Gentle Girls and Active Boys

- A Gender Analysis of Two Novels, *Vampire Diaries – The Awakening* and *Gossip Girl*

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ABSTRACT


Keywords: gender contract, gender roles, hierarchy, male-female relationships, norm, *The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening, Gossip Girl*
1 Introduction

Throughout history, there have been several debates regarding what kind of literature youths are allowed to read in school. As a prospective English teacher, I will work with youths of different ages and a part of teaching is reading literature. Fiction is something very controversial in today’s society because so many people has different opinions regarding what should and should not be read in school. Since we, during our teacher education, have worked a lot with fiction, I believe that it is a big part of the English teaching. Another reason why I believe that fiction is a big part of the English education is because the curriculum says that it should be a part of the education. The reason why fiction should be a part of education in today’s schools is something that is discussed in Magnus Persson’s book Varför läsa litteratur1 [Why read literature?]. He claims that reading is a creative process, because students reflect and problematize what they have read. Further, the author says that pupils can practise to change perspective based on various cultures and learn how to empathize with other people in different societies. Another idea is to make the pupils discuss various topics through deliberative conversations, in other words, fiction should also work as a democracy question. The Swedish National curriculum, 2011, says:

The national school system is based on democratic foundations. The Education Act (2010:800) stipulates that education in the school system aims at pupils acquiring and developing knowledge and values. It should promote the development and learning of all pupils, and a lifelong desire to learn. Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based. [...]The task of the school is to encourage all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and thereby be able to participate in the life of society by giving of their best in responsible freedom.2

By reading novels that address democracy questions, the pupils get the chance to discuss these topics that the curriculum says should be deliberated. To discuss gender equality and gender characteristics in connection to the norm in our society, with fiction as a basis, you may help pupils discover their own uniqueness and also establish respect and knowledge for other people, who might be different.

A theme that could be discussed based on reading fiction is how men and women are portrayed in literature, especially during the teenage period, because during those ages young people

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2 Skolverket, Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011, 2011, p. 5
usually think a lot about their gender identity. By reading and focusing on how gender is portrayed in fiction young people can recognize themselves and others and with that knowledge they get a chance for reflection as well. The syllabus LGR 11 for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure time says when it comes to English education:

Teaching in English should essentially give pupils the opportunities to develop their ability to: understand and interpret the content of spoken English and in different types of texts [...] reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used.³

This is a reason why reading literature is important, but also why the way gender and gender relationships are represented in literature is an important issue to discuss. According to the syllabus for the subject of English, fiction is a big part of teaching and at the end of ninth grade, the syllabus says that:

Teaching should help pupils to develop their skills in searching for, evaluating, choosing and assimilating the content of [...] texts from different sources [...] Literature and other fiction in spoken, dramatized and filmed forms.⁴

In summary, therefore, fiction should be used in the English subject and as a prospective teacher; I will be working with such texts. Therefore, I am interested in analyzing texts that are read by youths. I have chosen to study two novels that are written for young adults because I believe that young people, mostly, read what is written for them but also because these books are read by youths, mostly in their spare time, according to the list of the most popular youth novels at the Halmstad City Library.⁵

As a future teacher, it is my job to continuously work for every student’s equal right. In the curriculum, it clearly says:

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are the values that the school should represent and impart. In accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity of spirit, tolerance and responsibility.⁶

This is something that can be done by, in school, discussing whether or not the characters in the literature that they read follow or deviate from the norm. To discuss gender and relationships

³ Skolverket, p. 32.
⁴ Skolverket, p. 34.
⁵ See Appendix.
⁶ Skolverket, p.9.
between sexes can help the pupils think more about every person's equal right and can make them see how different people can be.

1.1 Aim
The aim of this study is to highlight how gender roles are portrayed in two different novels, *Gossip Girl* written by Cecily von Ziegesar and *The Vampire Diaries - The Awakening* written by L.J. Smith. The main purpose is to explore how boys and girls are represented because this might be a potential message that readers can take away from it, and young people are the audience for these teenage novels. In other words, my main research question is: *how are boys/girls and the relationship between genders portrayed throughout gender perspective in two novels written by Cecily von Ziegesar and L.J Smith*? To answer this question I will analyse how characters of each gender as well as the relationship between boys and girls are represented in each novel with gender theories constantly in mind.

The idea is that the result should be used in as a part of literature teaching in English but also in the study of literature in other languages as well, because gender is an important subject that should be discussed and by reading literature you can create interesting discussions that otherwise might be difficult to create. Further, despite the very limited scope of this study I hope to be able to contribute in some small way to the research on the subject of the portrayal of gender in youth literature. My hypothesis is that the analysis of these two novels represents both relationships and characters that go against the conventional gender norm. If my hypothesis is correct, it might help to create discussions regarding norm-breaking characteristics and relationships, but can also help pupils in school understand and be more aware of gender norms and more open about the breaking of them – in all kinds of literature, as well in the society and in the world in general.

1.2 Method and Material
My choice of novels has, of course, been influenced by my future role as a teacher because I will both work with young people and youth literature. Therefore, I am interested in analysing novels that young people voluntarily read. Further, the books that I have chosen for this study have been

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9 Teenage literature was something that came during 17th century and was then characterized by boys’ and girls’ books. After WWII, the first gender neutral book appeared and the view on teenagers changed. People realized that young people had their own culture that you should make room for. Typical for literature written for youths are depictions of teenagers and their interaction with people around them and the environment, obtained 2013-02-01 from: [http://www.ne.se/ungdomslitteratur](http://www.ne.se/ungdomslitteratur).
on the Halmstad City Library top ten lists for several years in a row. On those lists, a few years in a row, I could see that novels by Cecily von Zigesar’s and L.J. Smith’s were always placed high on the lists. Another aspect that the choice of authors and novels was based on was that it has not been possible for me to find any previous research gender research on these particular books, either in English or in Swedish. Furthermore, I have chosen to analyze two novels written by two different authors to see if they portray gender differently, or if there are similarities in how they portray gender in their novels.

The books I have chosen for this essay are books that are not generally included on the English curriculum in Swedish schools today, but fiction that young adults choose to read in their spare time. I am interested to see if these kinds of books can be used to problematize and discuss gender roles and expectations and eventually be used as a part of a democratic education. Furthermore, these kinds of books belong to a long tradition of young adult’s entertainment, rather than appropriate educational reading. I believe that we should bring these kinds of book to the education because it seems like, as the City Library in Halmstad claims; young adults want to and do read this type of literature.

Both of these authors have written multiple novels for young people, which meant that I needed to make a selection. The most natural choice for me was to choose the authors’ debut novels in these specific series, Gossip Girl and The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening. The reason why I chose to focus my analysis on the young characters in the books is also because I believe that when young people read young adult novels they identify themselves with the young persons in the novels. Therefore I chose these novels to see what image the reader gets from the characters they might identify themselves with. For the analysis of the material I used a qualitative method; specifically, a close reading, focusing on how the young main characters are portrayed in terms of their gender and relationships.

