any less" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 280).

Anna's, so called, redemption arch begins when she realises that she is starting to act and feel more like Rachel. She realises that like Rachel was, she also has become the wife Tom is cheating on. Also like in Rachel's case Anna is now turning into alcohol and she gets paranoid and starts reading through Tom's email and text messages. It is this that makes her take Rachel's side in the end and realize the faults of Tom; not that she hates Tom for his actions, like the cheating part, but the fact that he made her feel like Rachel, the disgusting woman she despises.

In the end Anna does not really change that much throughout the story. She is still doing everything for her advantage. But one change is that for once she helps another woman and recognize the faults of a man.

3.2.3 Megan

The third point of view character of TGOTT is Megan. Megan is an interesting character as all her point of view chapters take place before the present-day events of the book. It is also interesting that she is missing for most part of the novel. The reader gets to read chapters from her perspective but for the majority of pages the reader does not know where she is.

She is central to the narrative as she is the woman who goes missing, which leads to everything else that takes place, sparking the actions of all the other characters. Rachel starts snooping around trying to find out what really happened, Tom begins acting strange since he has to hide his part in her disappearance, Anna gets confused of Tom's behaviour, leading to her own investigation of what is going on.

At first glance Megan appears to be this perfect woman. Rachel observes Megan almost daily on her commute rides and she does not of course personally know Megan, but in her head, she creates this illusion of what Megan probably is like. In Rachel's mind Megan lives the perfect married life with her husband, Scott, and she is probably the

perfect wife as well. This is a result of the view that both Rachel and Anna share, that the perfect life has to involve marriage.

However, in this sense Megan differs a lot from the other two women. Anna and Rachel seemingly adore men and are too blinded by their adoration to be able to notice the faults of men. Megan however has learned to use men for her own purposes and knows how to control them to some extent.

Megan is to Scott a bit what Tom is to Rachel and Anna. Megan constantly cheats on Scott while Scott keeps on adoring her. Scott is also the one in their relationship who wants children, while Megan does not really want any children. It later turns out that Megan actually had a child in a previous relationship, but the child died because she was not able to take proper care of her baby. Megan also had a brother who died when she was younger. All these misfortunes are probably what makes her unable to live a stable life. In fact, due to her misery she goes to therapy, but this also only results in an affair with her therapist.

Megan is probably the most complicated character in the novel, and in the end it is her complications that make the other women more active agents, as she dares to be the first one to stand up to Tom, not accepting his behaviour, which leads to her own demise, but results in everything the other women have to go through in order to finally themselves defy Tom.

3.2.4 Tom

When Tom is first introduced in the novel he seems to just be a minor character that Rachel happens to share a past with. However later it turns out that he is connected to all the point of view characters; He is the ex-husband of Rachel, the current husband of Anna and the lover of Megan.

Both by Rachel and Anna, Tom is viewed as a perfect man. They view him as everything they could wish for in a husband. Rachel does not blame him for their divorce but only sees her faults in what lead to it. Even though Tom cheated on Rachel, she would be ready to take him back. Also, Anna lets him get away with most things, and when something seems wrong she blames other women.

This is what Tom is good at, manipulating women. He gets to do what he wants because Rachel and Anna fall for his lies. He would not even know how to act if a woman would not follow his plans. Megan is the first one to stand up against him, which leads to

her death, because he is not used to a situation like that and in his desperation, he kills her.

Tom's manipulation is also what makes Rachel the desperate woman she is. It turns out later in the book that all her alleged drunk violence and bursts of anger during their marriage were only made up by him. When she woke up with her blackouts he would tell her lies about how awful she had been.

Tom is a terrible person and the villain of the book, but he gets away with everything because the women are too busy distrusting each other, not accepting the fact that men are not always reliable. Only when they start trusting each other are they able to figure out what Tom really is.

3.2.5 Amy

Amy is one of the two point of view characters of GG. Her chapters could be divided into two categories; fake and real. In the middle of the novel the reader is presented with a plot twist; it turns out that everything Amy has told in the first half of the book has been a lie.

The premise of the novel is that Amy goes missing in the beginning. The police and the reader are left with clues written in her diary. This diary is presented to the reader in the form of her point of view chapters. They are written to make the reader, and the police, think that she was afraid of her husband and thus suspect Nick of murdering her. However, the plot twist is that she made up everything in the diary and wanted to frame her husband, because she was unsatisfied with her marriage to him.

The first view of Amy is that she is this very nice girl, or "cool girl", which is a term used repeatedly in the novel. Through her diary she is presented as the perfect woman for Nick; She is funny, smart and good looking. She is also shown to be ready to do anything for her man, no matter his faults. Basically, Amy is depicted as everything you could ask for in a woman. This view of her is however entirely changed after the plot twist is revealed. Turns out that she is mentally unstable, manipulative and always scheming to get what she wants.

Much of Amy's complex identity can be traced back to her upbringing. She was an only child of two psychologists. Not only was she an only child, but she was an only child in a rich family. Thus, she is used to being spoiled by her parents. This is further complicated by the fact that her parents are famous authors, which inspired, or pushed, her to attempt becoming one herself.

It is important to know what books her parents wrote, because they wrote a book series called *Amazing Amy,* based obviously on their daughter. However, this works in disadvantage for Amy, because she constantly compares herself to her fictional counterpart. Amy notices how Amazing Amy always succeeds in everything, while she herself might fail in things. She has to constantly try to prove herself and her parents that she is as good as fictional perfect version of herself.

Amazing Amy is portrayed as this girl that every woman wants to be like, making the real life Amy constantly reaching for success in order to make other women jealous. This is also what leads to problems in her marriage to Nick. She explains that she has not been herself with Nick, but that she rather created this perfect version of herself for Nick. Acting like the wife she thinks he wants. She's making herself the "cool girl", that she thinks that every man wants. Amy is somewhat obsessed with the concept of cool girl, or she thinks that men are obsessed with the cool girl, but in fact she herself cannot shake the idea of cool girl. She explains cool girl as the good looking, smart and funny woman who is more than willing to take part in typical men's activities, like drinking beer and watching football, in contrast to being the stereotypical nagging wife.

What puts everything in motion that leads to the events of the novel is when Amy drops the act of cool girl and tries to just be herself. This is when their marriage starts to fail. Amy does not see that it could be partially her fault for deceiving Nick for all those years, but rather blames Nick for not understanding who she really is, which leads to her justifying that Nick needs to be punished. And in her mind a mere divorce would not be enough of a solution but framing her husband for murder is perfectly reasonable.

Amy and Rachel share a similarity, which is that they both are unreliable narrators. This is also what makes Amy even more complex than all the other reasons already explained. Since everything she tells about herself in the first half of the book is more or less a lie, it is difficult to know what to believe for the rest of the book.

3.2.6 Nick

The last character presented here is Nick, the husband of Amy in GG. Though he might not be as complicated as his wife, who for instance tries to frame him for murder and is undeniably mentally unstable, he certainly has his complexities as well.

First of all, he is also an unreliable narrator, like Amy, and Rachel from TGOTT for that matter. The reader learns this about him quite early on in the novel, though still making the reader feel betrayed by him. He leaves out mentioning his real whereabouts

from when Amy disappeared, and it takes a while for him to tell about his secret lover. It is difficult to believe him because more and more evidence against him keeps appearing.

Even though the reader finally understands that Nick is innocent, when encountered with the plot twists, it still makes it difficult to be entirely sure of what is going on since both characters show that they cannot be fully trusted. Much like in Amy's case, Nicks behaviour can somewhat be explained by his past. He also had a difficult relationship with his parents. His father was abusive and had high expectations for his son. This has resulted in Nick trying to please everyone around him. His mother was the opposite and tried to give Nick everything he wanted. All this has probably resulted in the mixed feelings he has about his hometown.

