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**A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF LISBETH SALANDER IN  
“THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO” THROUGH  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH**

**Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Bachelor in English**

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## **Dedication**

To the person who has supported me since day one, my mother. Without you I would not be where I am today, thank you for showing me what hard work looks like and for trusting me every step of the way.

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this dissertation project is to answer the question “What makes Lisbeth Salander such an unstable character throughout the whole book?” In order to answer the question research was made, using articles and research of other people from a psychological point of view. The researcher of this investigation is Sofía Gómez Tábora and Professor Lawrence Vega Miranda is the tutor.

Moreover, the method used was the Psychological Approach in order to analyze Lisbeth’s Salander behavior and mannerism. The result was to validate her whole persona through a series of investigations and problems.

The final conclusion of the investigation and the question what really makes Lisbeth such an unstable character? Throughout the book are the traumatic experiences she had to endure while growing up, and how the system failed her when she tried to seek help; therefore abandoning any kind of help. The research and objectives were successfully developed, so the readers are able to read “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” by Stieg Larsson and fully understand the main character.

### **Abstract**

El objetivo de este trabajo final de graduación era responder la pregunta "¿Qué hace a Lisbeth Salander un personaje tan inestable a lo largo de todo el libro?" La investigación se llevó a cabo por Sofía Gómez Tábora y el profesor Lawrence Vega Miranda, el tutor.

El que se utilizó fue el enfoque psicológico para analizar el comportamiento y la manera de ser de Lisbeth Salander. El resultado fue validar toda su persona a través de una serie de investigaciones y ejemplos.

La conclusión final de la investigación a la pregunta ¿qué hace realmente a Lisbeth un personaje tan inestable? Con su respectiva respuesta siendo que en el desarrollo de la trama del libro se muestran las experiencias traumáticas que tuvo que soportar mientras crecía, y cómo el sistema le falló cuando trató de buscar ayuda, por lo tanto, rechazando cualquier tipo de ayuda. La investigación y los objetivos se desarrollaron con éxito, por lo que los lectores pueden tener una idea más clara de La chica el dragón tatuado de Stieg Larsson y entender completamente al personaje principal.

## Chapter I

### Introductory Framework

**The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is a psychological thriller novel written by Stieg Larsson. The story itself is full of mystery, unsolved crimes, murders, thrill, and characters that will make the reader feel as if what is being read could be real. But most importantly, Lisbeth Salander, the main character is such a complex person that her actions and points of view throughout the book are what make it enjoyable and captivating to the reader.

Furthermore, this thesis investigation will be divided into three points allowing the reader to understand why Lisbeth behaves so unique, how the storyline is affected by it, and how her power as a woman is reflected. First, Lisbeth's childhood trauma, lifestyle and mental health will be discussed deeply to educate the reader about Lisbeth's actions, and manners. By doing this, the reader will have a background and then be capable of understanding Lisbeth's behavior towards life and men. Second, using the last point as a reference, Lisbeth has a disturbed and pretty cold way of looking at crimes and how they should be addressed by the policemen and society. Whenever Lisbeth sees a crime and most specifically a crime committed by a man against women, Lisbeth would think of numerous ideas of how to punish whoever commits the crimes and most specifically if the crime is against women. Lastly, the female hysteria will be discussed in a psychological matter coming from Lisbeth's perspective mainly due to the part her emotions play in the book, which is huge. Lisbeth is seen by people on the outside as someone unapproachable; her demeanor will often make people second guess themselves before making contact with her. Although Lisbeth tends to keep herself calm in public, in her insides she is usually

carried away by her emotions. Mostly to the point where her decision making becomes a little too excessive.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The following research is meant to educate people on Lisbeth's mysterious way of living life, and why she behaves as a pariah; most of the time looking to isolate herself and looking to revenge women that have been assaulted by men. This would affect the way the books carry its narrative; therefore, it is necessary to understand Lisbeth Salander.

Lisbeth's mental health has been compromised since she was young, as a result of a childhood trauma caused by her father, and that is represented in her daily basis. Her lifestyle is shown as an isolated, private and odd person mainly because of the damage she has been carrying through the years, even though she is an adult now social life has been difficult to achieve.

Also, Lisbeth's point of view regarding crimes against woman and punishments are based on her perception of justice and ethics. Lisbeth does not follow any society rules, and the main reason why she is good at her job as a researcher, besides being incredibly smart, is because she is a hacker. Lisbeth would go and dig up all kinds of information about the clients the company assigns her, and she will always deliver her results. Her boss at Milton Security would speak about her as the best he has, although he knows she might be misjudged.

For instance, Lisbeth explained to Blomkvist why she used his sexual life in the file he delivered Milton Security, and the power she has whenever she is given research:

In that case, it might amuse you to know that I also have principles comparable to your ethics committee. I call them Salander's Principles. One of them is that a bastard is always a bastard, and if I can hurt a bastard by digging up shit about him, then he deserves it. (Larsson, 2005, p. 492)

Moreover, part of the reason why Lisbeth behaves the way she does is that she has developed a hostile position towards men who abuse women since she was a child because of her father and the abuse she had to live and endure while growing up. She does take special pleasure in exposing and punishing men; therefore, her behavior and decision making are affected by her emotions. The reader could easily depict certain characteristics that apply to female hysteria.

In the book, **The Psychology of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, Melissa Burkley, Ph.D., and Dr. Stephanie Mullins-Sweatt writes: "While she may not always follow society's rules, she does have her own set of moral principles that abide by a code of right and wrong."

All of the three points mentioned above will be deeply researched psychologically, so the character of Lisbeth Salander can be understood by the reader. Which allows this research the following question: What makes Lisbeth Salander such an unstable character throughout the whole book, accordingly to a psychological perspective?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Investigation**

### **1.2.1 General Objective**

To analyze Lisbeth Salander's behavior in **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** through the four psychological phases of Charles Mauron's method of literary works

### **1.2.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To analyze Lisbeth's behavior throughout the entire book taking into consideration her childhood trauma, lifestyle, and mental health
2. To evaluate Lisbeth's sense of justice towards crimes made against women and how she sees men should be punished for them
3. To identify characteristics of female hysteria through Lisbeth's emotions, behavior, and decision making

## **1.3 Justification of the Study**

The following investigation has the purpose to enlighten readers to comprehend Salander's behavior throughout the entire story, towards life and why she reacts to certain people, and situations the way she does through the psychological approach.

This investigation will be of benefit mainly to the people who read the book or have watched the movie and did not understand why Lisbeth Salander was portrayed as a mentally disturbed or "odd" person. By analyzing the character's traits, personality, and most important mental status, readers will find sympathy towards what Lisbeth Salander is: an amazing, intelligent mastermind.

Furthermore, the psychoanalysis will not only give the reader an insight into Salander's point of view about men and violence, but will also demonstrate why is she so

mistrustful towards men and how she deals with people who in her perception are not good for society.

Also, the upcoming research at psychoticism will be made using the Charles Mauron method to interpret the literary work via psychoanalysis. This will allow an explanation about Lisbeth's mental health and behavior, and moreover, about the author's life link to the story.

#### **1.4 Antecedents**

**The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, written by Stieg Larsson, was inspired by an incident that happened when he was 15. According to Larsson, he stood by as someone he knew named Lisbeth was being raped by a three men gang, and Larsson lived full of guilt for the rest of his life. He tried and begged for her forgiveness, but she refused to acknowledge Larsson. Therefore, Lisbeth's story inspired **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, which Larsson not only made a rape victim, but also a complex character that had issues forgiving people, and had a different perspective of justice against people that committed crimes. These crimes would include men inflicting violence against women (the worst kind of men according to Lisbeth). Larsson created Lisbeth as a way of portraying this unstable woman who was able to take care of herself and even though she continues to be fearless regardless of how society classifies her and how damaged she thinks she is.

For example, when Milton Armansky found out Lisbeth's appearance was deceiving and misjudged.