1.3 Presentation of the Authors and Primary Sources

In the following section, I will give a brief presentation of the authors and novels that have been analysed in this essay.

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10 Earlier this year, I was in contact with Anna Rymdfors, employed at the City library in Halmstad. Thanks to her help, I could get the statistics of most borrowed books between the years 2008-2011. L.J. Smith’s novel The Awakening was on the list 2011 and Cecily von Zigesar’s novels were at the list 2008-2009. See appendix.
Cecily von Zigesar was a student at the Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where she majored in English and her focus was Creative writing. Today she is the editor for a production company, New York. Her novel is about Blair who lives together with her mother and her stepfather, Blair is in a relationship with a boy called Nate. Serena, the second girl that is in focus in this novel, has been away for a year at a boarding school in Cornwall, Connecticut, but has now come back to town, and is planning to attend Constance Billard School for girls together with Blair. The second male character is a boy called Daniel, who is in love with Serena, even though Serena does not get to know him until the end of the book.\(^\text{11}\)

L.J. Smith currently lives in the Bay Area of Northern California, USA. She obtained a masters degree in Education at the University of San Francisco and her career started with her being an elementary school teacher but quit after only three years of work to start her writing career. Her books have been best sellers time after time, and have been translated into 35 languages.\(^\text{12}\) The Awakening is the first novel in her series, The Vampire Diaries. The novel is about a girl called Elena who lives with her aunt Judith, Elena’s parents having died in a car accident three years ago. Elena meets a new guy, Stefan, who just moved to town from Italy and proves to be irresistible to Elena. But Stefan has a brother, a brother who is revengeful towards him, and Damon is also very attracted to Elena. Later in the book, Elena finds out about Stefan’s and Damon’s big and dark secret, the fact that they are centuries-old vampires. I will, however, be focusing on Damon and Stefan’s personalities when they are regular teenagers, and not their characteristics as vampires.\(^\text{13}\)

1.4 Gender Related Theories

A key researcher in the field of gender theory is Judith Butler.\(^\text{14}\) Butler claims, in her book Gender Trouble\(^\text{15}\), that gender is something performative, which she explains in the following way as:

Constituting the identity it is purposed to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject, who might be said to pre-exist the deed. […] There is no gender identity

\(^\text{11}\) Ziegesar, p. 186-187.
\(^\text{12}\) http://www.ljanesmith.net/author/biography 2013-02-06.
\(^\text{13}\) Smith, p. 14 – 16; 22, 35.
\(^\text{14}\) “Judith Butler is Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature and the Co-director of the Program of Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley.”, obtained 2013-05-17 from: http://rhetoric.berkeley.edu/people.php?page_id=1056&p=54.
behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.\textsuperscript{16}

Gender is thus, according to Butler, a construction. Gender, which can only be masculine or feminine, can be defined throughout social and cultural norms. Thus, Butler claims, that gender is a result of repeated acts.\textsuperscript{17} The most radical part, which has commonly been seen as the most controversial aspect of Butler’s theory, is what she says about the human body and biological sex. She writes that:

Because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all.\textsuperscript{18}

According to Butler, there is no innate gender or anything that is naturally masculine or feminine, these are all constructions. According to her theory, the human body does not mean anything itself, but get its first importance through social, historical and cultural values regarding gender and sexuality. This also makes biological sex a construction that cannot be separated from social sex.\textsuperscript{19}

R.W Connell\textsuperscript{20}, following Butler, claims in her book \textit{Gender: In World Perspective}\textsuperscript{21} that being a man or a woman is a continuous work, which means that it is not something permanent. Connell refers to Simon de Beauvoir’s famous statement in \textit{The Second Sex} that was published 1949, where she claims that you are not born a man or a woman: that is something you develop into. Connell claims that there are different ways to be a woman or a man, which means that a person does not only have to have personality characteristics that are associated with the sex they belong to. According to her, a man can be both masculine and feminine and the same applies to women. However, Connell claims that gender is a social structure and that it is both influenced by, and has a relationship, with you biological sex. She also mentions that men and women are believed to have different sets of characteristics; men are expected to be aggressive, stubborn, rational, analytic and silent while women are expected to be sexually loyal, intuitive, talkative, emotional, impressionable and caring. Connell believes that research regarding this subject has shown that

\textsuperscript{16} Butler, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{17} Butler, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{18} Butler, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{19} Butler, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{20} Carried out research regarding gender problems and has published several books about the subject. See the back of the book Connell, R.W \textit{Gender: In World Perspective}, 2002.
different characteristics between sexes are only myths, and that men and women are psychologically very alike.\textsuperscript{22}

Yvonne Hirdman describes in her article “Genussystemet; reflektioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning”, [The Gender System: Reflections on Women’s Social Subordination], published in the book Genushistoria\textsuperscript{23} [Gender History], Yvonne Hirdman\textsuperscript{24} describes her theory regarding gender as stereotypes and what is considered masculine or feminine. According to Hirdman gender is something constructed and changeable. Further, she keeps the cultural and biological apart, but she also says that they depend on each other – men and women have different cultural conditions because of their different biological sexes. Hirdman calls these gender systems and, further, she states that there are two different logics or principles that describe how society perceives gender differences.\textsuperscript{25}

The first logic, which Hirdman calls dichotomy, means that all masculinity and femininity should be kept apart, in other words; men and women are in different places in the society, for example: they are in different professional fields; they are expected to have different interest but also dress differently. For example, the man is expected to be the one working while the woman is expected to give birth to children and take care of them. In summary, according to Hirdman’s definition of gender dichotomy, what is feminine is not masculine and the other way around. The second logic is called the hierarchy and indicates that men act as the norm for the average man while women are not able to reach this norm, which means that women are further down in the hierarchy.\textsuperscript{26}

Another concept that Hirdman presents is the gender contract. The purpose of this concept is to make the analysis of the gender system in our society easier. This concept refers to settlements that exist between a man and a woman, but are not mentioned. According to Hirdman’s theory, men and women are never equal in such contracts, because one of the sexes is the one who determines the contract and decides for the other person in the relationship. In other words, Hirdman claims that, when speaking about men and women, they are never equal in relationships. This gender contract might occur at three different levels; cultural, individual or social level. As a consequence, this gender contract controls our

\textsuperscript{22} Connell, p. 15, 20-21, 49, 58-60.
\textsuperscript{24} Hirdman is a historian and since 1996 and a co-opted professor at the University of Stockholm. Between the years 1989-1992 she worked at the University of Gothenburg as a professor in women’s history.
\textsuperscript{25} Hirdman, p. 115-117, 120-121.
\textsuperscript{26} Hirdman, p. 115-117, 120-121.
view of what is considered male or female, and might also occur at work or in school. I have chosen to use Butler’s, Connell’s and Hirdman’s theory in this study, because I believe that they are relevant for my research.