Nick goes through a roller coaster of feelings throughout the story. He falls in love with this "cool girl", who is everything he could wish for, who makes him feel important. But then as Amy gets tired of playing the part of cool girl, Nick suddenly realises that Amy changes and becomes a totally different woman, making him want to divorce her. When he investigates what has happened to Amy he learns from her fake clues that she really loved him, which makes him love her a bit more again, but then he finds out that it was all just a fraud and he feels hatred against her. In the end they decide to stay together, but with very mixed emotions and everyone around them, including the reader, feel very sceptical about how it will work.

3.3 Research questions

The aim of my study is to find out to what extent traditional gender roles manifest themselves in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl.* To support me in reaching the aim of my study I have constructed the following research questions:

1. How are men viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*
2. How are women viewed in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl?*

These questions have two sides to them. With the word *viewed* I mean both how the characters in the novels view each other and how they are presented to the reader. This includes what actions and thoughts are shown.

Through these questions I will try to find out what traits of female powerlessness and male dominance can be noticed in the two novels, because these are stereotypical characteristics found in literature that also represent issues with gender stereotypes. Thus I will try to find out to what extent gender stereotypes manifest themselves in the two novels. As these questions are quite wide I have chosen to also consider the following questions by Elias (2011) in order to narrow down my questions:

- Whose point of view?
- If it's a woman's, is it empowering or denigrating?
- Does the text represent the woman as a passive victim or an active agent?
- What levels of objectification does a woman undergo in the text?
- Is she seen as merchandise, a currency that enables the preservation of status quo?
- On what ground can we identify the woman as a potential source of social and intellectual revolution?
- What is different from the norm?

Some feminist theories focus on only female characters in literature, but like Mills (1995) points out that how gender is represented in literature can hurt societal views of both female and male. That is why I also feel that it is important to include both in my analysis. This will give a broader view of how gender is viewed in the novels, which will hopefully help giving an overview of gender issues in literature.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

I chose to take a phenomenographic approach in my analysis. Larsson and Holmström (2007) explain that the first step in the process of a phenomenographic analysis is to read through the entire material you have. After this you will go through it again, but this time you make notes of the parts that relate to the research questions. The important part is to mark these parts, but you should also make preliminary descriptions of the findings. This step is followed by a categorization of the descriptions. This is done by looking at the similarities and differences.

Likewise, I began my research with a close reading of the novels chosen as my material. I took constantly notes about anything that seemed of interest for my study. After this I started looking for patterns in my notes, such as similarities and repetitions. When I had gathered an overview of patterns found in my material I started asking

questions about the patterns. Mostly why and how, since these questions work as a great aid in trying to explain phenomena. I also kept in mind my research questions, as well as the supporting questions mentioned earlier, when trying to create categories out of the patterns I noticed.

## 3.5 A feminist approach in analysing literature

As mentioned in the theoretical framework part of this thesis, it is difficult to talk about a single feminist theory, likewise I found it difficult to just focus on one specific theory in my analysis. First, I was convinced that I would approach my material from an Anglo-American feminist critic point of view, by focusing on the practical side of the narratives, as opposed to the theoretical side. Which could be argued that it was also what I did as I looked at what the male and female characters in the novels do and think. However, as also mentioned in the chapter about feminist theories, the theories should not be seen as opposing forces but rather as supporting each other and encouraging to discussion. Thus, I decided to not approach my material through a specific theory but rather use a variety of theoretical guidelines to get the most out of my analysis.

When reading and analysing my material I followed some guidelines suggested for reading literature through a feminist point of view. For instance, Elias (2011) discusses some reading protocols to follow when taking a feminist approach in one's reading process. She mentions some questions worth keeping in mind. She recommends for instance to ask the following questions: Whose point of view is expressed in the text, and if it's a woman's, is it empowering or denigrating? Does the text represent the woman as a passive victim or an active agent? What levels of objectification does a woman undergo in the text? Is she seen as merchandise, a currency that enables the preservation of status quo? On what ground can we identify the woman as a potential source of social and intellectual revolution? What is different from the norm? These are questions that I used as support when reading the novels and trying to answer my research questions.

The questions above made the basis for the creation of the categories used in the analysis. However, when analysing the different categories other theoretical approaches were included as well. In fact, instead of only focusing on theories I also compared the novels to the historical background of feminism. This helped create a better understanding and an interesting interpretation of the novels.

4. Results

The results of this study are based on data gathered from reading the two novels chosen for this research. Out of this data six different categories have been created, based on patterns found in the data, to describe the findings about how men and women are viewed in *The Girl on The Train* and *Gone Girl.*
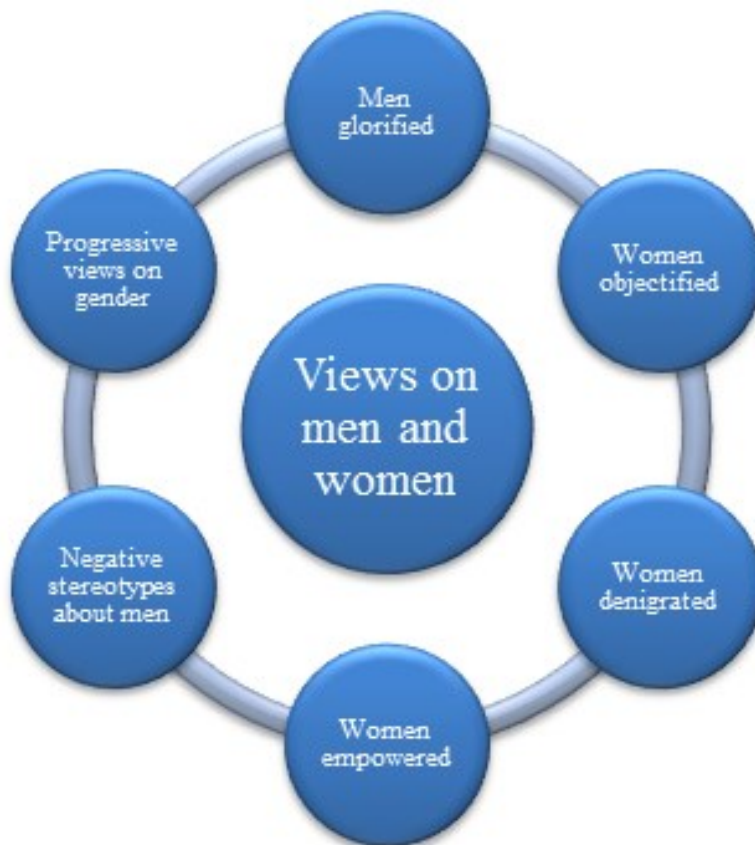
The categories I have created are: *1. Men glorified, 2 Women objectified, 3. Women denigrated, 4. Women empowered, 5. Negative stereotypes about men* and *6. Progressive views on gender.* The creation of these specific categories was mostly based on Elias´ (2011) questions about what to look for in a feminist literary analysis.

Category 1: Glorification of men

The first category strongly relates to the first points I noticed while reading TGOTT, that men are highly glorified. This category was for most part gathered from TGOTT, in which it was pretty much noticeable throughout the entire book. All three point-of-view characters, all of whom happen to be women as well, seem to view the men around them as something of perfect beings. This is especially noticed from Rachel's, the main protagonist's, point of view. First of all, she clearly still has strong feelings for her ex-husband, Tom, while Tom himself is married to Anna, one of the other point-of-view characters. Rachel does not seem to blame Tom for leaving her for another woman, but rather blames herself and Anna. Mostly Anna of course. Tom cheated on Rachel with Anna, but Rachel does not see it as if he did anything wrong, but instead blames Anna for it all.

Secondly, Tom is not the only one Rachel allows to get away with pretty much anything. While commuting to work every day she passes a house where she often sees a couple. This couple happens to consist of Megan, the third point-of-view character, and her husband, Scott. Also, in this case Rachel glorifies the man in her mind and imagines Scott as a perfect husband and when something seems to be wrong with the couple she is sure that Megan is to blame for it and feels sorry for the poor husband, even though she does not in reality know anything about this couple.