Armansky was bewildered and also angry with himself for having so obviously misjudged her. He had taken her for stupid, maybe even retarded. He had not

expected that a girl who had cut so many classes in school that she did not graduate could write a report so grammatically correct. It also contained detailed observations and information, and he quite simply could not comprehend how she could have acquired such facts. (Larsson, 2005, p. 56)

Larsson also had other passions; he wasn't only a writer, but also a journalist. That's the reason why he was so fluent with Blomkvist's story. Stieg Larsson portrayed himself as Blomkvist who tried to help and comprehend Lisbeth, and eventually became her only friend, and even love interest at one point. Larsson's experience in journalism working as an editor of the foundation's magazine, Expo (socio-political investigations and financial difficulties), in Sweden, 1995 helped him to write about Blomkvist's issues at Millenium Magazine. (*The girl with the dragon tattoo*, p. VI)

Though, after Larsson's death at fifty years old while climbing the stairs to work, a colleague from Expo magazine told Rolling Stone magazine that Larsson had heard the story from someone else and he retold it as his own, so it is unknown if Lisbeth's story is real or just something he made up to create such a psychological thriller. (Prich, 2011).

Also moving further into the book's narrative, a huge part of Blomkvist and Lisbeth's investigation to solve who killed Harriet, comes with huge research of Vanger's family and the discovery of multiple unsolved murder's all around Sweden. Larsson took inspiration from Catrine da Costa Murder. Catrine who according to the Global Network of Sex Work Projects was a 28-year-old sex worker last seen in Malmskillnadsgatan (Stockholm street sex work zone) on June 10, 1984. Some of her body parts were found five weeks later in a bag near Solna, north of Stockholm. The case is known as

*Styckmordsrättegången* (the dismemberment murder trial), produced massive “outrage” among feminists parties. (Bindel, 2010). Catrine’s murder works as a reference for all the murders that Blomkvist and Lisbeth found through the Bible's passages. Let us take into consideration that Catrine disappeared during Pentecost, a religious theme that Larsson decided to bring due to Sweden's religious past.

Moving forward to Sweden, part of the story is carried in Hedestad (fictional place Larsson created) and actual Swedish towns. Swedish culture is profoundly demonstrated by the Vanger family, which due to their descendants they were part of a community and enjoyed traditions like festivals.

Different articles have been written internationally about Larsson literary references to the genre's classic on Swedish society. Reviewer Robert Dessaix writes:

His favorite targets are violence against women, the incompetence and cowardice of investigative journalists, the moral bankruptcy of big capital and the virulent strain of Nazism still festering away ... in Swedish society. (Dessaix, 2008)

Vanger family in the book is represented and portrayed as a family that believes they are close to each other, but toxic to one another. When Blomkvist finds out that one of the family member’s was a Nazi he was kind of afraid of coming into his house because he could feel the hatred. Something Larsson liked to write about due to Swedish society. Cecilia Ovesdotter Alm and Anna Westerstahl Stenport (2009) write that the novel "reflects—implicitly and explicitly—gaps between rhetoric and practice in Swedish policy and public discourse about complex relations between welfare state retrenchment, neoliberal corporate and economic practices, and politicized gender construction. The

novel, according to one article, “endorses a pragmatic acceptance of a neoliberal world order that is delocalized, dehumanized and misogynistic.”

Alm and Stenport (2009) added:

What most international (and Swedish) reviewers overlook is that the financial and moral corruptibility at the heart of **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is so profound as to indict most attributes associated with contemporary Sweden as democratic and gender-equal. The novel is far from what American critic Maureen Corrigan calls an “unflinching ... commonsense feminist social commentary. (Corrigan's article was “Super-Smart Noir with a Feminist Jolt,” National Public Radio, 23 September 2008.)

Internationally, the most well-recognized text written to get to know Lisbeth, known as “**The Psychology of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo: Understanding Lisbeth Salander and Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy**” tried to answer the following questions (BenBella Books, 2011):

What does Lisbeth's infamous dragon tattoo say about her?

Why is Lisbeth so drawn to Mikael, and what would they both need to do to make a relationship work?

How do we explain men like Martin Vanger, Nils Bjurman, and Alexander Zalachenko?

Is Lisbeth just as sexist and as psychopathic as they are?

What is it about Lisbeth that allows her to survive, even thrive, under extraordinary conditions?

How is Lisbeth like a Goth-punk Rorschach test?

What do we learn about ourselves from what we see in her?

The book not only was written by multiple psychologists and psychiatrists but also they try to come up with an explanation of Lisbeth's Salander persona. The investigation created by these people will help as a tool for research and guidance as a scientific source will validate it.

### 1.5 Scope

At the end of the research, such points as the main objectives and the research question will be thoroughly explained, giving the reader an answer towards the general objective of the research. Those goals being:

Recollecting information that supports the unclear mind of Lisbeth Salander through psychological research that will prove why this character is seen as a pariah. This will be achieved with the help of the book *The Psychology of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. According to Amazon, the book written by Robin S. Rosenberg, Ph.D. and with the help of other nineteen psychologists and psychiatrists that attempt to do what expert investigator Mikael Blomkvist could not: understand Lisbeth Salander.

1. Going deeply into her childhood trauma caused by her father Alexander Zalachenko, and how her own family and society took care of isolating her, and even categorize her as someone who is mentally ill because of it.
2. Deciding to live as a hermit, and shutting down every person that tries to help her, or become her friend.

3. Getting to the bottom of her hatred, and mistrust towards men.
4. Proving that Lisbeth's point of view in regard to punishing violence against women does not make her a psychopath.
5. Proving that characteristics of hysteria appear in the entire book, as well as in the Millenium Trilogy, affecting Lisbeth's entire decision making and behavior due to trauma issues.

## Chapter II

### Theoretical Framework

Before research is made about a literary work, the reader must be aware of what the book is about, and how the analysis will be taking place among characters, places, objects, and even emotions. Therefore aspects like literary theories, approaches, themes, symbols, motifs, the author's biography, and the story will be explained briefly.

#### 2.1 Literary Theories and Approaches

In this section of the theoretical framework, various aspects will be discussed such as the meaning literary theory, the theories that will be applied to the book **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, and the psychological approach that will be taken place throughout the entire research.

First of all, literature, according to Aristotle in **Ars Poetica**, comes from the Latin root *litteratura/litteratura* (derived itself from “*littera*” which means “letter or handwriting”)(p. 36) Normally, literature will be recognized as any series of written work with artistic or intellectual value. Plato considered literature just a series of false images projected in the mind of readers, which is the origin of fiction according to *the Legend of the Cavern*, in his book **The Republic**. Longinus considered literature as any artistic form that has as a purpose to teach people how to behave in society. In the Middle Times literature was seen as a corpus of fiction that could be used to teach people morality and religion, but carefully, since pagan tales could teach evil deeds. In the Renaissance, literature takes the form of short stories and plays, and with great writers like Shakespeare and Bacon it was used to show how society and men behave together. At the very beginnings of literature the stories, poems and all narratives were spoken or sung by poets known as *scops* or *trouvadeurs* in

other places, they memorized long texts and went from town to town singing those poems. An example of this kind of texts is Beowulf who was part of the oral tradition of literature. Nowadays, the concept of text has changed a lot, and literature is not only what is written, but as a cultural expression even a movie or a painting may be considered as part of the non-written verbal art forms. Before the Twentieth Century, people considered literature an art form that could criticize society and that could be used to entertain readers. In those times, literature was studied in the most important universities under certain methods that are barely used at the present. For example, professors of literature emphasized on the biography of the author only, learning about his life, about the influences he had to write his books, and in very few situations they referred to the book. Later on, they started referring more to the book, but the plot was not important, not even how the characters behaved, what was important was what the book could teach in terms of morality and ethics. This is the reason why during The Age of Reason most writers wrote huge novels to teach people good principles, including Christian values and references to the Bible. Jonathan Swift is a good example of this phenomenon with books like Gulliver's Travels. In the Nineteenth Century, critics and writers started to pay more attention to the context, to the characters and to the outcomes of the novels. This is the time when entertaining and teaching are important, but also technique will be important as part of the analysis, to discover how the novel works in the inside. It is in the United States with the New Critics and in Russia with group of theorists that the Formalistic approach is born. For these critics the book has to be examined in the same way a human body can be examined, dividing it into parts and then seeing how these parts work and how they are interconnected. This is how they decided to analyze characters, symbols, and situations of irony, types of conclusion, and the theme of the text. As time passed by and texts became more

complicated, theorists started using other approaches or theories to analyze literature. When archeological studies emphasized on the mythology of cultures, literature theorists started using myths and elements related to cultural theories like the archetypes and mythological structures to analyze narrative. This is how they discovered the used of mythological intertexts in some books , the use of archetypes like those related to men ( the good wizard, the hero, the warrior, the leader) and those related to women( the good mother, the witch, the femme fatale) or how books used elements coming from the Bible. With the feminist revolution, in the 1920's, theorists started using ideas coming from the social oppression and discrimination against women which are easily portrayed in many of the books of Jane Austen, like in **Pride and Prejudice**. With the upcoming of Sigmund Freud and the ideas of sexual repression as unconscious mechanisms that all human beings use to control the forces of the libido and live orderly in a society, theorists started using what is known at present as the psychoanalytical approach. This is how in the analysis of important novels like **The Turn of the Screw** by Henry James, professors of literature started using terms like psyche structure, the repression of the id, the unconscious, the ego versus the superego. But psychoanalysis has evolved quite much after Freud with other authors that are nowadays using other terms like trauma, and who have explored mental structure and human behavior more deeply and have come with new ideas about what hysteria is and who have studied with more complexity psycho phenomena. (A history of literary approaches, p.67)