1.5 Previous Research Regarding Gender Patterns in Literature

As regards previous research of gender perspectives in fiction, one cannot find a large amount of studies. The ones I will present in this essay are some important studies that are relevant to this paper.

The first study that will be discussed is published by Ellen S. Silber and Jerilyn Fisher. Their focus has been on gender portrayals in old and classic literature that is a part of education in schools today. Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), is one of many books analysed in Silber and Fisher’s study. They concluded that women in this novel are portrayed as the ideal mother and wife. The description of the women’s beauty has a colourful ring of traditional and romantic poetry; “blue eyes that were like nothing but sapphires”; pouty, crimson lips”28 Furthermore, they have determined that women’s clothes in this novel are more presented than the male character’s clothes and they claim that is because clothing is more feminine than masculine.2930

Another study that is worth discussing is an article brought out by Lena Kåreland, “Kön och klass i Mats Wahls Vinterviken, [Gender and Class in Mats Wahl’s The Winter Bay] published in *Modig och stark - eller ligga lågt: skönlitteratur och genus i skola och förskola*31 [Brave and Strong - or Lie Low: Literature and Gender in Schools and Preschools], that analyse a novel from a gender perspective. Lena Kåreland chose her novel based on the popularity among youths, but also because this novel has received major attention and has also, several times, been filmed. The main thing that is relevant for my study is how Kåreland chooses to analyse the main character John-John, and how John-John formulates his masculinity in different ways. Kåreland concludes that John-John, mostly, follows the norm of what is considered being male, because he is described as strong, tough, misbehaving, interested in sports but he also has complicated family relationships. However, Kåreland also finds that John-John has characteristics that are

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27 Hirdman, p. 115-118, 120-121.
29 Fisher, & Silber, p. 6-8.
30 I do not know of any connection between Smith’s and Chopin’s novels even though the novels have similar titles.
considered as feminine because he is, at the same time, interested in literature and theatre and he is also an emotive person which you see when he occasionally cries.\footnote{Kåreland, p. 340-343.}

Helen Schmidl\footnote{Helen Schmidl, ”It takes two to tango - om Per Nilssons Hjärtans fröjd” i Modig och stark – eller ligga lågt: skönlitteratur och genus i skola och förskola, Red. Kåreland, Lena, 2003.} has also researched gender in youth fiction. In her article “It Takes Two to Tango” that was published in 2005, Schmidl focuses on the novel \textit{(Hearts Delight)}\footnote{Per Nilsson, \textit{Hjärtans fröjd}, Raben & Sjögren, 2007.} by Per Nilsson. She has chosen to focus on this novel because she has read it herself with high school students, and also because this book had been popular among both sexes. Her main interest in this novel is the characters but also the book’s form and shape, in other words, how it is written. However, Schmidl concluded that all characters in the book are, as she calls it, norm-breaking. This means that none of the female characters has only feminine characteristics and none of the male only has masculine characteristics. For example, the girl in the book is confident and open while the boy is cautious and sensitive. Furthermore, she claims that the male character’s self-image has been affected by his view of his father. However, even the relationship between this boy and girl is norm-breaking, the girl is the older one with sexual experiences while the boy is the one who is naive and experiencing his first love.\footnote{Schmidl, p. 300-301.}

Another study that is relevant for my essay is Maria Nikolajeva’s book called \textit{Barnbokens byggklossar} \footnote{Maria Nikolajeva, \textit{Barnbokens byggklossar}, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004, p. 147, 152, 163.} [The Building Blocks of Children’s literature]. Nikolajeva studies the construction of a number of children’s and youth literature and her selection her selection is based on what different schools use as teaching material. Her focus is on the novels’ plots, characters’ personal stories, perspective, relationships and also how the plot in every book is organized. The part that I will use for my study is where she discusses the gender perspective when it comes to character portrayal. She has constructed a schema, where characteristics are connected to the norm and describes what is masculine or feminine. Further, she claims that male and female are opposites and based on that, she constructed this scheme. According to Nikolajeva men and women are expected to be:

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Men/boys} & \textbf{Women/girls} \\
\hline
Strong & Beautiful \\
Violent & Aggression inhabited \\
Unemotional, hard & Emotional, gentle \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Kåreland} Kåreland, p. 340-343.
\bibitem{Schmidl} Helen Schmidl, ”It takes two to tango - om Per Nilssons Hjärtans fröjd” i Modig och stark – eller ligga lågt: skönlitteratur och genus i skola och förskola, Red. Kåreland, Lena, 2003.
\bibitem{Schmidl} Schmidl, p. 300-301.
\bibitem{Nikolajeva} Maria Nikolajeva, \textit{Barnbokens byggklossar}, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004, p. 147, 152, 163.
\end{thebibliography}
I have had Nikolajeva’s schema in mind when I have analyzed the characters in the novels. Nikolajeva does not say that all males and females will follow this schema, but it makes it easier to assess stereotypical portrayals of literary figures, as well as non-fictional men and women.

Most of the previous research in this study is Swedish material and this is something that I am aware of, but the materials I have found were too relevant and interesting to ignore. The reason why I chose this material is because I have not been able to find a large amount of English previous research that is as relevant as the Swedish ones to this essay. Most of the material found in English is connected to children’s literature which makes it irrelevant for me because my focus is on teenagers and therefore also on young adult literature. It is harder to find English studies when you are a Swedish student and because of the minimum amount of time I chose to use what has been possible for me to find. I have done my best to translate from Swedish to English as accurately and precisely as possible to achieve the best possible result.

2 Observation

In this chapter, I will present my observations regarding the gender portrayal of some of the main characters in the novels as well as the relationships between the sexes. This will be followed by a comparative analysis of my results using the previous research and gender theories presented in the Introduction.

2.1 Gossip Girl

In this section, I will analyse how Blair, Serena, Daniel and Nate are portrayed based on their gender, but also the relationship between Nate and the two girls and between Serena and Daniel.