Rachel's idealization of men can also be noticed when she is questioned by the police. The detectives who question her are a woman and a man, and she does not trust the woman at all and prefers to talk to the male police.

Anna does not differ that much from Rachel when it comes to viewing men as perfect. She adores her husband, Tom, and does not believe that he could be capable of doing any mistakes. For instance, when it seems like he would be lying she just blames her imagination, thinking it is running wild.

Megan differs from the other two point-of-view characters in the sense that she on the other hand does not worship her husband in the same manner, as she for instance is having a lot of affairs outside her marriage. However, in these affairs she seems to get easily very clingy and in some cases she seems to even be obsessed with the men she sleeps with.

"Of course she misses him, just as I do. He is kind and strong, everything a husband should be." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 20).

Category 2: Objectification of women

In both novels there could be found instances where women were seen as tools or even property of men. There are many cases in the books where male characters seem to think that they can use, or treat, women as they want: "It was, pathetically, all I wanted right then: a woman to fix me a sandwich and not ask me any questions." (Flynn, p. 83)

Mostly it is about sex. For instance, in TGOTT Tom seems to switch between women as he desires and based on who he finds attractive at the time. The same kind of view that women should be evaluated based on their looks can also be found in TGOTT when Scott has had sex with Rachel:

"Detective Sergeant Riley told me,' he says. 'She was asking me about you. Whether I was in a *relationship* with you.' He laughs. 'A relationship with you! Jesus. I asked her, have you seen what my wife looked like? Standards haven't fallen that fast." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 247.)

It is not only a view that men have, but women are also aware of how they are treated: "He uses me for sex when he needs to." (Flynn, p. 256). And it is not only the fact that they are aware of how they are used and even accept it, but it goes as far as the female characters being glad of the part they play: "I've become a sounding board, and I'm glad of it. I'm glad to be of use to him" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 128).

In fact, in some instances it appears that female characters do not even recognize any worth in themselves, unless they are of any use for a man: "I'm not beautiful, and I can't have kids, so what does that make me? Worthless. "(Hawkins, 2015, p. 89). Almost all of the female characters try at least at some point to be what they think that the male characters want them to be. The only exception is Megan, though even this could be debatable.

Category 3: Denigration of women

Women are in many ways viewed in a negative manner in both novels. We have for instance the clinginess mentioned in the first category, which can be combined with the view that women are somehow helpless without men: "What is it with me, that I'm desperate to be alone when he's here, and when he's gone I can't bear it?" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 282).

There are other aspects as well. The clearest one is probably found in TGOTT, where we have Rachel who is an alcoholic: "I've barely slept. I drank a bottle and a half of wine in an attempt to get off to sleep…" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 250). Later in the novel Anna also turns to alcohol in her desperation:

> "I'm feeling really quite jolly, thanks to the wine and the tedious contents of Tom's computer. I've reassured myself I was just being silly. I go upstairs to brush my teeth - I don't want him to know that I've been at the wine again." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 263).

Women are also seen as somewhat simple beings without many ambitions. For instance Anna is completely satisfied with her life as long as she gets to be a wife (Hawkins, 2015, p. 66). The same thing can be said about both Rachel, from TGOTT, and Amy, from GG, who both share the end goal of wanting to be married with children.

Then there is the classic stereotype that women make a big fuss about nothing, which can for instance be noticed on p. 106 in GG (Flynn,): "It's a very female thing, isn't it to take one boys' night and snowball it into a marital infidelity that will destroy our marriage?" Here the character, Amy, is even self-aware of the how stereotypical her actions are.

In this category I decided to also include another pattern I noticed in the novels. The pattern I found is that the words *woman* and *girl* are often used in slightly different contexts. The term *woman* or *women* seems to often refer to female characters in a negative way, such as *ugly women* or women with some characteristic that does not appeal to the male characters.

Meanwhile the term *girl* or *girls* repeatedly reflects positive views on female characters. For instance, when a man likes the looks of a woman or thinks that the woman acts in the way he wants her to act. An example can be found on page 79 in GG (Flynn,), where Nick first refers to Amy as a girl when he is nostalgic about her good traits, "Over

just a few years, the old Amy, the girl of the big laugh and the easy ways…", but when he talks about her negative traits he switches the word girl to woman: "She was not the thing she became, the thing I feared most: an angry woman."

Other instance of *woman* used in a negative manner:

> "Amy was the first pretty girl I ever dated, really dated. The ugly woman spoke first.." (Flynn, p. 59)
> "He doesn't talk to me, he behaves as if the act of talking physically pains him and I am a vicious woman to ask it of him." (Flynn, p.125)
> " 'And fuck you very much,' the woman muttered." (Flynn, p. 165)
> "The woman was surprisingly ugly.." (Flynn, p. 59)

Meanwhile there seems to be no equivalent for men. When men are young they are boys and as grown-ups they are called men: "I can see what he looked like as a boy." (Flynn, p. 34).

Category 4: Empowering of women

In opposite to the negative views, such as denigration and objectification, women could also be found to be viewed in a more positive manner as well. Both of the books allowed for some empowerment of female characters. There are for instance parts were women take control over their own lives. In both books the main plot is actually about women taking action into their own hands, but there are also more subtle everyday situations where they take control over their lives. As an example, this part where Amy chooses herself what kind of men she wants to date:

> "I go on dates with men who are nice and good-looking and smart -   perfect-on-paper men who make me feel like I'm in a foreign land, trying to explain myself, trying to make myself known." (Flynn, 2012, p. 55).

There are also instances were women are the ones objectifying men: "It's Nick, laidback and calm, smart and fun and uncomplicated. Untortured, happy. Nice. Big penis." (Flynn, p. 66). There is even a real "girl power" monologue in GG:

"You got rid of your idiot cheat of a husband. Women would cheer you. You're not a scared little girl. You're a badass take-no-prisoners *woman*. Think about it. You know I'm right: The era of forgiveness is over. It's passé. Think of all the women - the politicians' wives, the actresses - every woman in public who's been cheated on, they don't stay with the cheat these days. It's not *stand by your man* anymore, it's *divorce the fucker*." (Flynn, 2012, p. 517).

There are many moments where Amy shows through action how she is able to do what she wants with men, for instance the entire plot of her framing Nick, or when she murders her ex-boyfriend. Also, TGOTT have moments of women showing their powers, like at the end when Rachel and Anna work together to defeat Tom.

Category 5: Negative stereotypes about men

This category certainly balances out the first category, *Glorification of men*. There were to be found instances where men were viewed in a less positive manner. This fifth category is based on what negative stereotypes about men could be found in the novels. Whereas the first category was more dominant in TGOTT, the negative stereotypes were more common in GG, but became later also noticeable in TGOTT. For instance, both novels share the stereotype of the husband being the one who cheats.

In the first part of GG there is a chapter when Nick and his father-in-law are driving around town trying to find clues about Amy. When they ask some people, they hear about these ill fates that women can end up with in wrong parts of the town.

"Because some of them, they gang-raped a girl there a month ago. I mean, you get a bunch of angry men together, and things aren't too good for a woman that comes across them." (Flynn, p. 137).

Likewise, when we are presented with the mysterious murder in TGOTT it is without a doubt assumed to be the deed of a man:

"So, who does that leave? It leaves the usual suspects: the husband, the lover. Scott, Kamal. Or some random man who snatched her from the street - a serial killer just starting out? Will she be the first of a series, a Wilma McCann, a

Pauline Reade?" (Hawkins, 2015, p. 244).

But it is not just these kinds of worst-case-scenarios that are mentioned in relation to male behaviour. We can also find instances of more mundane negative stereotypes about men, such as men are bad at taking care of themselves or that boys like to throw rocks at girls (E.g. Flynn, p. 140 & 353).