Second, a theory, in contrast, may be defined as a principle that has been formed as an attempt to explain things that have already been substantiated by data. Moreover, it is already assumed for the sake of argument or investigation; therefore, because of the

investigation held and its control of data, it is understood to be more likely to be true than a hypothesis is.

By uniting both words and taking into consideration their respective meanings, it can be inferred that literary theory is a written proposal that will serve as proof for an investigation or research.

In this research four theories will be applied in the book **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson, so readers can be educated and guided through the main character's behavior and demeanor. Those theories being: the Trauma Theory, the Hysteria Theory, the Punishment Theory, and the Freudian Theory of Personality which will be explained below.

To start with, the Trauma Theory says that children who are exposed to repeated experiences of overwhelming arousal may never develop normal modulation of arousal. For instance, Lisbeth turns to investigations, tattoos, alcohol, cigarettes all of which help her to calm down, at least temporarily.

Secondly, the Hysteria Theory, which according to Freud, hysteria comes from traumatic origins. In the book **Hysteria Beyond Freud** (1993), it is explained how the trauma did not have to be a "railway accident" or an injury in the workplace; it could be a disturbing sexual experience that had been forgotten and repressed. Also, Freud noted that hysteria is created through a process of symbolization, and expressed emotional states. (Gilman, et al., 1993)

Taking into account that hysteria comes from traumatic origins, what is trauma? According to **the Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, trauma is a disordered psychic or

behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury. Odelya Gertel Kraybill, Ph.D. (2019), a trauma therapist, and consultant who has worked with the UN and NGOs around the world, said that a psychological trauma is a response involving complex debilitation of adaptive abilities such as emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual and social; following an event that was perceived by our nervous system as life-threatening to oneself or others (especially loved ones).

As a traumatic experience, there is Lisbeth after her sexual assault by Bjurman. Not only was she surprised because

e of the turn of events, but coming out of his apartment bruised, harmed, and not being able to seek for help made a huge impact on the narrative of the book. Lisbeth as it is, spent most of her childhood being abused multiple times, and this only made her remember it and revive that trauma one more time.

Using the last example, it is known that trauma can be a one-time event, a prolonged event or a series of events; as it is in Lisbeth's life.

Moreover, Gertel (2019) explains later in the article '*What Is Trauma?*' establishes that that traumatic injury shocks and changes all systems. These include:

1. Cognitive: The trauma affects the ability to process thoughts and make good judgments.
2. Emotional: Looping with emotions of shame, guilt, fear, anger, and pain
3. Physical: It affects muscles, joints, digestion and metabolism, temperature, sleep, immune system, etc.

4. Spiritual: The trauma affects our worldview, the lenses with which we see reality (typically so we see it as unsafe), our understanding and meaning of life, society, and the world.
5. Social: The trauma affects relationships with spouses, family, friends, colleagues, and strangers (because it affects so many so deeply, it affects structures of societies)

These traumatic injuries explain perfectly Lisbeth's reasoning toward life and her actions. From an early age, she had to fight for what she believed was correct, and due to the violence inflicted on her by her father, everyone thought she was stupid. Lisbeth stopped trying to find help and trusted no one because the kind of help she needed was neglected to her all of because of her father criminal status and power.

Which brings us to kinds of trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as PTSD is a set of alarm responses that occur when a survivor's nervous system remains on high alert after trauma in order to protect against further harm. (Gertel, 2019) The survivor's alert systems respond to reminders of traumatic memories as a threat. Often additional triggers are added to a growing list of stressors.

In addition, developmental trauma, according to Gertel, occurs early in life and disrupts normal sequences of brain development. As a result, other aspects of development such as emotional, physical, cognitive and social are also impacted. All of which formed Lisbeth in what society classifies as a pariah. As it is demonstrated in the book when it is explained why Lisbeth spent a part of her childhood in a Child's Clinic, Larsson (1993) wrote:

By then her casebook was filled with terms such as *introverted, socially inhibited, lacking in empathy, ego-fixated, psychopathic and asocial behaviour, difficulty in cooperating, and incapable of assimilating learning*. Anyone who read her casebook might be tempted to conclude that Salander was seriously retarded. (p.228)

In the first years of life, the brain develops from the bottom upwards. Lower parts of the brain are responsible for functions dedicated to ensuring survival and responding to stress. Upper parts of the brain are responsible for executive functions, like making sense of what you are experiencing or exercising moral judgment.

Development of the upper parts depends upon prior development of lower parts. In other words, the brain is meant to develop like a ladder, from the bottom-up. So when stress responses (typically due to persistent neglect or abuse) are repeatedly activated over an extended period in an infant or toddler or young child, sequential development of the brain is disturbed. The ladder develops, but foundational steps are missing and many things that follow are out of kilter. (Gertel, 2019)

Gertel (2019) explains that unaddressed developmental trauma can manifest in many ways. The most common psychological diagnoses that follow are bipolar disorder, personality disorders (especially borderline), ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, learning disabilities, social disabilities, addictions, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, complex PTSD, PTSD and so forth.

Memories are stored in explicit and implicit ways:

Explicit memories are verbal ones, conscious. People is aware of the facts and can typically recall them in a way that has order - story (event), people that they know, a certain location, etc. For example as Lisbeth recalls her little social life with “Evil Fingers”, and how much they have changed throughout the years.

During the five years she hung out with “Evil Fingers,” the girls began to change. Their hair colour became less extreme, and the clothing came more often from the H&M boutiques rather than from funky Myrorna. They studied or worked, and one of the girls became a mother. Salander felt as if she were the only one who had not changed a bit, which could also be interpreted as that she was simply marking time and going nowhere. (Larsson, 2005, p. 338)

Traumatic memories are implicit (autonomic). These are stored in an unconscious, fragmented form. They bear no sense of order or even a connection among themselves. They can, however, be easily activated by inputs from our senses in the present moment, causing us to intensely experience reminders of something that happened to us in the past.

Since traumatic memories are implicit, trauma therapy should in the beginning focus on bottom-up modalities that target areas of the brain known to store implicit memories. As trauma integration progresses, it becomes possible to engage with top-down modalities to process the narrative of the traumatic event/s. (Gertel, 2019)

Thirdly, the punishment Theory says that the sight of wrong-doing-particularly when it takes the form of cruelty-does inspire a sentiment of indignant resentment in healthy minds, Lisbeth does understand that people must be punished when committed a crime, but if it is one against women and involves abuse, she will not care whatsoever.

Lastly, the Freudian Theory of Personality according Journal Psyche (2018), says an adult personality emerges as a composite of early childhood experiences, such as Lisbeth's life experience with mental clinics and misdiagnosis. As she refused to even speak with someone that was seen as an "authority", Lisbeth was sent to a mental establishment.

When she turned thirteen, the court had decided, under laws governing the guardianship of minors that she should be entrusted to the locked ward at St. Stefan's Psychiatric Clinic for Children in Uppsala. The decision was primarily based on the fact that she was deemed to be emotionally disturbed and dangerously violent towards her classmates and possibly towards herself. (Larsson, 2005, p.225)

Therefore, the approach used in this research will be psychological. A psychological approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. In this investigation, the psychological study of a particular artist, Lisbeth Salander, will enlighten the fact that an author's biographical circumstances affect or influence their motivations and/or behavior.