2.1.1 Blair and Serena
Blair is seventeen years old and lives with her mother and stepfather, it is not clear who Serena’s real father is. Blair is described as a girl with long and dark brown hair and her clothes are constantly being described.\(^\text{37}\) Furthermore, she is very protective of her boyfriend Nate, who is described in the following quotation: “Blair was the one getting sloppy. And if Cyrus Rose didn’t stop harassing Nate, her boyfriend, she was going to have to go over there and spill her scotch all over his tacky Italian loafers.”\(^\text{38}\)

Furthermore, Blair is described as a good girl when it comes to boys and relationships, she is a virgin but she also describes herself as a very romantic person. At the same time, she is portrayed as a person who wants to have control over everything, this might for example be seen when she decides that Nate, without even asking him what he wants, must end his friendship with Serena.\(^\text{39}\)

In contrast to these personality characteristics, Blair is also perceived, by the other characters in the book, as a cruel person, for example, she keeps lying throughout the novel. One good example of her cruelty and lies might be seen when she is telling Serena, when Serena is trying to become friend with her and the rest of her old friends, that no one of their common friends are partying when they actually are. Blair does not want Serena in their circle of friends anymore and therefore she lies and when Serena found out she expresses that it was cruel of Blair to do so. Other characteristics that might be seen throughout the novel are that she is portrayed as responsible, childish, jealous, talkative, not independent, and sporty. Blair only is seventeen years old and that she is both drinking and smoking that much might be seen as an adult thing to do, but might also be perceived as immature for her age. Smoking and drinking is something for adults and when youths also drink and smoke it might be seen as immature, because they are trying to be adults when they actually are not.\(^\text{40}\)

The other main female character in the novel, Serena, is described as a girl with navy blue eyes, tall, blond, thin, talented, looking like a supermodel, looking adult, have perfect skin and very popular. Blair’s clothes are often described and so are Serena’s.\(^\text{41}\) Furthermore, she is perceived as an irresistible person, which one may clearly see in this quotation:

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\(^{37}\) Ziegesar, p. 5, 171.

\(^{38}\) Ziegesar, p. 7.

\(^{39}\) Ziegesar, p. 8-10, 13.

\(^{40}\) Ziegesar, p. 5, 7-9, 13, 29, 31-32, 54, 57, 94, 107, 122-124, 125, 130, 134, 137, 139, 193.

\(^{41}\) Ziegesar, p. 16-18, 68, 118-119, 163, 166.
“Serena thought about entering the Eighty-Ninth Street and sitting down for a while to kill time before the play rehearsal. But alone? What would she do, people-watch? She had always been one of those people everyone else watches.”

Serena is also described as flirty, sexually experienced, entertaining, disorderly, nervous, shy, busy, impulsive, emotional, difficulties with alcohol and likes to party a lot. Characteristics that stand out are her loneliness and irresponsibility. It is clear that, since she came back to the city, she often feels very lonely, for example when she stays at home for several nights instead of going out with her friends. Since Blair did not want Serena back as her friend and lied to her about the rest of their friends, Serena did not have anyone she could be with, so she stayed alone at home. However, her irresponsibility can clearly be seen in this quotation:

Anyway, of course I partied a lot at school, but so did everyone else. What the school couldn’t deal with was that I didn’t even bother to show up at the beginning of the year. I don’t blame them, I guess. But to tell you the truth, I really didn’t care about going back to school. I was having too much fun.

Just like Blair, Serena, is described to be a dependent person, for example, since her parents are the ones who are taking care of her.

2.1.2 Nate and Daniel

Nate is described as a boy with dark green eyes, he is well built, has brown hair and tanned skin. Several times during the story, his clothes are described. Furthermore, he is portrayed to be self-confident about his appearance but insecure about his personality, mature, attractive, calm, quiet, analytic, beautiful, sexually experienced and respectful to other people. He is also described to be irresponsible and unaccountable, which can clearly be seen in the following quotation:

“Charlie puffed on the joint and passed it to Jeremy. Nate shot him the ball and Charlie tripped over it […] “Shit, this stuff is strong,” Jeremy said, hitching up his pants. […] “Yeah, it is, “Nate agreed. “I’m all fucked up.” His feet were itchy. It felt like the grass was growing through the rubber soles of his sneakers.”

This irresponsibility and unaccountability, which might be seen in the previous quotation, can be seen throughout the novel, because Nate keeps making action that proves that he has this characteristic. He uses drugs, he keeps drinking a lot and he does not go to school. Further, one

42 Ziegesar, p. 86.
44 Ziegesar, p. 123.
45 Ziegesar, p. 34-35.
46 Ziegesar, p. 8-10, 12, 20, 26-27, 41, 79, 130, 137-138, 141.
47 Ziegesar, p. 78.
can also see that Nate is a very honest person and this might be seen clearly when he, for example, tells Blair the truth about his and Serena’s intimate night even though he knows that he will lose her.\textsuperscript{48}

Daniel Humphrey also called Dan, lives with his sister Jenny and father. Dan is described as thin, having dark shaggy hair, pale and dark brown haunting eyes. It is also mention that he likes coffee and sugar, literature, poetry and that he is a lonely person but that likes to live on the edge. To live on the edge, in this case, is to not be afraid of doing things one has never done before, for example when Dan starts to dance with Serena. Furthermore, he is portrayed as nervous, shy, sexually inexperienced, insecure, regular, insecure, quiet and naive. Dan is secretly in love with Serena but his shyness keeps him from getting to know her.\textsuperscript{49} He also keeps fantasising about him and Serena constantly throughout the novel, which can be seen in this quotation:

\begin{quote}
When Serena came to his apartment, Dan would walk right up to her and take her coat, and welcome her back to New York. \textit{It rained every day you were gone}, he’d say, poetically. Then they would sneak into his father’s library and take each others clothes off and kiss on the leather couch in front of the fire. [...] Then they would go to Columbia and live in a studio apartment nearby with nothing in it but a huge bed. [...] She wouldn’t care if she had to give up her trust fund and her great-grandmother’s diamonds. Serena will be willing to live in squalor if it meant she could be with Dan.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

In this quotation, it can also be seen that Daniel is also a romantic guy by the way he dreams about a life with Serena. He is also, as mentioned throughout the novel, poor in comparison to Serena and the rest of the youths in the novel. Every time he thinks about a life with the girl of his dreams it is romantic and simple. This characteristic is not expressed in public but can only be seen when he is expressing his thoughts. Furthermore, this can be interpreted as him being shy about his romantic part but might also be seen as insecurity, according the book he does not dare to express his thoughts out loud.\textsuperscript{51}

\section*{2.1.3 Male – Female Relationships}

In the novel \textit{Gossip Girl} there are three love relationships, the one between Nate and Blair, the one between Nate and Serena and the one between Daniel and Serena. Blair and Nate’s relationship is characterized by romance, but these romantic actions are, most often, initiated by Blair. However, it is described by Blair that she is expecting Nate to take initiatives but he never

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesep=2pt
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ziegesar, p. 78-79, 137-138.
\item Ziegesar, p. 14, 27-29, 35, 42, 53-54, 82-84.
\item Ziegesar, p. 50.
\item Ziegesar, p. 49, 149.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
does so she the ones taking charge, in other words, she is the one taking the first step in their relationship, no matter if it is to call, to go out or to have sex. Only a few times during the storytelling, Nate is in charge. Blair expresses her feelings to Nate directly to him, while Nate does not do the same. He keeps his feeling to himself, and that might be because he is not sure of which one of the girls, Serena or Blair, he really loves. As mentioned above, Nate is honest to Blair regarding his and Serena’s romantic night together. This is when their relationship changes and at this point Nate understands that he does love Blair. He keeps asking for forgiveness and he keeps struggling to get her back, which might be seen as he shows weakness in relation to her. However, when Blair finally forgives him; she gives him direction of what he should do to get her back and she also begins to decide for him what he should and should not do. When they get back together, their relationship has changed because now, Nate is the one taking initiative while Blair is more passive.\(^5^2\)