Category 6: Progressive views on gender
The last category is constructed of the findings presenting progressive views on gender in both novels. It is the last category, which reflects how the books seemed to be constructed; both novels start with unequal ground between genders but seem to build up towards a more balanced relationship between men and women. There are for instance examples of women challenging male believes about them being the ones in power: "I picture them at one of the pricier strip clubs, the posh ones that make men believe they are still designed to rule, that women are meant to serve them." (Flynn, p. 106).

Both novels included several instances where the word *woman* often bore a negative connotation and the word *girl* was used when a girl acted in a way the male characters liked or when she was seen as something fragile or helpless. This got some counterbalance when one of the police officers in GG pointed out that one should think about which terms are used: " 'Yes, just one girl, she's very - ' 'Don't say girl, don't ever say girl.' Bolt said." (Flynn, p. 291).

The novels start with the female characters having to just accept their part in relation to male characters. In both stories, women are shown as being victims of unfair relationships. It all changes of course, as it is one of the main premises in the stories, and the female characters finally dare to act in order to change the status quo. For instance, it is made clear that you do not have to stay in a relationship you are not happy with:

> "You got rid of your idiot cheat of a husband. Women would cheer you. You're not a scared little girl. You're a badass take-no-prisoners *woman*. Think about. You know I'm right: The era of forgiveness is over. It's passé. Think of all the women - the politicians' wives, the actresses - every woman in public who's been cheated on, they don't stay with the cheat these days. It's not *stand by your man* anymore, it's *divorce the fucker*." (Flynn, p. 517)

While at the beginning of TGOTT it was considered obvious that the murderer had to be a male, later in the book Rachel becomes open to the idea that it could of course also be a woman who committed the murder (even though she bases this idea on the fact that the victim was a weak woman who even a female could take down).

> "And who said, after all, that the killer had to be a man? She was a small woman, Megan Hipwell. Tiny, birdlike. It wouldn't take much force to take her down." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 244).

Throughout the novels there can also be found little sparks of female characters hoping to change their situations:

> "I just wanted him to *want* to leave her. To want me that much. I don't remember when I started believing that it could be more, that we should be more, that we were right for each other. But that moment I did, I could feel him start to pull away." (Hawkins, 2015, p. 290).

In this example Anna explains how she wanted to be more than just Tom's lover. In the following example Amy explains how she is aware of gender issues and has already for years been waiting for the relationship between men and women to change:

> "I waited patiently - years- for the pendulum to swing the other way, for men to start reading Jane Austen, learn how to knit, pretend to love cosmos, organize scrapbook parties, and make out with each other while we leer. And then we'd say, *Yeah, he's a Cool Guy.* But it never happened. Instead women across the nation colluded in our degradation! Pretty soon Cool Girl became the standard girl. Men believed she existed - she wasn't just a dreamgirl one in a million. Every girl was supposed to be this girl, and if you weren't, then there was something wrong with *you."* (Flynn, p. 302).

It is not only women who recognize the negativity of gender roles. In GG Nick addresses them as manipulative of male and female behaviour: "It was what her dad always did for her mom on their anniversary, and don't think I don't see the gender roles here, that I don't get the hint." (Flynn, p. 40).

5. Discussion

It is worth stating that feminist analyses have come a long way from focusing on the basic question of whether a literary work includes a woman, which Jacobus (1996) mentions as the most important question for feminist critics. In the two novels analysed in this study we do have women in the texts. In fact, the majority of the characters are female. Also we have surpassed the era Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) present in their study, which indicates that female characters often plays passive roles in literature, as the female characters in TGOTT and GG turn out to be very active agents.

The results of this study seem to further support several previous theories about gender roles. For instance, Minogue (1990) talks about the dangers of feminist criticism as it might lead to women always associating themselves with female characters in literature. In categories 1 and 3 we see for instance that the main characters of TGOTT, even though being women, are often viewing men as some kind of superiors, while they themselves seem to be desperate beings with many faults.

There is Rachel who is an unemployed alcoholic, stalking her ex-husband. Anna is the obeying housewife who despises other women. Megan sleeps with other women's husbands, has an affair with her therapist and fails to take care of her child. Amy is a scheming unbalanced woman, ready to even murder in order to obtain her goals.

The first impression here is that TGOTT and GG both are heavily women-centred novels that encourage female readers to associate themselves with the female characters, even though they are full of flaws, just because they are women. However, the reader has to be patient and stick with these characters through the entire novel, or novels, to see the true meaning of these characters.

The third category mentions the difference in the use of the words, *girl* and *woman.* This is a relevant observation, since it could affect the meaning of the titles of the novels. Both writers have chosen to include the word *girl* in the name of their novels. Obviously, the books are not stories about children, but grown-ups. *Gone Girl* is not a story about little Amy who has run away from her parents, and *The Girl on The Train* does not tell the story of how young Rachel is travelling by train on her own for the first time. There must be some other reason why the authors chose to use this precise wording.

There could be several possible explanations to this. For instance, as mentioned in a previous chapter, Eszter (2015) points out that being called girl instead of woman has traditionally meant that one is passive, vulnerable and in the need of protection. This

would explain how all the female characters in both TGOTT and GG seem to be so helpless at the starting point of the novels. This could give the titles the interpretation of representing how these women start off as weak but evolve into strong self-caring women.

This fits well into the narratives of both novels. Rachel begins her journey as a woman who only sees her value through how men value her, but in the end, she stops caring about the opinions of others and stands up for herself. The same can be applied to Anna who goes through a similar journey than Rachel. Megan's story arch is different from Rachel's and Anna's, but there can still be found some similarities and much like Rachel she also starts off miserable and end up challenging the status quo of her relationship to men. Amy goes probably through the most radical change from weak girl to strong woman, as she first gives the reader the impression of being a simple girl in love who does whatever her man wants to, but later she makes sure no one controls her life and is even ready to commit murder to get what she wants.

Although this interpretation fits accurately into the stories of the novels. The decision to use *girl* in the title could be the result of something else as well. It could be a way of pointing out what is wrong with societal views on gender. Maybe the titles are ironical, and by including this word in them readers are encouraged to notice how the word is used within the narratives and thus inspired to realize the issues surrounding it.

Another thing worth keeping in mind here is that while some see language as a way of presenting ideas, it could actually be the other way around, that we are enabling ideas presented by the existing language (Mills, 1995). Hence, it is important to think about how certain words are used. For instance, using *girl* instead of *woman* could cause people maintaining an idea of women as weak, while an intentional use of *woman* supports a more equal view on gender.

Even if *girl* would be accepted to be more than a specific period in a woman's life, it is still important to understand that how it is used is based on social constructions, meaning that how it is used can be changed (Eszter, 2015). Using words in a more positive manner, encourages changes in the general use of the word.

Even though the first impression from the novels is that women are viewed in a negative manner, categories 1 and 5 show negative sides of both sexes. In other words, the status quo of gender roles is balanced out later in the novels. Instead of just denigrating women, Flynn and Hawkins seemingly throw men under the same bus. Though we have to point out that these are not just negative things about men that the authors are making

up, but many of the negative aspects found are stereotypes present in various works of literature and television.

Mills (1995) argues that many of the representations of genders found in literature support neither real life men or real-life women. In fact, they often do the opposite as they might represent disagreeable views of both. This could lead then to readers believing in these views, which again could lead to just further strengthening gender stereotypes.

The results of my study support the view Mills (1995) explains, but it also raises the question that if the case really is that literary representations might confirm gender roles and support gender stereotypes, how far has our society really come in changing the status quo of gender roles? If these statements are correct, should we not then make more effort to write literature that does represent other views of gender? In the context of TGOTT and GG viewed from a feminist perspective we can either see that the authors are doing a bad job representing women in their novels, or that they are doing a great job showing readers the problems with gender roles.