Consequently, to explain how the psychological approach will be taken place in this investigation Freud will be discussed first. As the father of modern psychology, Freud has had an impact on many areas of human thought and analysis, which will allow placing Lisbeth's behavior in one of them, so the reader is well educated when reading the book.

Freud said that "we do things... really weird and silly things sometimes, for reasons that are to some degree hidden, inaccessible, beyond our direct control or awareness" (Lynn 199). Throughout the book, the reader can find this to be true at least on Lisbeth's behalf; even though she portrays this strong, hero persona for women, it is known that she is seen

weirdly in the eye of society in the book. She is described in the book as unsure of people around her, and she does not trust anyone that easily. Her ways of dealing with emotions might as well involve some pain, but that will be her outlet to escape whenever she feels.

The foundation of Freud's contribution to modern psychology is his emphasis on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche" (Guerin et al 154).

"Freud changed our notions of human behavior by exploring new or controversial areas such as wish fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression" (Kennedy 1477). All of which are demonstrated in the book by Lisbeth, she is a complex character from the very first moment the writer started to describe her in her first scene. A pariah, odd-looking, almost a mute. Lisbeth might be as well a depressed person but knows how to find little joy in things such as lovers or her hacking as a hobby.

That is the reason why the repression of thoughts and desires is what causes the unconscious to harbor many human's wants. Freud "examined symbols... to study how the unconscious mind expressed itself in coded form to avoid censorship of the conscious mind" (Kennedy 1477). Lisbeth from a very young age was repressed and not allowed to prove herself in any way, to an extent in which she is not bothered with it, and plays along making people believe she is not intelligent.

Her resistance to all attempts to measure, weigh, chart, analyze, or educate her applied also to her school work—the authorities could have her carried to a classroom and could chain her to the bench, but they could not stop her from closing her ears and refusing to lift a pen to write anything. She completed the nine years of compulsory schooling without a certificate. (Larsson, 2005, p. 226)

## 2.2 Themes, Symbols, Motifs

Moreover, to be able to understand a literary work and what the author tried to convey through actions or objects, the reader must understand first what a theme, symbol, and motif are. These aspects will be defined with their corresponding examples.

In every book, the reader will find themes, symbols, and a motif, **the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is no exception; they help the narrative of the story in ways of meaning and depth. These aspects will be explained below.

What is the theme? A theme is what the story means. The theme is a message or 'big idea.' In other words, what critical belief about life is the author trying to convey in the writing of a novel, play, short story or poem? This belief, or idea, transcends cultural barriers. It is usually universal. According to Debbie Notari (2016), an instructor from Study.com, when a theme is universal, it touches on the human experience, regardless of race or language.

In **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**, one of the themes that is found from the beginning is violence. The book itself carries violence as its own since Blomkvist is hired by the Vanger family to investigate Harriet's disappearance and by doing so with the help of Lisbeth, they discover more than a dozen murders carried by Martin and Gottfried Vanger. Even though this might seem a clear example, the main one is portrayed in Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 when Lisbeth is sexually assaulted by his court guardian Nils Bjurman.

Nils Bjurman first sexually assaulted Lisbeth in exchange for her finances, Lisbeth accepted since she saw no other choice. She then elaborated a plan in which she would

record the next assault, so she can have something against him. She did not know though, that he would turn even more violent than she thought, and brutally raped her.

Another theme would be judgment, this one is mostly directed at Lisbeth since day one. Lisbeth as it is physically described as someone small, skinny, with tattoos and piercings, and dressed as emo, followed by her personality of barely speaking and just observing, made people think she was a complete idiot or someone with problems. When in reality Lisbeth turns out to be more than expected by society; she is incredibly smart and a hacker which allows her research as a detective to be more thorough.

Moving forward, symbolism according to Shamekia Thomas (2011), an instructor from Study.com, is a figure of speech that is used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a work of literature. It is the use of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else. Some common types of symbolism include:

1. A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things without using the words 'like' or 'as'.
2. Allegory is an extended metaphor. An allegory can be an entire story, poem or book with symbolism that continues throughout the literary piece.

A motif according to Ann Casano (2017), an instructor from Study.com, is a recurring symbol that takes on a figurative meaning. We see them in books, films, and poems. A motif can be almost anything: an idea, an object, a concept, a character archetype, the weather, a color, or even a statement. Motifs are used to establish a theme or a certain mood; they have a symbolic meaning.

It's typically pretty clear when a writer is using a motif. They're not usually associated with hidden meanings because the writer wants to recognize them. They play a role in defining the makeup of a narrative.

The motif in **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** would be a criminal investigation; the whole book is based on solving murders and disappearances of people. There are policemen, media, and investigators (Blomkvist and Lisbeth) involved. Also, violence, crime, weapons, and lots of corruption.

### **2.3 Author's biography**

Karl Stig-Erland "Stieg" Larsson was born on August 15th, 1954 and passed away on November 9th, 2004. He was a Swedish journalist and writer. He is best known for writing the Millennium trilogy of crime novels, which were published posthumously, starting in 2005, after the author died suddenly of a heart attack.

The trilogy was adapted as four motion pictures in Sweden and the U.S. (for the first book only). For much of his life, Larsson lived and worked in Stockholm. His journalistic work covered socialist politics and he acted as an independent researcher of right-wing extremism. This aspect of his life inspired character Blomkvist who is a journalist and has his own business in which he uncovers political's scandals.

The book is based in Stockholm, Sweden just as Larsson's; he used his biographical environment and used it in his favor to write about a place he knew already. As well as his job background, Larsson used his main aspect in life to create Blomkvist and therefore solve multiple cases of murders using his skills of research in the investigation held by

Lisbeth and him. Also, he created this fictional battle between him and Wennerström, and with the help of Lisbeth created an exposé in the media to rein vindicates his name.

Moreover, Larson had originally planned a series of ten books and had completed two and most of a third when he began looking for publishers. At the time of his death in 2004, only three had been completed, and although accepted for publication, none had yet been printed. These were published as the Millennium series.(Wilson, 2015)

The first book in the series was published in Sweden as *Swedish: Män som hatar kvinnor* meaning *Men who hate women* (2005). It was titled for the English-language market as **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** and published in the United Kingdom in February 2008. It was awarded the Glass Key award as the best Nordic crime novel in 2005.

His second novel, *Flickan som lekte med Elden* (2006), **The Girl Who Played with Fire**, received the Best Swedish Crime Novel Award in 2006 and was published in the United Kingdom in January 2009.

The third novel, *Luftslottet som sprängdes* ('The Air Castle That Was Blown Up'), published in English as **The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest**, was published in the United Kingdom in October 2009 and the United States in May 2010.

Larsson left about three-quarters of a fourth novel on a notebook computer, now possessed by his partner, Eva Gabrielsson: synopses or manuscripts of the fifth and sixth in the series, which he intended to comprise an eventual total of ten books, may also exist. Gabrielsson has stated in her book, "There Are Things I Want You to Know" About Stieg Larsson and Me (2011) that she is capable of finishing the book.

The Swedish title is *Mannen som sökte sin skugga* (literal English translation: The Man Who Hunted his Shadow) and the English title is **The Girl Who Takes an Eye for an Eye**.

All of the books mentioned above have Lisbeth as her main character, allowing her to evolve and prove the reader that she is a mastermind hidden in a small body.

Novels are written by Stieg Larsson:

1. The Millennium series include:

1.1 *Män som hatar kvinnor* ("Men Who Hate Women"), 2005. English translation by Reg Keeland under the title *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, January 2008. The US release 16 September 2008.

1.2 *Flickan som lekte med Elden* ("The Girl Who Played with Fire"), 2006. English translation by Reg Keeland under the title *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, January 2009. The US release 28 July 2009.

1.3 *Luftslottet som sprängdes* ("The Air Castle That Was Blown Up"), 2007. English translation by Reg Keeland under the title *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*, October 2009 (UK release). US release date in May 2010.

## **2.4 Book's Plot**

The novel begins in December 2002, Mikael Blomkvist, publisher of the Swedish political magazine *Millennium*, loses a libel and defamation case involving allegations about billionaire industrialist Hans-Erik Wennerström. Blomkvist is sentenced to three months (deferred) in prison, and ordered to pay hefty damages and costs. He worries more

about the fate of his political magazine, Millennium. After thinking the matter over, he meets with Erika Berger, Millennium's editor-in-chief and Blomkvist's lover, and announces his intention to leave the magazine.