When it comes to Nate and Serena’s relationship, you can say that they have a relationship as a boyfriend and girlfriend, like Blair and Nate does. Serena and Nate had sex once, and after that they have had feelings for each other, but secretly.\(^5^3\) Nate shows weakness in relation to Serena which you clearly can see in the following quotation:

\[
\text{Nate turned over on his side and Serena moaned softly as her head rolled back at the pillow. He studied her critically. She was so beautiful and sexy and trusting, and so full of surprises. It was hard to believe she was actually for real.}\(^5^4\)
\]

However, Nate is more attracted to Serena than to Blair, he constantly imagines Serena and him in bed. Further, it is described that Serena does not tell Nate about her feelings while a part of Nate’s thoughts and that is how the reader might know that he is weak for Serena as well. In their relationship, like the one between Blair and Nate, the girl is the one taking initiative. She is the one calling him and several times she is trying to sleep with him, but he rejects her. Even in this relationship it is expected by the girl that the boy should take the first step, but he does not.\(^5^5\)

Serena and Daniels love relationship does not start until late in the book. Before that, Daniel knows Serena, but Serena does not know Daniel. He is head over heels in love with her but he does not dare to get to know her. He is the one, as mentioned before, fantasizing about them but is to shy to do anything about it. When they finally get to know each other, their common friend Vanessa is the one introducing them to each other, in other words Daniel did not do anything on

\(^{5^3}\) Ziegesar, p. 19-21, 27, 154.
\(^{5^4}\) Ziegesar, p. 142.
\(^{5^5}\) Ziegesar, p. 159, 199.
his own to get to know Serena.\textsuperscript{56} When they get to know each other and are out one night together, Serena is the one taking initiative, in other words, she is the one talking to him, she is the one asking him to dance and she is the initiator which might be seen in the following quotation:

\begin{quote}
Come on” Serena said, standing up. “Let’s dance.” […] “Dan?” Serena said, tugging on his jacket sleeve. “Come on!” Dan stood up. “Sure, why not,” he said. Serena grabbed his hand and pushed her way into the gyrating throng with Dan stumbling after her. […] Serena reached out and clasped Dan’s hips, rocking them back and forth and around and around, mimicking what her hips was doing all on their own.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Even when Daniel does have the chance to say what he really feels and what he really wants, for example during their dance on the dance floor, he cannot do it because of his shyness. Daniel is a calm and passive person and several times during the novel his shyness stops him from telling what he feels inside. \textsuperscript{58}

\subsection*{2.2 The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening}

In this section, I will present how Elena, Stefan and Damon are portrayed based on their gender. Furthermore, I will explain the relationship between Elena and Stefan and Elena and Damon.

\subsubsection*{2.2.1 Elena}

Elena Gilbert is described, in the novel \textit{The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening} (1991), as blond, slender, beautiful, having creamy skin and dark, sky-blue eyes. Her parents are dead, and she lives together with her baby sister and her aunt Judith in Fell’s Church.\textsuperscript{59} In the beginning of the novel, Elena is described to be very confused about her life and that is something one may when the reader gets to see Elena’s diary:

\begin{quote}
Home. I’m home. Why does that sound like a lie? I was born here in Fell’s Church. I’ve always lived in this house, always. This is my same old bedroom, with the scorch mark on the floorboards where Caroline and I tried to sneak cigarettes in 5th grade and nearly choked ourselves. […] This is my bed, my chair, my dresser. But right now everything looks strange to me, as if I don’t belong here. It’s me that’s out of place. And the worst thing is that I feel there’s somewhere I do belong, but I just can’t find it.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Ziegesar, p. 175, 180, 184-190, 199.
\textsuperscript{57} Ziegesar, p. 184-185.
\textsuperscript{58} Ziegesar, p. 48-49, 69, 184-185.
\textsuperscript{59} Smith, p. 1, 3, 70, 144.
\textsuperscript{60} Smith, p. 1.
In this quotation, through Elena’s thoughts, the reader gets to know that she is insecure about where she belongs in life and who she is as a person. However, the narrator generally describes her as very confident and she is also presented to be a very popular girl, fearless, emotional, adventurous, analytic, selfish, arrogant, cool, and irresistible and a girl with a very powerful personality. Moreover, her clothes are described several times in the novel. It is also expressed that she gets upset if there is a guy who does not see her as attractive, but also if she does not get what she wants. If a boy does reject her, she will struggle even harder to get him to fall for her. This might be seen when she sees Stefan for the first time, and he walk past her without even looking. After that moment, she felt even more in love with him and kept struggling to make him fall for her. However, Elena expresses several times that she feels watched, and that makes her even more insecure but also scared. At the end of the novel it might be seen that Elena is even more insecure about her life but also about her love for Stefan and his brother Damon.\textsuperscript{61}

2.2.2 Stefan and Damon

In the novel \textit{Vampire Diaries – The Awakening}, there are two male characters that are in focus, Stefan and Damon. Stefan is described to be of average height, with dark, wavy hair in an unusual cut, a straight nose, beautiful lips, high cheekbones and a lean muscular body. Further, his clothes are described several times and he is portrayed to be well dressed and his clothes are always described as expensive. The only family member you get to hear about is his brother Damon, it is mentioned that his father are dead. In the beginning of the novel, that Stefan is from Italy. He is, as various times, described to be lonely, strong, romantic, mysterious, polite, exotic, beautiful, exciting, different, emotional, sad, jealous and honest. Stefan it is described that he do not want any attention, he wants to be a person standing in the background and not in the centre of attention.\textsuperscript{62}

Damon is described to be graceful, sensual and a beautiful dark guy with dark hair and black eyes. Like Stefan, it is mentioned that he is from Italy. Furthermore, he is described to be aggressive, sensual, strong, selfish, quiet, arrogant, insensitive and evil.\textsuperscript{63} Moreover, Damon is an irresponsible person which is explained in following quotation:

\begin{quote}
[...] Damon had announced he was quitting University. He would never forget that. He had never seen his father so angry… “What do you mean you are not going back?” [...] “I would have thought even you could understand such a simple sentence, Father. Shall I repeat it in Latin for you?” [...] “Is it not bad enough that when you are at school you waste your time and my money?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Smith, p. 3-4, 14-15, 18, 34-36, 38, 39, 65, 70, 72, 74, 76, 197.
\textsuperscript{62} Smith, p. 6, 11-13, 18, 22-26, 36, 51, 83-84, 88, 104-105, 130, 134, 140-144, 166, 173-174, 194.
\textsuperscript{63} Smith, p. 13, 24-27, 125-126, 178, 189.
Oh, yes, I know all about the gambling, the jousting, and the women. And I know that if it were not for your secretary and your tutors you would be failing every course. But now you mean to disgrace me utterly. And why?  