Both Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) and Basow (1992) talk about gender roles being constructed by society. As writers are members of a society they have the opportunity, or the choice, to either strengthen gender roles or oppose them. It is of course not that simple. If we view this from a gynocritical point of view, the point of the text is, as e.g. Eagleton (1991) explains it, to describe the truth. This would mean that the purpose of the works of both Flynn and Hawkins is not to paint a picture of a perfect gender neutral society, but rather to show the harsh reality of what women have to stand against and thus raising awareness of gender-based issues among readers.

Both novels seem to portray quite well this harsh reality of the kind of oppression women have to face in their everyday lives. For instance, as Shaw (2010) points out, marriage has traditionally functioned to mainly mirror the interests of the man in the relationship. Likewise, in the TGOTT both Anna and Rachel just try to be dutiful wives, while the husband gets to do pretty much whatever he wants. This phenomenon is also present in the first half of GG where Amy paints the picture of herself as the dutiful wife.

Interestingly this reflects several of my categories, depending on how you look at it. It shows the glorification of men, but also some negative stereotypes, like how men are often expected to prioritise their own needs. This also fits into the second category, objectification of women, as in both novels the husbands seem to, at least at some point, treat their wives as their property, or something that is there just ready for their use when they need it. In TGOTT Tom cheats on both Rachel and Anna but still expects them to

kindly wait at home and play their part as wives when it suits him. In GG Nick is at one point depicted as expecting Amy to be ready for sex when he wants it, lending him money when he needs it and still leaving him alone.

The disturbing part about this is that in both novels the women seem to not only be aware of how they are objectified and treated by their husbands, but they also seem to accept it. It is like women just have to accept their part in relationships, without getting to demand more respect. Or of course they could do it, but as both novels try to point out, when a woman does not act in a way that is convenient for the man, he gets tired of her and wants to get rid of her. In TGOTT Tom leaves Rachel when she does not fulfil his needs anymore he cheats on Anna when she starts to bore him, and she ends the affair with Megan when she announces the unexpected pregnancy. In GG, Nick begins an affair and wishes for divorce when Amy's behaviour changes from the "cool girl" to a duller one. It is like the women cannot win. Either stick with the man in an unfair relationship, or have no relationship at all.

This again leads to a decision the women have to make. Do they want to accept their fate as good-behaving wives, with little power in their marriage? Or do they want to try their luck in stepping up for themselves? The thing is that there seems to be no good option really. For instance, Megan gets killed for stepping up, while both Anna and Rachel try to be dutiful wives but get switched for a more beautiful woman. The result of this is that Rachel and Anna get desperate and clingy and end up trying to find comfort in alcohol. In Amy's case when she tries to be herself, hoping Nick to accept her true self, he loses interest, and when she tries something else she drives him even further away.

It is this kind of denigration of women that is interesting in these novels. At first glance one could expect them to be novels about powerful women, but it does not take long for the reader to notice that these women are full of flaws. Not only does it show that characters do not have to be so black and white all the time, but it actually also shows some progressive views on gender, which is what the sixth and final category represents. Stereotypically it is always male characters who play the roles of alcoholics and unemployed persons with little meaning in life, but here we find these roles played by women. This would once again take us back to the point made by Minogue (1990). Is it okay for female readers to associate themselves with female protagonists who are like this? Does it not then only promote the negativity of gender roles?

This also further reflects on Butler's theory of performativity. Both female and male characters in TGOTT and GG are at some point depicted in a negative fashion,

which does not really encourage anyone to associate with these characters. There can be found many similarities among the female characters, and likewise among the male characters, suggesting that depending on the readers gender there is only one representation for everyone. The fact that this association likely is a negative one, supports the idea of associating oneself with characters with characteristics that represent oneself the best, rather than considering a character's gender when trying to relate to them.

As mentioned above, women are at times shown in a very negative manner in the novels, but also both novels end with women taking charge of their own destinies, as shown in category 4. However, in both novels this leads to the male characters suffering. Does this mean that the female characters are still depicted in a negative way, since their success comes as the cost of the male characters' happiness? Or, is it alright for male characters to sometimes feel the part the females have had to suffer for so long? Whether or not that, it also shows that women are capable of being more active agents.

Another interesting aspect of the empowerment of the women in the novels is that in GG Amy does indeed use her power, but is she in fact *empowered?* As mentioned earlier, she could be argued to be mentally unstable, which questions on what basis she is acting. She does reference a lot how gender norms should change, but is she a reliable advocate of a social movement, when she is so unstable? Possible her mental issues could be argued to be result of all the social injustices she copes with. She has struggled for so long to live according to certain norms that go against her real values and emotions, which makes it understandable that she ends up confused about what is right and wrong

This could be argued to mirror how society works. There are gender norms that people blindly follow, without questioning them, which makes it understandable that some people see it as controversial when someone starts talking about feminism and gender equality.

As previously stated, the female characters in the novels are in fact aware of how they are treated and that they are sacrificing their freedom to keep their husbands happy. All four female protagonists start their story arcs like this. But, much like the progression of the feminist movement itself, their narratives take a turn when they realize the existence of the issues.

This leads to two interesting interpretations of the six categories the study resulted in. The basic view I had before noticing these two other ways of looking at was that the six categories can be seen as representing equal parts of the story. However, this view is

a bit complicated. For instance, keeping in mind that we have unreliable narrators and do not really know what should be seen as correct representations of views on gender that the novels want to present. Can we say that GG wants to show that Nick is an awful husband, when it is something shown in Amy's fake journal?

Of course, the fact still remains that the six categories represent things noticed about views on male and female characters in the novels. But, we should also give room for another aspect to this, which is time. To be more precise, *when* in the narratives the categories are noticed. Most of the categories are more central to certain parts of the books. Thus, the six categories can in fact be organized chronologically, according to when in the novels they take place.

The first three categories, *Men glorified, Women objectified* and *Women denigrated,* represent the first part of the books. This is when the male characters are the ones in control and the female characters just silently obey the rules laid out for them. In other terms the first three categories represent the problem that has to be overcome in the novels. Rachel and Anna are mere objects to Tom, but they still almost worship him. Amy views Nick as the perfect man for her and she is at his mercy.

The other three categories, *Empowering of Women, Negative stereotypes about men* and *Progressive views on gender,* represent changes taking place in the novels. The women get more courage to step up for themselves; they notice the actual power they possess. Rachel and Anna both notice that they do not have to blindly follow Tom's wishes. Likewise, Amy stops living the way Nick wants them to live and Megan understands that she has the right to be more than just the other woman for Tom.

When these women are empowered we also start noticing more about the negative aspects of the male characters, even though it works actually both ways, with the negative sides of male characters inspiring women to take action. When the female characters realize the negative perspectives of their relationships and their men, they realize their own rights and powers. Rachel and Anna work together against Tom when they both understand all the terrible things he has done. Megan cheats on Scott when he does not fulfill her needs. Amy starts her revenge plan when Nick is not capable of being the husbands she wishes him to be.

All this results in the progressive views on gender in the books. Rachel, Anna and Amy can get out of their marriage if they so want to. Like Tom and other male characters, Megan can also have affairs if that is what she desires. Nick learns that it is not only a man who makes the rules of a marriage, but he has to respect his wife's wishes as well.

Furthermore, the readers are presented with other progressive ideas of gender roles. The novels present the possibility of women being the disgusting alcoholics and unemployed people, which are usually roles of male characters. Both novels also show that it does not have to be the woman in a marriage who wants to have children, but both Scott and Nick are the ones in their relationships wishing for children.

In addition to this chronological dividing of the categories, another interesting interpretation of the categories and the novels can be found. One could claim that Hawkins and Flynn are writing a history of feminism itself. The chronological view shows how the different waves of feminism are actually noticeable throughout the stories. The basic idea is that, as already established, the novels start off with the female characters in less powerful positions than the men, and end with them achieving equality, or even superiority. That mirrors how the evolution of feminism itself has taken place, with women having lower status and then gradually gaining more power. To compare the novels and the categories with the different waves of feminism, the waves could be places in the novels chronologically in the same manner as the categories.