Soon afterward, he is invited to meet Henrik Vanger, a wealthy industrialist and the retired CEO of the Vanger Corporation, unaware that Vanger has checked into his personal and professional history; the investigation of Blomkvist's circumstances has been carried out by Lisbeth Salander, a brilliant but deeply troubled researcher, and computer hacker. Salander continues her research as requested and purchases an electronic cuff that will allow her to monitor Wennerström's computer while Blomkvist considers the job offer.

Vanger promises to provide Blomkvist with evidence against Wennerström in return for discovering what happened to Vanger's grandniece, Harriet, who disappeared in 1966 during a family gathering at the Vanger estate on Hedeby Island when the island was temporarily cut off from the mainland by a traffic accident on the bridge. Despite his interest in the mystery, Blomkvist feels reluctant to take the job since he has more important things to worry about. As Millennium continues to lose advertising revenue, Blomkvist finally decides to take the offer as a way to repair the damage to his career. Blomkvist moves to the island and begins to research the Vanger family history and Harriet's disappearance. As he does so, he meets most of the remaining Vanger clan, including Harriet's brother Martin, the current CEO of the company; Isabella, Martin and Harriet's mother; and Cecilia, a headmistress who was Harriet's younger aunt and friend.

Meanwhile, Salander's legal guardian Holger Palmgrem suffers a stroke and is replaced by Nils Bjurman, who uses his position to extort sexual favors from her and eventually rapes her.

After using a hidden camera to record her assault, and a week after the rape she returns to his home, handcuffs him to the bed, and tortures him while she threatens to publicize the recording of her rape. Ultimately she extracts Bjurman's promise that he will permit her access to her finances and work to have her declared legally competent. Satisfied, she tattoos a reminder of his perversion on his abdomen and then leaves. She is surprised when she gets the news that she is no longer needed to research the Wennerström affair.

On Hedeby Island, Blomkvist pursues new evidence in Harriet's disappearance, including photographs showing Harriet's discomfort at the sight of a young man. He also discovers a set of names and numbers believed to be old telephone numbers in Harriet's journal; however, his daughter Pernilla, passing through on the way to Bible camp, identifies them as passages from the Book of Leviticus, which describe rules about violent punishment of women. Blomkvist correlates one of them with the grotesque murder of a Vanger Corporation secretary in 1949, and realizes that he may be on the trail of a serial killer. Vanger's lawyer suggests Salander as a research assistant.

Blomkvist realizes that Salander hacked into his computer for the initial report, and confronts her to ask her to help with the investigation, to which she agrees. The two eventually become casual lovers. However, they realize they are being threatened when a local cat is left dismembered on their porch, and Blomkvist is shot at from a distance during

an afternoon jog. Meanwhile, they uncover the remaining four murders corresponding to what was described in Harriet's journal, as well as several more that fit the profile. Moreover, most of the murders occurred in locations where the Vanger Corporation did business. They are initially suspicious that the murderer was Gottfried Vanger, Martin and Harriet's deceased father, but they find out that he died before the last victim's death.

While Salander continues to hunt through Vanger Corporation's archives, Blomkvist manages to identify the man in the photograph: her brother Martin. However, before he can do anything, Martin takes Blomkvist prisoner, revealing that Gottfried "initiated" him into the ritual rape and murder of women before his death, and implies that Gottfried sexually abused both him and Harriet. Martin admits to murdering dozens of women but to Blomkvist's surprise, however, Martin disavows any knowledge of what happened to Harriet and attempts to suffocate Blomkvist. Salander bursts in just in time and beats Martin severely with a golf club. Martin flees by car, pursued by Salander, and commits suicide by purposely colliding with an oncoming truck. Hurriedly Salander gives chase, but a desperate Martin drives his vehicle into the oncoming lane and dies in a fiery car accident. The next day, Salander, Blomkvist, and Frode agree that they will not notify the police about the murders. Putting together all the pieces, Blomkvist realizes that Harriet is not dead. He contacts her, and she shares her part of the story and reunites with Henrik.

Believing that Cecilia's sister Anita, who now lives in London, is the only relative who might know something about Harriet's fate, Blomkvist and Salander meet her and learn that Harriet is still alive and living under Anita's name in Australia. When Blomkvist flies there to meet her, Harriet tells him the truth about her disappearance: her father and brother had repeatedly raped her, until she killed her father in self-defense. Martin was sent

away to a preparatory school, but he returned the day of her disappearance. Harriet realized she needed to escape, so she found a place to hide during the traffic accident, and Anita smuggled her to the mainland the next morning. Blomkvist persuades Harriet to return to Sweden, where she reunites with Henrik. Blomkvist then accompanies Salander to her mother's funeral.

Back in Sweden, Blomkvist learns that the evidence against Wennerström that Vanger promised him is useless. However, Salander hacks Wennerström's computer and discovered that his crimes go far beyond what Blomkvist documented. Using her evidence, Blomkvist prints an exposé and book which ruin Wennerström and catapults Millennium to national prominence. Salander, using her hacking skills, succeeds in stealing some 2.6 billion KR (about USD 260 million) from Wennerström's secret bank account. Blomkvist and Salander spend Christmas together in his holiday retreat. Shortly after, she goes to Blomkvist's home, intending to declare her love for him, but leaves when she sees him with his long-time lover and business partner Erika Berger.

Though Salander finally acknowledges her feelings for Blomkvist and prepares to confess them on Christmas, she finds him out with Millennium's editor-in-chief, Erika Berger. Her decision to walk away from the situation indicates a lack of closure between the two of them despite their successful solving of the case.

As a postscript, Salander continues to monitor Wennerström and after six months, anonymously informs a lawyer in Miami of his whereabouts. Four days later the body of Wennerström is found in Marbella, Spain, shot three times in the head.

## Chapter III

### Methodological Framework

In this chapter, it will be explained how the investigation of the novel **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo through a Psychological Analysis** will take place. What kind of research approach will be used, how the problem statement will be solved, the information sources used throughout the research, the different instruments used to achieve it, and how the data will be collected. According to **the Info Sci-Dictionary**, a methodological framework is an “approach for making explicit and structuring how a given task is performed”. (2013, p. 1871)

#### 3.1 Research Approach

A research approach is defined according to John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark as plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Moreover, the overall decision involves which approach should be used to study a topic. (Creswell, 2008, p. 3)

Two types of research approaches can be used, those being: qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative research according to **Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research** is "An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Some of its characteristics involve rising questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, processed data analysis moving to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Also, it includes narrative description, identification of major subjects and topics, and generalization. Using this style information

the novel will be inductively researched while focusing on the meaning of each concept of the book and help the complexity of it.

On the other hand, quantitative research according to **Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research** is "An approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables." (Creswell and Clark, 2011). These variables as mentioned before can be measured on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. As it is research-based in numbered data its final report will have to include assumptions about testing theories deductively, just as the qualitative, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.

Moreover, this research will have a qualitative approach since the book **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** will be analyzed through a psychological approach and as it was mentioned before part of qualitative research includes, exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Therefore, understanding Lisbeth Salander and the social environment in which she is involved will allow the reader to find it easy to comprehend the entire Millennium experience Lisbeth is part of. The main goal is being able to understand an unstable human and its many different reactions to the world itself.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design is a type of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach that provides specific direction for procedures in research design. Others have called them strategies of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The research designs that will be used in this investigation are narrative and phenomenological research. The narrative research will form an inquiry from the humanities found in the book while studying the lives of characters, and ask one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Riessman, 2008). The information collected will help the investigation to make a comparison between the book and people's experiences related to the story. Often, in the end, the narrative combines views from the people interviewed and the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews.

### **3.3 Information Sources**

Information sources are crucial for the development of quality research and literary analysis. The purpose of this project and according to the validation of **the Oxford Dictionaries**, information has been defined as "facts provided or learned about something or someone" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). On the other hand, sources have been defined as either "a place, person, or thing from which something originates or can be obtained" or "an entity that provides information" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Both definitions have a direct correlation as they refer to the acquisition of particular knowledge, taken from a specific origin.