In this excerpt from the book, his arrogance as well as his irresistibility are clear. He does not want to go to school, he gambles a lot and he is fond of different women. Even his brother described him to be irresponsible because he is more interested in women, gambling and drinking then his school or his family members.

2.2.3 Male – Female Relationships

In the beginning of the novel the relationship between Stefan and Elena is presented. This relationship is characterized by the attraction between them. However, it is described that Elena is the one who is pushier than him, and she wants to get close to him no matter what. Stefan, on the other hand, does not want Elena from the beginning because she reminds him of his previous love. Every time Elena comes close to him, he rejects her, which makes her fight even more. But still, Stefan does not take the first step; Elena must do so to even get to know him. Her initiatives can be seen in the following quotation: “I told Stefan to call me today, but why don’t we walk over to the boarding house instead? It’s not far from here.” When Elena manages to make Stefan want her, the reader can see that he is as weak for her as she for him.

Moreover, Elena’s thoughts regarding her life and where she belongs changes, she is happier and more outgoing when she is with Stefan. Even though the two of them often are together, there is not much intimacy between them. When they do kiss, Elena is the one kissing Stefan and not the other way around even though she describes that she is waiting for him to kiss her. “She reached up within the restraining circle of his arms and caught his face between her two hands. […] and she kissed the predatory mouth that had threatened her a few minutes ago”. In this situation, Elena is the initiator. Elena is also the one to say that she loves him - sometimes Stefan does not even respond to that. However, they are very honest to each other about their past and they talk about everything.

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64 Smith, p 24.
65 Smith, p. 24-27.
66 Smith, p. 57, 143-144, 183.
67 Smith, p. 112.
68 Smith, p. 167, 194.
69 Smith, p. 184-186.
70 Smith, p. 184-186.
71 Smith, p. 93, 112-113
The relationship between Damon and Elena cannot be called a love relationship, however, they do have some kind of a relationship and it is described that they are very attracted to each other.\footnote{Smith, p. 204-208} In the following quotation, there is a description of Damon and Elena’s first meeting, but also of her immediate attraction to him:

> What am I doing? She thought in shock. I was about to let him kiss me. A total stranger, someone I met only a few minutes ago. But that wasn’t the worst thing. For those few minutes, something unbelievable had happened. For those few minutes, she had forgotten Stefan.\footnote{Smith, p. 127.}

Between Elena and Damon, in contrast to Stefan and Elena’s relationship, Damon is the initiator and he is the one fighting for Elena’s love. It is described that she is waiting for him to appear and not the other way around. Damon’s attraction to Elena also occurs, for example, when he is threatening his brother Stefan and telling him that he does not want anything else but Elena and if he does not get her to be his, he will kill Stefan.\footnote{Smith, p. 127.}

### 2.3 Comparative Analysis – Gossip Girl and The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening

After presenting every main character that is in focus and how they are portrayed, but also the relationships between the male and the female characters, the following part will give a comparative analysis in order to see what similarities or differences there are and in what way these novels represent gender. Furthermore, the results will be discussed based on Butler, Connell and Hirdman’s gender theories, but the result will also be set against previous research on gender representation in character portrayals in young adult literature.

#### 2.3.1 Portrayal of the Female Characters

In *Gossip Girl* there are two girls in focus, Serena and Blair. Blair is described to be a virgin, that is, she is not sexually experienced. Serena, on the other hand, is described to be sexually experienced. It might be interpreted that neither Blair, nor Serena, is an independent girl, because one may see that they are always taken care of. For example, their parents are the ones who are maintaining their economy. Another sign of their lack of independence is that they are very linked to the people around them. Serena, for example, is very lonely when she is by herself and Blair does not know how to be on her own. Nikolajeva has constructed a schema of what characteristics the norm considers to be male and female. One characteristic mentioned is
independence which she says is masculine, while women are expected to be dependent.\textsuperscript{75} In other words, both Serena and Blair are following the norm because they are both very dependent on their social circle, their friends. Just like Blair and Serena, Elena in the novel \textit{Vampire Diaries – The Awakening}, is dependent when it comes to the economy, friends and love partners in her life, which means that she also follows the norm when it comes to this characteristic.

Elena, in \textit{The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening}, is described to primarily have masculine characteristics because she is fearless, adventurous, selfish, arrogant and analytical.\textsuperscript{76} Serena, in \textit{Gossip Girl} is, according to the norm, more masculine than feminine because she is described to be sexually experienced, entertaining, disorderly, irresponsible and busy. It is also described that she cannot handle alcohol, in other words, she is consuming more alcohol than she can handle. However, Blair in \textit{Gossip Girl} has more feminine characteristics than masculine ones because she is described to be a protective person, sexually inexperienced and jealous but also a good student that is a fan of theatre and movies. The few masculine characteristics she is described to have is that she is a cruel and immature person who likes sports. The few feminine personality characteristics that might be seen in Elena is that she is emotional, and she has a strong sense of morality, in other words, she think before she acts so she does not hurt anyone. Serena’s few feminine parts of her personality are that she is nervous, shy and impulsive.

Elena and Blair have a characteristic in common, and that is they are not sexually active.\textsuperscript{77} Connell mentions that, in the Western culture, women have for a long time expected to be a virgin.\textsuperscript{78} This means, both of the authors to these novels have chosen to let one or more girls follow the norm in that respect.

One feminine characteristic that all of the female characters have in common is that they are all described to be beautiful and their clothing is mentioned several times. This is an observation that Silber and Fisher also made in Chopin’s \textit{The Awakening}. They found that all of the female characters analyzed had one characteristic in common and that is they are all described to be beautiful.\textsuperscript{79} Furthermore, according Nikolajeva’s schema of what is expected by the norm from females and males, the characteristic of being beautiful is something that is primarily expected of

\textsuperscript{75} Nikolajeva, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{76} Nikolajeva, p. 129-130.
\textsuperscript{77} Nikolajeva, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{78} Connell, p. 58-61.
\textsuperscript{79} Fisher & Silber, p. 6-10.
women. This means that this essay goes hand in hand with Nikolajeva’s study but also with Fisher and Silber’s.

Nikolajeva uses concepts called static and dynamic characters as she talks about the characters and if they do or do not change throughout a novel, regarding both main characters and the rest of the characters in a story. A dynamic character changes during the story while a static person does not change. Generally, it might be seen that all three of the female characters analyzed are static, in other words, they do not change from the beginning to the end of the novels. Elena stays the same and so does Serena and Blair in as well. This might be interpreted as the female characters are being stubborn and not open for changes in their personalities, while the male characters are more open for changes.