To begin with, the first wave of feminism was about women's right to vote. In other words, the goal was to let women express their opinions (Tolan, 2006; Sheber, 2017). The problem was that they had not had that right previously. Likewise, in the novels, women are at first just denigrated objects with not much say in their positions, but men are glorified and have the right to make the rules. As in real life men used to have the only valid opinions in society. Women's voices were not respected. In other words, the first category of men being glorified represents the beginnings of feminism when men were placed on high pedestals and seen as the ones worthy to rule the world.

The second and third categories, of objectification and denigration of women, represent the second wave. The objective of second wave feminists was to liberate women and gain equality in all aspects of society, not only giving them the right to vote (Tolan, 2006; Sheber, 2017; Barber et al., 2013). In the second and third category the female characters are shown to be subject to even more issues than the fact that they have to follow the rules laid out by men.

This leads to the fourth and fifth categories, empowering of women and negative stereotypes about men. This can be seen as the third wave of feminism, when the feminists already had the foundation of the two first waves, making it easier for them to carry on the movement (Brunell & Burkett, 2016). For instance, Rachel and Anna were able to defy Tom thanks to Megan's sacrifice.

The fourth and fifth categories also show glimpses of fourth wave feminism. Fourth wave feminism aims to make every woman heard. An important tool in this is the use of different media, which has made it easier for women to reach wider audiences. (Munro, 2013). In both TGOTT and GG different media play an important role as it is for instance through newspapers and online articles that Rachel gets an understanding of what is going on with the case of Megan's disappearance. In GG Amy follows the news to know how her case is progressing. It is also through her writings that she manipulates the police and Nick. In both novels phones and text messages play important roles as well.

As mentioned in chapter two of this thesis, fourth wave feminism and the rise of social media has made it easier to engage in the feminist movement. However, as Munro (2013) states, when there is no real effort needed to show participation, the risk is that this results in slacktivism, which is when people show their interest to something on social media but will not go as far as to implementing it in their real lives. Examples of slacktivism can be found in GG. Amy complains in her own diary about Nick's behaviour, but never actually tells him what she really wants out of their relationship.

Finally, there is the sixth category of progressive views on gender. This could be argued to represent a possible postfeminist phase were the challenges of gender inequality have been overcome. Both novels end with only speculations of what happens next, likewise postfeminism is subject to debate whether or not it is something positive or negative and whether or not we really have achieved gender equality in our society.

In conclusion, different parts of the books can be viewed as representing different phases of feminism and towards the end of the books we get a glimpse of what feminism is all about and what we need to create a more equal society. Thus, it could be argued that both TGOTT and GG present a quite realistic representation of our society.

Mills (1995) argues that the purpose of a feminist literary analysis is to highlight how gender is represented in literature, and by pointing out the flaws try to encourage change. In the context of this study we have certainly noticed the negative aspects of gender roles, and I hope that the general notion of these kinds of negative representations in literature would inspire society to aim for change.

The existence of the negative stereotypes in these novels could arguably mean that they can also be found in, not just other literary works as well, but also in the real world. Thus, as they definitely are negative they should help us see what is wrong with the current concept of gender roles. By noticing and accepting the fact that something is

wrong in society, we can aim to change it. As Tolan (2006) points out, literature could be used to maintain or create belief systems.

Korhola's (2018) analysis of the novels show that the idea of what women should be like is a construction of a patriarchal society. This shows the gender inequality present in our society. However, the novels also present the idea that when the established gender ideas are challenged and broken can both men and women be happy. A real life application of this idea would need us to understand that only when it is equal between men and women can we all be happy and satisfied with the status quo of our society.

This study is subject to some limitations when it comes to claiming major societal effects. As the data sample of this study consisted of just two novels it is difficult to draw any general conclusions. Especially when noting that they belong to a very specific genre. Both novels are written by female authors, have female protagonists and fall in the category of crime thrillers. Thus if any generalizations can be made they are limited to the specific category of crime thrillers written by female authors. Hence, I would suggest that further research should be made of novels representing other literary genres to obtain a more general overview of the relationship between contemporary literature and gender roles in our society.

It is worth pointing out, that even if these pieces of literature can be viewed as feminist works, they do in a way represent earlier feminisms, as they focus white heterosexual relationships. The only noticeable character of another ethnic group in the two novels is Kamal, and he is also a secondary character. This specifies even further the genres of the novels, making it difficult to draw conclusions that would fit into literature including other ethnicities or sexual orientations. Thus, not only should further research be done focusing on other literary genres, but studies should also focus on literature including minorities, making the studies more inclusive.

This study is further implicated by the way the novels are written. Both novels include unreliable narrators, these mainly being Rachel in TGOTT and both Amy and Nick in GG. This makes it difficult to state that the novels depict characters in a certain way, when the reader cannot all the time be entirely sure what is really happening in the books. However, it could be argued that the fact that the unreliability is for most part present in the first half of the books and the chronological interpretation of the presence of feminism make the unreliable narrators irrelevant in context of the findings of this study.

Recently, there has also been much debate about who should have the right to conduct feminist research and analysis. I am aware of the question whether I as a white male am the right person to do a feminist analysis. I do understand the presented concern and understand that it is justifiable. However, I want to argue that the aim of everyone becoming feminists (Adichie, 2014), encourages more men taking part in this field of study.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of my study was to find out to what extent gender stereotypes manifest themselves in Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on The Train* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl.* By studying this my aim was to get a view of the relationship between contemporary literature and gender. This would hopefully also help me get an understanding of where our society's views on gender stand at the moment.

This study can be compared to some earlier theories, for instance De Beauvoir (1949) stated that all literature is impacted social ideas of gender roles. This was an early statement on the matter, and this thesis shows that De Beauvoir's (1949) statement is still relevant. Also Korhola (2018) made the statement that both men and women are still controlled by the norms of society. The fact that social ideas of gender roles impact literature as much in 2018 and 2019 as in 1949 does not necessarily have to be a bad thing. It all depends on how they impact.

Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) showed that female characters have remained more passive than the male characters in literature. However, this thesis shows that there can be finally found evidence of the contrary, making it possible to say that society has at least to some extent made progress.

The books analysed in this study turned out to not only show where our society stands today when it comes to gender roles, but also reflect the historical progression of gender issues. The categories produced by the analysis of the novels present three main ways of looking at them.

First of all, the six categories can be interpreted as representing six different aspects of gender views in the novels. This is of course a true statement, but there is more than meets the eyes. It is possible to interpret the findings on a deeper level. When taking a closer look at where in the novels the different categories are present, a second way of interpreting the findings emerges. They can also be viewed chronologically, resulting in a view that the books tell a story about how gender issues progress from inequality to a more equal status. This then leads to a third way of looking at the categories. The novels themselves could be seen as reflecting the real life evolution of the feminist movement. With the first category, and the beginning of the novels, representing the first wave of feminism when women were trying to make their voices heard. The second and third categories represent the second wave of feminism, when women noticed inequality in all

aspects of their lives. The fourth and fifth category represent to some extent third wave feminism. Finally, the sixth category represents the end goal of feminism.

In conclusion, how men and women are viewed in The Girl on The Train and Gone Girl can be interpreted as representing specific phases in the development of feminism in real life and hence also giving a historical overview of feminism. This results in the novels presenting us with a realistic view of what feminism is all about and what we need in order to achieve a gender equal society.

In the introduction I mentioned I am looking for what traits of male dominance and female powerlessness can be found in these two pieces of literature. The were to be found traits of both, which highlighted some very negative depictions of both female and male characters. These repeatedly found negative stereotypes in the books clearly indicate the issues with gender found in both the world of literature as well as in real life society. The key term here being *negative* undeniably shows that there is something wrong with the current status of gender roles in both our society and in literary representations. By noticing and accepting the fact that there are these flaws in our world, we can try to change them.