The quality of research, and in this case, project development is heavily dependent on the quality of the sources of information used as a reference for the elaboration of a psychological analysis of **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**. The two sources of information that will be used in this investigation will include the primary and tertiary sources of information; the various examples of these kinds of sources will be outlined and defined to show their use in the research development.

First, **the Harvard Library** defines primary sources of information as "sources that provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation" (Harvard Library, 2017). These sources are determined by the characteristic of being first-hand information, either seen or witnessed or by the experience gathered in a direct and personal account or form. Primary sources are often considered of great value as they provide direct insight into a pertinent topic. They are considered crucial mediums because the great analytical value can be retrieved from them.

These types of sources tend to be produced upon a determined occurrence of activities but can include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral history. Other sources of primary information can include original documents, which encompass diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, official records, pamphlets, meetings notes and footage, creative works such as poetry drama, and novels are considered primary sources along with relics and artifacts.

Moving forward, there are secondary sources. These are "sources created by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events or conditions being researched" (Harvard Library, 2018). Although secondary sources are not gotten from

direct experience, they rely heavily on research and a critical analysis of what can be substantiated and used. Some examples of secondary sources are encyclopedias, textbooks, and articles, such as literature reviews.

Lastly, there are tertiary sources, those are sources that “index, abstract, organize, compile, or digest other sources.” (University of Minnesota Crookston, 2017). Some reference materials and textbooks are considered tertiary sources when their chief purpose is to list, summarize or simply repackage ideas or other information. Tertiary sources are usually not credited to a particular author.

In this research, the information sources that will be used are the secondary and tertiary. The secondary sources will be mainly from the book **The Psychology of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo: Understanding Lisbeth Salander and Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy** since it will help the investigation to comprehend Lisbeth's behavior. Also as a tertiary source the thesis of a student of the California Polytechnic State University.

### **3.4 Analysis Categories**

As an analysis category, the main analysis in the investigation will be a literary analysis. What is a literary analysis? As mentioned in a previous chapter, a literary analysis carefully examines a text, or one element of a text, such as character, setting, plot or theme of a story. The purpose of a literary analysis essay is to carefully examine and sometimes evaluate a work or an aspect of a work of literature.

The book *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, in this case, will be the work of literature that will be used in this investigation. The main goal is to be able to figure out the main

character of the book, Lisbeth Salander, who will be the main cause of the investigation being analyzed through a psychological approach.

First of all, what is the approach? According to **the Merriam-Webster Dictionary**, the approach definition is, "to take preliminary steps toward accomplishment or full knowledge or experience of (p. 110). In this investigation, the steps will be the whole research that needs to be made to understand Lisbeth's Salander character.

Therefore, the approach used in this research will be psychological. A psychological approach uses the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. In this investigation, the psychological study of a particular artist, Lisbeth Salander, will enlighten the fact that an author's biographical circumstances affect or influence their motivations and/or behavior.

The categories analysis in this investigation will be mainly represented as elements, such as Lisbeth's childhood. How her childhood impacted her adulthood and the mental state overall. As mentioned above the psychological approach will be a means to an end to reflect her point of view in life.

Also, the psychological environment will represent a huge element in the book, the whole plot is part of each character's life, but mainly Lisbeth's. Whether it was because of the Harriet case, her family, Blomkvist or Lisbeth; each character brought to the storyline certain emotions and personal baggage the help the book to become what it is now.

Moreover, an element of revenge will come to life mostly from Lisbeth's side. She had always been abused in each aspect of her life; she even has a guardian who has to manage

her payment status and overall life to justify her as a socially capable person. Lisbeth's driven behavior to solve Harriet's case, to bring revenge to women.

The element of feminism, mostly identified by Lisbeth and woman who portrayed distinguished parts of society. As mentioned above, by solving the cases of multiple murdered women and Harriet's case, she wanted to bring at least some peace and safety to each woman who has suffered abuse. To show how women as a unit are stronger and can fight each other's fights.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

In this investigation, some instruments will be used to collect the necessary information that will help the research objectives be solved. For that reason, some theories will be used, for example, The Trauma Theory Abbreviated, The Punishment Theory, The Hysteria Theory, and The Freudian Theory of Personality. These theories will help the development and collection of information to comprehend Lisbeth's behavior in **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**. The instruments that will be used are:

A complete set of tables that will explain each Theory, with its correspondent examples and explanations.

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
The Trauma Theory Abbreviated by Sandra L. Bloom, M.D.	“It's a reminder.” Chapter 14, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo	Lisbeth's coping mechanism.
	“In her world, this was the natural order of things. As a girl she was legal prey, especially if she was dressed in a worn black leather jacket and had pierced eyebrows, tattoos, and zero social status.” Chapter 12, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo	Sexual assaults in Sweden are normal and the police would not be of any help.

*Table 1 Trauma Theory*

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
The Punishment Theory	“Don’t ever fight with Lisbeth Salander. Her attitude towards the rest of the world is that if someone threatens her with a gun, she’ll get a bigger gun.” Chapter 30, The Girl Who Played with Fire	An eye for an eye.
	“One more thing”. She leaned forward again so that her face was only a couple of inches from his. "If you ever touch me again I will kill you. And that’s a promise” Chapter 14, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo	Lisbeth acknowledgement that she would do anything to keep safe and bring justice.

*Table 2 Punishment Theory*

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
The Hysteria Theory	<p>“One more thing”. She leaned forward again so that her face was only a couple of inches from his. "If you ever touch me again I will kill you. And that’s a promise” Chapter 14, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</p>	Go to the extremes without clear reasoning.
	<p>“Keep it in mind that I’m crazy, won’t you? Chapter 14, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</p>	Admits that she is about to do something out of mind.

*Table 3The Hysteria Theory*

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
The Freudian Theory of Personality	<p>"It did no good to cry, she had learned that early on. She had also learned that every time she tried to make someone aware of something in her life, the situation just got worse. Consequently, it was up to her to solve her problems by herself, using whatever methods she deemed necessary."</p> <p>— Stieg Larsson, <i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i></p>	Mental Health

*Table 4The Freudian Theory of Personality*

## Capítulo IV

### Data Analysis

In order to convey an investigation and research, it is necessary to take into account the novel that is going to be analyzed, opinion from experts and the researcher's analysis. Therefore, the approach used in the research must be explained and analyzed as well as the book. Moreover, the theories mentioned previously in Chapter III will give meaning to each example given in order to answer the questions the reader might have so far. Finally, themes, motifs, and symbols are going to be described.

#### 4.1 Approaches to the investigation:

According to William Moran, a researcher-writer for the Biblical Botanical Gardens Society: [bbgsusa.com](http://bbgsusa.com), an approach used in literature is the method, technique, and choice a writer uses to create a literary work. Therefore, an approach would allow researchers to have background supporting each statement.

The book that was chosen for this research is **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson. The book itself is a psychological thriller novel, filled with mystery, unsolved crimes, murders, suspense, technological advances, well-written characters and the most complex and odd satisfying main character, Lisbeth. It is a psychological thriller novel because of the way Stieg Larsson wrote everything.

First of all, what is a psychological thriller novel? A psychological thriller has a narrative which emphasizes the unstable or delusional psychological states of its characters. This is proven from the very first moment when Blomkvist is told about his sentence, and

he is at an absolute loss of himself and his accomplishments in life. He is devastated that his life word has been humiliated like this.

In terms of context and convention with similarities to Gothic and detective fiction in the sense of sometimes having a "dissolving sense of reality". It is often told through the viewpoint of psychologically stressed characters, revealing their distorted mental perceptions and focusing on the complex and often tortured relationships between obsessive and pathological characters. Psychological thrillers often incorporate elements of mystery, drama, action, and paranoia.

As it was explained in Chapter II, a psychological approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. Also, a psychological approach is a perspective that involves certain assumptions about human behavior: the way they function, which aspects of them are worthy of study and what research methods are appropriate for undertaking this study.

So, what is a psychological thriller? According, Peter Hutchings varied films have been labeled psychological thrillers, but it usually refers to "narratives with domesticated settings in which action is suppressed and where thrills are provided instead via investigations of the psychologies of the principal characters." (Hutchings, 2009). A distinguishing characteristic of a psychological thriller is it emphasizes the mental states of its characters: their perceptions, thoughts, distortions, and a general struggle to grasp reality.