2.3.2 Portrayal of the Male Characters

In Gossip Girl there are two male characters that are in focus, Nate and Daniel. Daniel and Nate might be seen as opposites to each other, because Nate is more masculine and Daniel is more feminine. Nate’s masculine characteristic of his personality is described to be self-confident, mature, analytical, sexually experienced, irresponsible, uncountable and honest. Daniel’s only masculine characteristic that is mentioned is that he likes to live on the edge, in other words, he is adventurous while his feminine characteristics are that he is nervous, shy, insecure, quiet, calm and sexually inexperienced.

In The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening, there are also two masculine characters in focus, Stefan and Damon. They might also be seen as each other’s opposites, because Stefan has more feminine characteristics and Damon has more masculine ones. Damon, as mentioned above, is described to be aggressive, strong, selfish, arrogant, intensive and irresponsible, which are all masculine characteristics according Nikolajeva. Stefan, on the other hand, is described to be masculine only by a few characteristics and that is his jealousy and lack of family connections. Damon’s feminine side can be seen when he is described to be quiet and sensual. Stefan is described as to be romantic, lonely and polite which are all feminine characteristics. One may see some similarities regarding their masculine characteristics between Nate and Damon and, in terms of feminine personality traits, between Daniel and Stefan.

81 Nikolajeva, p. 108.
82 Nikolajeva, p. 129.
83 Nikolajeva, p. 109.
84 Nikolajeva, p. 147-149.
As mentioned in the earlier, Nikolajeva claims that, according the norm, women are expected to be beautiful\(^{85}\) and so do Fisher and Silber\(^{86}\). However, this characteristic can also be found when talking about the male characters in these two books. Three persons out of four of the male characters analysed have been described to be beautiful and their clothes have also been mentioned to be good-looking. Fisher and Silber have found in their study that this is the case, and that is why they are claiming it.\(^{87}\) In other words, it can be stated that von Ziegesar and Smith have chosen to create male characters that break the norm in this aspect. Thus, they might be seen as examples of displaying conventionally feminine traits.

Another feminine characteristic that Stefan and Daniel have in common is that they are both emotional. Kåreland claims that John-John in \textit{Vinterviken}\(^{88}\) (Winter Bay) goes against the norm, because he is sometimes described to show his emotions which is expected from women and not men.\(^{89}\) Furthermore, Daniel’s, Stefan’s Nate’s and Damon’s, appearance is also described in dept and they are all described to be very beautiful. To be beautiful is, according the norm that Nikolajeva talks about, a feminine characteristic.\(^{90}\)

Two out of four male characters are portrayed as dynamic characters, in other words, they change during the storytelling. Stefan becomes more emotional and Daniel becomes a more open person. Damon and Nate are static characters while Daniel is dynamic. It is significant that both of these novels are a part of a series, which means that even Nate might change as the story moves on in the rest of the novels, but in this novel he remains a static character.\(^{91}\)

In summary, is it relevant to divide personal characteristics according to gender? Nikolajeva’s schema of gender characteristics\(^{92}\), which goes hand in hand with Hirdman’s theory of gender dichotomy\(^{93}\), has been applied here to see how these gender theories relate to gender portrayals in Von Ziegesar’s and Smith’s novels. As mentioned previously, Connell follows de Beauvoir’s thoughts when she claims that we are not \textit{born} to be a man or a woman; that is something we develop into. According to Connell, there are feminine men and masculine women. Furthermore, following Butler, Connell also says that our biological sex has nothing to do with our gender, gender is something that is constructed and it does not matter if you are a female or a male when

\(^{85}\) Nikolajeva, p 109.
\(^{86}\) Fisher, & Silber, p. 8.
\(^{87}\) Fisher & Silber, p. 9-10.
\(^{89}\) Kåreland, p. 337.
\(^{90}\) Kåreland, p. 336.
\(^{91}\) Nikolajeva, p. 109-110.
\(^{92}\) Nikolajeva, p. 129.
\(^{93}\) Hirdman, p. 115-117, 120-121.
speaking about feminine and masculine. This analysis concludes that all the analyzed characters, to some extent, break the norm. They all have both feminine and masculine characteristics.

Furthermore, Butler also says that this separation between male and female personality characteristics is a myth, because men and women are psychologically very alike, and this is something that Connell also claims. This is something that this essay proves as well, because it has not been possible to find a male or female character that is described to have only characteristics associated with one gender. Thus, one might also say that these narratives have moved on from the conventional view of feminine and masculine as a dichotomy that Hirdman talks about in relation to the characteristics of the sexes, in other words, femininity and masculinity cannot be kept separate.

### 2.3.4 Portrayal of the Male-Female Relationships

In *Vampire Diaries – The Awakening* there are two relationships of interest: the one between Elena and Stefan and the one between Elena and Damon. In neither of these relationships the sexes are equal; in both of them the girl is inferior because both of the boys are sexually active. Between Stefan and Elena, Elena is the one who is the initiator which makes her the one with power. However, she is the one who wants Stefan more than he wants her and this might be interpreted like she is in power. When it comes to Damon and Elena, Damon is the one who has an upper hand, because he is the initiator.

In *Gossip Girl* there are three relationships, the one between Daniel and Serena but also the ones between Nate and each of the girls, Serena and Blair. Just like between Stefan and Elena, the girls are the initiators in every relationship in this novel. Schmidl claims, in her article “It Takes Two to Tango” that the girl usually is the passive standby, which means that the girls are waiting for the boy to take a first step. In every relationship in the analyzed novels, girls are the ones who take the first steps because the male part does not do so. This means that the result of this study does not go hand in hand with Schmidl’s, because boys are, in majority, the ones who are passive in the two novels analyzed in this essay. In these novels, girls are the active ones but more often, the boys is the one who takes the first steps, like Elena and Stefan but also between

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95 Connell, p. 15-17, 20-22.
96 Butler, p. 140.
97 Schmidl, p. 295.
98 Schmidl, p. 295-296.
Elena and Damon. However, Hirdman’s theory brings up something called *gender contract*, which means that there are hidden gender contracts between the sexes in a relationship.\(^{99}\) These hidden contracts might be seen in these novels, because it is expected from the male part in a relationship to be the initiator, but here, they never are. Another example of a *gender contract* is that there always is a weak part in a relationship, in other words; love is not always mutual and equal.