As most studies, this study does also comes with its limitations. The amount of data, i.e. the number of novels analysed, is not enough to draw any general conclusions about the connection between contemporary literature and gender roles in our society. The novels chosen for this study represent a very specific category, crime thrillers written by female authors. This makes it easier to draw conclusions of that specific genre, and the similarity in the findings of both novels encourages to look further in other genres.

Svensk Sammanfattning – Swedish Summary

Här följer en svensk sammanfattning av avhandlingen. Sammanfattningen börjar med en inledning, som beskriver bakgrunden till studien samt målen och forskningsfrågorna. Detta följs av en teoridel där den relevanta teorin kring studien beskrivs. Teoridelen innehållen även en sammanfattning av feminismens historia, eftersom en förståelse kring hur feminismen har utvecklats har en betydelse för denna avhandling.

Inledning

Det har blivit allt mer aktuellt att diskutera feminism i olika media (Fernet, 2018). Bland annat har det blivit vanligt att diskussioner om feminism på sociala medier lätt övergår till debatter (Cosslett & Baxter, 2013). Detta har lett till att många undviker diskussioner kring ämnet, eftersom ens åsikter lätt kan mötas med kritik om man inte är säker på hur man ska uttrycka sig (Brown, 2018).

Det är sådan osäkerhet som har lett till skrivandet av denna avhandling. Osäkerheten kring, och i vissa fall även tabun, att diskutera feminism tyder bara på att det krävs mera diskussion kring ämnet. En litteraturanalys ur feministiskt perspektiv, som denna avhandling, visar både hur samhället ser på ämnet och uppmanar till vidare diskussioner kring det.

Denna avhandling har sina rötter i Paula Hawkins roman *The Girl on The Train.* Boken är skriven ur tre olika kvinnors synvinkel. Det första intrycket detta ger är att det är en berättelse om starka kvinnor. Det intressanta är att det krävs inte att läsa mycket förrän man lägger märke till de många felen dessa karaktärer har.

Samtidigt innehåller boken manliga karaktärer i biroller, och även om dessa män har mindre roller än kvinnorna, lyfts de fram på ett helt annat sätt. Det första intrycket av de manliga karaktärerna är att de är något av perfekta varelser. Det är intressant att även om kvinnorna fått huvudrollerna är det ändå männen som föreställs viktigare.

Det var denna upptäckt som inspirerade till skrivandet av en avhandling om det. Förutom, *The Girl on The Train,* valde jag att inkludera även *Gone Girl* av Gillian Flynn. Den kändes som en passande roman att jämföra med *The Girl on The Train* i denna studie, eftersom båda är kriminalromaner med kvinnliga huvudkaraktärer skrivna av kvinnliga författare. Båda novellerna handlar dessutom om opålitliga berättare.

Det jag är intresserad av att studera är feminism och könsroller i litteratur. Det har gjorts tidigare studier om könsroller i litteratur. Ett tidigt exempel hittas i *Det*

Andra Könet av De Beauvoir (1949), som undersökte hur kvinnliga karaktärer är representerade i texter av manliga författare. Slutsatsen var att alla litteratur påverkas av samhälleliga idéer om könsroller.

En annan studie av Kortenhaus och Demarest (1993) visar skillnaden i hur pojkar och flickor representeras i barnlitteratur. Studien jämförde könsroller i 150 barnböcker från de senaste 50 åren. De konstaterade att inkluderingen av kvinnliga- och manliga karaktärer hade blivit mera balanserad, men att kvinnliga karaktärer fortfarande hade en mera passiv roll i böckerna.

För att jämföra utvecklingen från dessa tidigare studier kan nämnas Korholas (2018) studie om kvinnliga karaktärer i modern litteratur. Korholas (2018) studie fokuserade på *Gone Girl* och *The Girl on Train.* Även denna studie visade att både män och kvinnor fortfarande påverkas av samhällets normer. Trots detta nämner Korhola (2018) ändå möjligheten att dessa böcker uppmanar till diskussion om en könsneutral framtid.

Det är viktigt att studera könsroller, och feminism i allmänhet, i litteratur, eftersom det fungerar som en indikator om samtida syner på könsroller. Genom att studera könsroller i litteratur kan vi få en förståelse för hur samhället ser på kön i olika sammanhang. Därför behövs avhandlingar som denna.

Mål och forskningsfrågor

Målet med denna avhandling är att se hur stereotypiska könsroller manifesteras i *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkins och i *Gone Girl* av Gillian Flynn. I ett större perspektiv är mitt syfte att genom denna studie få en förståelse av sambandet mellan samtida litteratur och könsroller, och genom detta även se hur samhället förhåller sig till könsroller. För att nå mitt syfte har följande forskningsfrågor skapats:

1. Hur presenteras män i *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkin och i *Gone Girl* av Gillian Flynn?
2. Hur presenteras kvinnor i *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkin och i *Gone Girl* av Gillian Flynn?

Teori

När man talar om feminism och feministteorier är det viktigt att vara medveten om att det inte går att tala om en specifik teori, utan det finns flera olika former av feminism och likaså många olika teorier kring feminism (Mills, 1995; Eagleton, 1996).

Feminismen är känd för att vuxit mycket på 1960-talet, och många hänvisar till denna period som börjar för liknande rörelser, men sanningen är att ämnet har diskuterats redan mycket tidigare. Man brukar tala om *vågar* när man talar om faser i feminismens historia. Den första vågen skedde mellan 1830 och 1920. De första feministerna fokuserade främst på kvinnornas rösträtt. (Tolan, 2006).

Den andra vågen brukar räknas ha varat mellan 1960- och 1990-talen (Tolan, 2006). Medan den första vågen fokuserade mera på kvinnornas rättigheter inom politiska frågor, fokuserade den andra vågen på kvinnornas rättigheter i alla samhällsområden (Sheber, 2017). Detta var ett resultat av att många unga kvinnor levde bland pågående förändringar i samhället, vilket fick dem att förstå att förändringar kunde göras i deras egna liv också, till exempel med tanke på förhållandet mellan kvinnor och män (Barber, Russell, Jolly, Cohen, Johnson-Ross & Delap, 2013).

Första och andra vågen lyckades till en viss del uppnå sina mål. Det som de ändå inte hade gjort, var att inkludera kvinnor av andra etniciteter. Det hade varit främst vita kvinnor som var involverade i feminismen. Detta ledde till uppkomsten av den tredje vågen, som räknas ha börjat på 1990-talet. (Sheber, 2017). Den tredje vågen ville slutföra vad första och andra vågen hade påbörjat och de hade dittills bästa möjligheterna för detta eftersom de hade en stark grund som de tidigare feministerna hade byggt upp åt dem (Brunell & Burkett, 2016).

Man kan även tala om en fjärde våg av feminism. Om inte den redan är etablerar så är den åtminstone på kommande (Cochrane, 2013). Målet för fjärde vågens feminister är att varje kvinna ska bli hörd. Tack vare internet och sociala medier har detta blivit enklare än förr. Man till och med säga att det är internet som gjort skiftet från tredje vågen till fjärde vågen möjlig. (Munro, 2013).

Denna korta genomgång av feminismens historia visar att det finns många olika syner på vad feminism innebär, vilket gör det svårt att definiera vad som egentligen menas med feminism. Ett förenklat sätt att se på saken är att säga att en feminist är en person som ser ett problem med könsroller och vill hitta en lösning till det (Adichie, 2014). Denna syn på feminism kan även kopplas ihop med denna avhandlings syfte, eftersom

denna studie har som mål att analysera hur modern litteratur hanterar problem relaterade till könsroller och samhället.