According to director John Madden, psychological thrillers focus on story, character development, choice, and moral conflict; fear and anxiety drive the psychological tension in

unpredictable ways. Madden stated their lack of spectacle and a strong emphasis on character led to their decline in Hollywood popularity. (Bowie-Sell, 2012)

Psychological thrillers are suspenseful by exploiting uncertainty over characters' motives, honesty, and how they see the world. Films can also cause discomfort in audiences by privileging them with the information they wish to share with the characters; guilty characters may suffer similar distress by virtue of their knowledge. (Whitney, 2012)

However, James N. Frey defines psychological thrillers as a style, rather than a subgenre; Frey states good thrillers focus on the psychology of their antagonists and build suspense slowly through ambiguity. (Frey, 2010) Creators and/or film distributors or publishers who seek to distance themselves from the negative connotations of horror often categorize their work as a psychological thriller. The same situation can occur when critics label work to be a psychological thriller in order to elevate its perceived literary value.

These are some literary devices and techniques that characterize a psychological thriller novel (Breznican, 2005):

1. Plot twist: In **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson, there is an example of a plot twist in which they realize that Harriet is alive and that she was running from her brother. Also, that Blomkvist found who the killer of the unsolved murders was.
2. Unreliable narrator, the unreliable narrator as a common literary device used in psychological thrillers and traces it back to Edgar Allan Poe's influence on the genre. (Taylor, 2009) The example of this is found in **The Girl with the**

**Dragon Tattoo** since each chapter is read from someone else's perspective.

The narrator keeps changing through the entire novel.

3. MacGuffin is a goal or item that helps to move the plot. The MacGuffin is frequently only vaguely defined, and it can be used to increase suspense.

(Holden, 2011)

#### **4.2 Theories vs literary work:**

Furthermore, with the analysis of **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** by Stieg Larsson, parts of this literary work will be analyzed and backed by literary theories previously mentioned in Chapter III.

Based on the chart below, The Trauma Theory Abbreviated according to Sandra L. Bloom, M.D., explains that children who are exposed to repeated experiences of overwhelming arousal do not have the kind of safety and protection that they need for normal brain development. Therefore they may never develop normal modulation of arousal.

<b>Psychological Approach.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
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*Table 5 The Trauma Theory Explained*

<b>Theories.</b>		
<p>The Trauma Theory Abbreviated by Sandra L. Bloom, M.D.</p>	<p>“It's a reminder.” <b>Chapter 14,</b> <b>The Girl with the Dragon</b> <b>Tattoo</b></p>	<p>Lisbeth says this to the tattoo artist as she asks for a tattoo of a thin band around her ankle. She had just been raped and assaulted by Advokat Bjurman, her legal guardian.</p> <p>Readers will understand why Lisbeth turns to the investigation, tattoos, alcohol, cigarettes all of which help her to calm down, at least temporarily. Behaviors that are socially objectionable and even destructive are Lisbeth's only method of coping with overwhelming and uncontrollable emotions.</p>

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
The Punishment Theory	“Don’t ever fight with Lisbeth Salander. Her attitude towards the rest of the world is that if	An eye for an eye.

*Table 6The Punishment Theory Explained*

*Table 7The Punishment Theory Explained*

	<p>someone threatens her with a gun, she'll get a bigger gun." <b>Chapter 30, The Girl Who Played with Fire</b></p>	<p>Moreover, Lisbeth does understand that people must be punished when committed a crime, but if it is one against women and involves abuse, she will not care whatsoever. As well, as if it is directed at her, she will be ready to fight for herself since from a young age no one did; therefore, this will allow Lisbeth to take justice in her own hands. An eye for an eye, most to the men who take pleasure in making women feel useless or unintelligent.</p>
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	<p>“One more thing”. She leaned forward again so that her face was only a couple of inches from his. "If you ever touch me again I will kill you. And that’s a promise”</p> <p><b>Chapter 14, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</b></p>	<p>The ideal example of the Punishment Theory, Lisbeth went ahead and performed her own kind of justice. After being raped, she had enough evidence to be able to go to the police department and trapped Bjurman, but she had long lost hope with the policemen. As a child, she tried to warn everyone because of her father, but no one would take her seriously.</p>
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The punishment Theory says that the sight of wrong-doing-particularly when it takes the form of cruelty-does **inspire a sentiment of indignant resentment in healthy minds** and that it is right and reasonable that in all legal ways that sentiment should be gratified, no sensible person will deny. But that is only because experience shows that **the infliction of pain upon offenders is one of the most effectual ways-and in some cases the only effectual way-of producing amendment.** (Rashdall, 1891)

<b>Psychological Approach.</b>  <b>Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<p>The Hysteria Theory</p>	<p>“One more thing”. She leaned forward again so that her face was only a couple of inches from his. "If you ever touch me again I will kill you. And that’s a promise” Chapter 14, <b>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</b></p>	<p>Salander went to see Bjurman to let him know that after their last encounter he would no longer be with the upper hand. She had used all that anger and trauma she had lived and turned it into an act of complete loss of mind.</p>

*Table 8The Hysteria Theory Explained*

	“Keep it in mind that I’m crazy, won’t you? Chapter 14, <b>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</b>	Even Salander admits that what she is about to do is crazy and exaggerated. Though, she says it just to make sure that Bjurman would not take advantage of her ever again.
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As it was mentioned in Chapter II, according to Freud hysteria comes from traumatic origins. In the book "Hysteria Beyond Freud", it is explained how the trauma did not have to be a “railway accident” or an injury in the workplace; it could be a disturbing sexual experience that had been forgotten and repressed. Also, Freud noted that hysteria is created through a process of symbolization, and expressed emotional states.

<b>Psychological Approach. Theories.</b>	<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
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*Table 9 The Freudian Theory of Personality Explained*

<p>The Freudian Theory of Personality</p>	<p>"It did no good to cry, she had learned that early on. She had also learned that every time she tried to make someone aware of something in her life, the situation just got worse. Consequently, it was up to her to solve her problems by herself, using whatever methods she deemed necessary."  — Stieg Larsson, <b>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</b></p>	<p>For that reason, not every person completes the necessary tasks of every developmental stage, like Lisbeth, she was put through a medical diagnosis since a very young age when she was not unstable, but because of that. When they don't, the results can be a mental condition requiring psychoanalysis to achieve proper functioning.</p>
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The Freudian Theory of Personality says "an adult personality emerges as a composite of early childhood experiences, based on how these experiences are consciously and unconsciously processed within human developmental stages, and how these experiences shape the personality."

### 4.3 Themes, Motifs, and Symbols:

Since this was earlier explained in Chapter II, there will be a summary of what a theme, motif, and symbol are. These aspects will be defined with it is the correspondent's examples in a table.

What is the theme? A theme is what the story means for the reader. It is important to mention that there is not only one theme in a story. There may be millions of themes since millions of people draw out different interpretations. The theme is a message or 'big idea.' In this particular case, the analyst of this novel will use the evidence gathered to prove why she has gotten her theme of the novel. In other words, what critical belief about life is the author trying to convey in the writing of a novel, play, short story or poem? This belief, or idea, transcends cultural barriers. It is usually universal. When a theme is universal, it touches on the human experience, regardless of race or language.

*Table 10 Themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Violence	Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 when Lisbeth is sexually assaulted by his court guardian Nils Bjurman.	Even though violence is presented in the entire book, this specific one is incredibly raw. Bjurman who was Salander's court guardian had already assaulted her once, and she believed that if she recorded him she would be able to black mail him. In the end,

		Bjurman brutally raped her and Salander used the recording against him and tattooed him for two long hours, so she can provoke him the same kind of pain he inflicted on her.
Judgment	Judgmental thoughts are immediately created when people meet Lisbeth.	From an early age, Lisbeth decided that she would no longer talk since people did not believe her, because of this people treated her as if she had mental problems or completely useless. Also, her looks are not encouraging either. Thanks to her boss, she was able to demonstrate the entire opposite. She worked as a private investigator, but the reason why she was so good at her work was because of her hacking skills and her incredibly intelligent mind.
Justice	Through the entire book since Salander and Blomkvist are trying to solve a crime and bring justice.	Lisbeth decides to help Mikael in the quest of finding out who killed Harriet, mostly because she hates men who may harm any women due to her past

		experience, but also because she believes that everyone who commits a crime deserves a punishment.
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A motif is a recurring symbol that takes on a figurative meaning. We see them in books, films, and poems. A motif can be almost anything: an idea, an object, a concept, a character archetype, the weather, a color, or even a statement. Motifs are used to establish a theme or a certain mood; they have a symbolic meaning.