In every relationship analyzed there is a female looking for a healthy love relationship, which they are expected to according the norm.\(^{100}\) Elena is looking for the love of her life, Serena feels lonely and is looking for a partner and Blair forgives her boyfriend even though he has had sex with her best friend. Uncertainty is something Schmidl claims is common in representations of romantic relationships. However, she believes that the male character is the one who is uncertain in *Hjärtans fröjd*.\(^{101}\) Kåreland reached the same result: in her study John-John, the male main character in *Vinterviken* [Winter Bay], is the one who is uncertain.\(^{102}\) This essay shows similar results to Schmild’s and Kåreland’s. Three of four boys who have been analyzed in this essay are uncertain in their relationships, Stefan, Nate and Daniel. Damon is the only male character that is secure in relation to girls.

Furthermore, all of the girls show some form of weakness for the boy in the relationship, which is expected according to the norm that Nikolajeva brings up.\(^{103}\) However, the boys also show weakness in relation to the girls in the relationships, which is not expected for them to do. Stefan does not want to be close to Elena but in the end he gives in, Nate show weakness in relation to Serena even though they are not a couple, he goes back to Blair after she throws him out but Damon on the other hand, who is generally described as insensitive, gives himself up to Elena. In summary, every male character in the relationships analyzed have shown weakness for the female part of the relationship, which means that they all go against the norm. This coincides with the results that Schmild’s study provided, in which she has identified a male character that shows weakness to the women he loves.\(^{104}\) My result in this essay may be interpreted as if the women have the power when speaking about the sexual part of their relationships, because girls are the ones who are the initiators and then the boys feel weakness in relation to the girls. However, even though the girls are in charge it is described several times that it is expected from

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\(^{99}\) Hirdman, p.120-122.

\(^{100}\) Nikolajeva, p. 129.

\(^{101}\) Nikolajeva, p. 128-129.

\(^{102}\) Kåreland, p. 340.

\(^{103}\) Nikolajeva, p. 129-130.

\(^{104}\) Schmidl, p. 300-303.
the girls that the boys should be the initiators. For instance, Elena is waiting for Stefan to kiss her and for Damon to come to her, Serena is waiting for Nate to call her and Blair is waiting for Nate to have sex with her. Despite this expectations it mostly ends with the girls are being impatient and therefore they take charge. On those grounds, it is clear that there is a hidden contract that Hirdman’s theory states occur in every relationship between a man and a woman. It is expected of the male characters to be in charge, which gives the male characters a certain form of power.

Additionally, there is a hidden gender contract between the genders in these novels; women are expected to be sexually loyal, which means that the males are in power because the same thing is not expected from them. This might also be seen as the female characters, the girls, are lower down in the hierarchy ladder. Hirdman claims that this is something that does exist in relationships and where these hidden contracts appear and this research proves that, in these two novels, it occurs. There is another view on this certain subject as well, women can be seen as if they have an upper hand in these kinds of relationships because it is up to them to decide when they will become sexually active and the men must wait. Furthermore, this hidden gender contract that Hirdman claims exist in every relationship between men and women also appears in these novels when it comes to who has an upper hand in the relationships. It is expected from the girls that the boys should be in charge, which means that the boys automatically are in power. It can be stated that the women are lower down in the hierarchy because of this. However, when the boys do not take the first step with the girls, the girls take charge and that is when they get the power in the relationships.

3. Final Conclusion

The aim of this study was to see how boys and girls are portrayed, but also how the relationships between the sexes are presented in L.J. Smith’s novel *The Vampire Diaries – The Awakening* and Cecily von Zesgar’s novel *Gossip Girl*. Firstly, I described the results of the analysis of each novel, with focus on the main male and main female characters and the relationship between them. This was followed by a comparative analysis based on previous research on gender and literary representations of gender in youth literature.

All of the main characters in these novels, both male and female ones are norm-breaking to some extent, as none of them only have characteristics traditionally associated with their sex.

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105 Hirdman, p. 120-122.
106 Hirdman, p.115-117, 120, 124.
107 Hirdman, p. 117-121.
However, it might be seen that there still are some divisions, for example that the girls are expected to be beautiful and emotional. Both previous research and gender theories indicate that specific characteristics have long been associated with each sex and that these features are opposites to one and other, which means that the sexes have been set as opposites. I have used Nikolajeva’s schema of characteristics as a useful template of the characteristics that are traditionally associated with femininity and masculinity. To see if these opposites between the sexes exist in these novels, I have tried to apply the gender theories formulated by Butler, Hirdman and Connell. As mentioned above, I have pointed out many different ways of being both masculine and feminine – and more importantly, that both men and women can have these characteristics. This means that this essay supports the general view that feminist like Butler, Connell, Hirdman share, which is that static gender characteristics and differences between the sexes are a socially constructed myth.

The only thing all the girls analysed have in common is that they all follow the norm when talking about their appearance. However, I have not found anything masculine that all of the boys have in common. Feminine characteristics that all of the male characters have in common, which go against the norm of what is expected from men, is that they all are weak in relation to the girls.

Furthermore, when it comes to the relationships I have, for example, found that there exists a hidden contract in the relationships when it comes to who should and should not be the initiator which Hirdman also talks about. It is expected of the boys to take the first step, but every relationship was initiated by the girl. Hirdman also talks about hierarchy, which can likewise be found in these novels, especially in relation to the relationships and feelings between boys and girls. It is expected from the girls to show more sensitivity to the boys, which gives the male characters the power and also put them higher up in the hierarchy. My results when it comes to portrayal of characters and the relationships between the sexes has been enhanced with relevant previous research that has shown similar results as this; that there are norm-breaking characters and relationships.

The reason I chose to study these two youth novels is because they seem to be popular among young people but also because I believe that literature is something very controversial in today’s society, in other words, literature is something that is very much discussed. The reason I did not choose books that is a part of the National Curriculum is because I do not believe that those books are read by teenagers in their spare time like these novels are. To make a student become
interested and make them want to discuss a book, I believe, that you must bring their reality in to the classroom. To retain old study material and fiction that are far away from a young adult’s reality is not instructive and stimulating. Furthermore, I do not believe that it will create discussions in class that could be created. Both researchers and The National Curriculum emphasize the importance with literature in schools. Since the Swedish school advocates for every students equal right¹⁰⁸, we should be interested in analysing how gender is portrayed in literature that young people actually do read. That is mainly because this should be discussed during lessons in order to achieve equality. Norm-breaking personalities and relationships do exist and to create discussion it might create equality. If these novels would be analysed in class, there would be a lot to discuss with young people; for example the fact that the girls are lower down on the hierarchy ladder or why certain things are expected from women or men, but also how we can make genders more equal.

My hope with this essay is to inspire others to problematize gender portrayals in literature, because it is a good tool to highlight issues of democracy that otherwise would not be discussed. However, it would be interesting to carry out a larger study about how teachers actually do work with gender perspectives in school but also how students themselves perceive these portrayals of male and female characters. I hope that I will see such a study in the future.

¹⁰⁸ Skolverket, p. 9-10, 32-34.
REFERENCES

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