Ett grundläggande problem som kvinnor har haft inom den litterära världen är att traditionellt har litteraturens värld varit mansdominerad. Det har varit främst män som varit kritiker och därmed har männen bestämt vilken litteratur som är viktigt. Resultatet har blivit att kvinnliga författare inte blivit inkluderade i samma utsträckning som manliga författare. (Morris, 1993). Detta är en orsak till varför litteraturforskning borde fokusera mera på kvinnliga författare också, så att de på detta sätt skulle få mera synlighet. Detta är också en orsak varför denna avhandling är viktig.

Inkludering av kvinnliga författare är inte enda problemet för kvinnor inom litteraturen, utan detta gäller också kvinnliga karaktärer. Det är därför en viktig grundläggande fråga inom feministisk litteraturanalys är om det överhuvudtaget finns kvinnor i texten (Jacobus, 1996). Eftersom både *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl* passerar den frågan med ett positivt svar, kan denna studie motiveras till att ta analysen vidare till *hur* inkluderas kvinnor i litteratur.

Då man talar om könsroller är det viktigt att fundera vad som menas med *kön*. Traditionellt har det kön en identifierar sig med ansetts representera det biologiska könet man föds till. Culler (1997) poängterar att kön inte borde vara en viss status man föds till, utan istället borde könet bestämmas av det man gör. Basow (1992) förklarar att vad som förväntas av ett visst kön är helt och hållet baserat på samhälleliga konstruktioner som bara blivit accepterade och att det därmed inte finns några bevis att stöda upprätthållande av könsroller.

Synen att kön och könsroller är konstruerade av samhället är en viktig del av feministteorier. Ett av målen för feministteorier är att ge uppmärksamhet åt detta faktum och att därmed även ändra på det. (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). Inom feministisk litteraturanalys betyder detta att kritiker försöker både visa hur kön är representerade inom litteraturen och därmed även ändra på detta (Mills, 1995).

Hur man borde se på kön och könsroller leder till många svåra frågor inom litteraturanalys. För det första finns det väldigt varierande representationer av både män och kvinnor i litteratur, vilket gör det svårt att säga vilka som är acceptabla. Speciellt med tanke på hur obalanserat män och kvinnor har inkluderats i litteratur. För det andra försvåras detta av tanken att kön bestäms av hur vi agerarar, och inte enligt vad vi föds som (Butler, 1990). Därmed är det också svårt att säga vem som representeras av vad

inom litteraturen. Eftersom läsare brukar associera sig själva med karaktärer av samma kön som de själva, kan vi även fundera om det måste vara på det viset.

Minogue (1990) påpekar att det kan finnas problem i att kvinnor alltid relaterar till de kvinnliga karaktärerna. Ska läsare exempelvis alltid associera sig själva med de kvinnliga karaktärerna utan att fundera på hurdan person karaktären är? Detta utgör en risk i både *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl,* eftersom båda innehåller en hel del kvinnliga karaktärer utan speciellt attraktiva karaktärsdrag.

Metod och Material

Denna avhandling analyserar två böcker. *The Girl on The Train* av Paula Hawkins samt *Gone Girl* av Gillian Flynn. Dessa romaner utgjorde ett naturligt val för jämförelse med varandra eftersom de har många likheter. Båda är kriminalromaner, där en kvinna försvinner och resten av karaktärerna försöker lösa mysteriet kring vad som hände. Båda romanerna är dessutom skrivna av kvinnliga författare och har kvinnliga huvudkaraktärer. En annan intressant likhet mellan romanerna är att båda har karaktärer som är så kallade opålitliga berättare. Därmed är det svårt att hela tiden vara helt säker på vad som pågår i berättelserna.

Romanerna analyserades med hjälp av kategorisering. Jag skapade 6 stycken kategorier utifrån mönster jag upptäckte i romanerna. Kategorierna baserades även på stödfrågor jag använde i analyserandet av materialet. De 6 kategorier som analysen resulterade i är:

1. Förhärligande av män
2. Objektifiering av kvinnor
3. Nedsättande av kvinnor
4. Kvinnor står upp för sig själva
5. Negativa stereotypier om män
6. Progressiv syn på könsroller

Diskussion

Det kan konstateras att feministisk litteraturanalys har gjort stora framsteg från att fokusera på den grundläggande frågan om det överhuvudtaget finns kvinnor med i texten. I texterna analyserade i denna avhandling kan vi konstatera att det finns flera kvinnliga karaktärer. De går även att konstatera att vi kommer vidare från att anta att de kvinnliga karaktärerna är mera passiva än de manliga karaktärerna, eftersom i både *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl* är de kvinnliga karaktärerna väldigt aktiva.

Resultaten av denna studie kan tolkas på ett antal olika sätt. Till exempel kan vi reflektera det Mills (1995) säger om att manliga och kvinnliga karaktärer i litteratur är till fördel för varken kvinnor eller män. Litterära representationer kan representera negativa stereotypier av både kvinnor och män och om läsare alltid associerar med karaktärer av sitt eget kön, leder det här till att könsroller representerade i litteratur förstärker könsrollerna i det riktiga livet. Detta betyder att författarna till böckerna i denna studie antingen gör ett dåligt jobb med att ändra könsroller eftersom de visar både män och kvinnor på ett väldigt negativt sätt, eller så gör de ett bra jobb genom att visa läsarna vilka utmaningar samhället har med könsroller.

Eagleton (1991) förklarar att feministisk litteratur ska återspegla samhället på ett sanningsenligt sätt. Detta skulle betyda att varken Flynn eller Hawkins försöker illustrera ett perfekt könsneutralt samhälle, utan i stället försöker visa vilka utmaningar kvinnor måste kämpa emot och därmed göra läsarna medvetna om problem med könsroller i samhället.

En annan tolkning av resultaten i denna studie är att både Hawkins och Flynns böcker representerar feminismens historia. Detta blir tydligare om man ser på kategorierna kronologiskt. Den första kategorin representerar den första vågen av feminism, då kvinnorna kämpade att få sin röst hörd. Likaså börjar böckerna med att det ser ut som om männens åsikt är den enda som spelar någon roll. Den andra och tredje kategorin föreställer andra vågen av feminism då kvinnorna började lägga märke till orättvisor på andra håll i samhället också. Detta syns i böckerna i och med att de kvinnliga karaktärernas är allt mer begränsade i vad de kan göra.

Detta leder till den femte och sjätte kategorin, nämligen att i och med kvinnornas begränsade roller börjar de lägga märke till männens negativa sidor, det vill säga det som är fel, och därmed börjar de våga stå upp för sig själva. Detta kan ses

reflektera den tredje vågen av feminism då feministerna hade grunden av den första och andra vågen som stöd för att förverkliga sina mål.

Den fjärde och femte kategorin kan även tolkas representera till en viss del fjärde vågen av feminism. Målet med den fjärde vågen är att få varje kvinnas röst hörd. Ett viktigt redskap i detta är användandet av olika medier, vilket har gjort det lättare för kvinnor att nå en stor publik. I både *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl* har olika medier en viktig roll. I båda böckerna använder kvinnor sig av medier för att uppnå sina mål.

Slutligen, kan den sjätte kategorin tolkas som en möjlig representation av postfeminism, där utmaningarna med könsfrågor har överkommits. Båda böckerna slutar med att läsaren får själv spekulera vad som händer till näst. Likaså kan man debattera om vad postfeminism egentligen innebär och om vi ens har kommit så långt i samhället ännu.

Synen på män och kvinnor i *The Girl on The Train* och *Gone Girl* kan tolkas som en representation av feminismens historia. Detta betyder att romanerna ger en realistisk bild om vad feminism handlar och vad som krävs för att uppnå jämställdhet mellan män och kvinnor.

Denna studie är begränsad att dra större slutsatser eftersom materialet bestod av endast två romaner. Men böckerna representerar samma genre, vilket gör det lättare att dra slutsatser gällande den genren, och likheten i resultaten av analyserna av båda romanerna motiverar till vidare forskning gällande könsroller i andra litterära genrer.

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