*Table 11*Symbols

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Tattoos	Lisbeth's tattoos represent her power over her body.	Salander's tattoos mark her immediately as an unorthodox figure and always draw the attention of others. However, though Salander's tattoos mark her as a nonconformist, they also indicate her control over her own body and her fierce self-possession. After her rape, Salander immediately goes and gets a tattoo: a slim band around her ankle. The act functions as a calculated assertion of her control over her own body. Likewise, the tattoo that she gives Bjurman indicates her control over his body and signifies

		<p>Salander's newfound power over him. Consequently, Bjurman too becomes marked as a social outsider, since the location of the tattoo and the nature of the words essentially cut him off from certain social interactions and reminds him consistently of Salander's power over him.</p>
Computers	Lisbeth's intelligence is powered by her hacking skills.	<p>Computers symbolize, throughout the novel, both the benefits of knowledge and power through information. Salander, the character who most utilizes technology, uses computers to protect herself, to find out information useful to her career, and to assure her independence financially. More importantly, however, computers serve throughout the novel as a way for the powerless to level the playing field. Salander takes advantage of her knowledge about Bjurman and her later intelligence about</p>

		<p>Wennerström to plan the downfalls of both men. Additionally, she gives Blomkvist the opportunity to do the same when she permits him to access Wennerström's hacked hard drive via her Macbook. In the later chapters of the novel, the Millennium staff's calculated refusal to use unprotected computers or to email effectively leaves Janne Dahlmann in the dark about their plans. In all cases, computers symbolize the myriad opportunities that information can provide, and they empower their users to make decisions, take calculated risks, and glean the knowledge necessary for financial, emotional, and even sometimes physical survival.</p>
<p>Geography</p>	<p>Blomkvist's situation at Hedeby.</p>	<p>The geography of Hedeby serves to define Blomkvist's relationship to</p>

		<p>the rest of the Vanger family and also to demonstrate the sense of isolation within the text. In particular, the closed-off location of the island serves to ensconce the Vanger family away from society, to preserve history, and to isolate Blomkvist from his old life and profession. Conversely, the urban bustle of Stockholm signals a shift in the novel's tone and almost always indicates Blomkvist's reconnection to his profession and to his old life.</p>
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Finally, symbolism is a figure of speech that is used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a work of literature. It is the use of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else.

Table 12 Motifs

Symbol	Example	Explanation
Criminal investigation	Harriet's Vanger unsolved case. Unsolved murders.	Blomkvist and Lisbeth spent a lot of time doing research and trying to investigate who killed Harriet. Through the entire novel, there are policemen, media, investigator, violence, crime, weapons and corruption.
Seasons	Blomkvist's mood through the entire novel.	Throughout the novel, the seasons often reflect Blomkvist's mood and, more importantly, signify major shifts in tone and plot. The bleak cold winter, as described in the book, when Blomkvist arrives in Hedeby symbolizes both his barren career and signifies the mistakes of his life, in which his personal relationships and his future prospects seem unlikely. Additionally, the return of spring, which heralds Blomkvist's return from prison, echoes the new

		promise of Blomkvist's future as well as his progress on the case.
Flowers	Harriet's birthday gift to her grandfather.	Dried flowers first appear in the prologue to the novel as a harbinger of that grief that brings Henrik Vanger to tears on his eightieth birthday. He explains to Blomkvist during their initial interview that the flowers, originally yearly birthday gifts from Harriet, once symbolized affection and love. However, the flowers have come to represent something much darker: On the most superficial level, the flowers symbolize Harriet's lost youth and the way that Harriet exists, preserved agelessly, in her family's memory. Though Henrik believes they are a taunt from Harriet's killer, Blomkvist considers them a chilling reminder of Henrik's obsession with the case and the long passage of

		<p>years since Harriet's presumed death. In the end, Harriet's reappearance and Blomkvist's resolution of the mystery restore to the flowers their original hopeful meaning. Originally a provocative signifier of obsession, death, and loss, they finally come to exemplify the profound love and affection a woman still holds for a beloved family member.</p>
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## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will give an end to the research carried out by the researcher. The main goal of this objective was to find out who Lisbeth Salander is and why it is such an enigma to the society of **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**.

Also, to make sure that her behavior, oddness, and mystery was completely understood by the readers. Allowing, the reader to comprehend Lisbeth's past, and how that is affecting her entire livelihood.

#### 5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion

The purpose of the conclusion is to make a summary of the objectives described at the beginning of the research and find out if an answer could be given to the reader, as well as how the objectives were solved throughout the investigation.

The general objective was to analyze Lisbeth Salander's behavior in **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** through the four phases of Charles Mauron's method of literary works. As moving further in the investigation the four phases were completed successfully.

1. The creative process is akin to dreaming awake: as such, it is a mimetic, and cathartic, representation of an unconscious impulse or desire that is best expressed and revealed by **metaphors** and symbols. Those were described in chapter II in which examples were carefully chosen.

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2. The juxtaposition of a writer's works leads the critic to define symbolical themes, and throughout **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** many symbols are found, and later explained in Chapter IV.
3. These metaphorical networks are significant of a latent inner reality, a reality that Sweden represents in **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**. Violence and crimes against women are the main parts of the novel's story.
4. The last phase consisted of linking the writer's literary creation to his own personal life which was explained in Chapter II how Stieg Larsson's life created the whole novel and how Blomkvist was a version of himself..

### 5.2 Conclusions

Part of the research is to make sure that the objectives fulfilled their purpose; therefore, an explanation of the entire investigation will be made in each objective.

#### **5.2.1 To analyze Lisbeth's behavior throughout the entire book taking into consideration her childhood trauma, lifestyle, and mental health**

Lisbeth is already a very complex character and the main goal of this objective was to allow the reader to understand better why the main character is different. It was possible to explain Lisbeth's behavior and persona by explaining the origin of her trauma while she was growing up. Through multiple articles and medical back up that allowed the reader to understand Lisbeth's psyche.

### **5.2.2 To evaluate Lisbeth's sense of justice towards crimes made against woman and how she sees fit men should be punished for it**

It is important that the person that reads **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** fully comprehend why Lisbeth might be classified as someone crazy, which she even admits in the book. Lisbeth had a lot of traumatic experiences growing up, which caused her to not trust authorities, and mainly men. Since she could not find the assistance needed, she decided to make her own justice based on her opinions, all of which was explained in Chapter II, II and IV.

### **5.2.3 To identify characteristics of female hysteria through Lisbeth's emotions, behavior, and decision making**

In Chapter II an explanation of the origin of hysteria in women was fully developed, as well as how hysteria is linked with traumatic experiences which at the end make a full circle and the reader is able to see how everything is connected in Lisbeth.

## **5.3 Restatement of the Research Question**

The research question is, What makes Lisbeth Salander such an unstable character throughout the whole book? The following reasons will answer the question:

5.2.1 Lisbeth was raised in a violent environment, and she only ever cared for her mother which was repeatedly abused by her father. Lisbeth on her quest to help her mother tried to go with the authorities and informed them of the situation, but no one ever believed her.

5.2.2 She was institutionalized as a child and from that moment she stopped talking to people and decided to take important matters to her own.

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5.2.3 The sexual assaults that Bjurman inflicted on her, made her relive her time in the psychiatric center.

What really makes Lisbeth such an unstable character throughout the book is the traumatic experiences she had to endure while growing up, and how the system failed her when she tried to seek help; therefore abandoning any kind of help.

### 5.4 Unexpected Results

There were not any unexpected results.

### 5.5 Recommendations:

These are some following recommendations in case someone decides to continue this one:

1. Conducting research from a translated book might be difficult, mainly when the names are in a whole different alphabet. Therefore, it is important to learn each name and be careful.
2. Be aware that time management is pretty important while doing research, so make a schedule and follow it.
3. **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is full of interesting characters; maybe the investigation could involve more of them and their perceptions of Lisbeth.
4. The development of Chapter II could use more information in regards to psychological behavior.

Moreover, **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** is incredibly complex, as well as their characters. It is interesting to find out other opinions or points of view in which it can be analyzed. Whoever wants to continue this research is welcomed to do so.

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