

## **Abstract**

**DISCOURSES ON "WOMEN"**

**STUDIES IN FEMINIST THINKING DURING THE 1930S IN SWEDEN**

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**This dissertation deals with feminist thinking in Sweden during the 1930s, from the perspective of Karl Mannheims sociology of knowledge and feminist research. While the sociology of knowledge perspective stresses the fact that thinking must be understood in terms of social relations and processes, and therefore must be understood through its location in specific historical and social contexts, the feminist perspective stresses that we live in a society where women and that which is associated with women are subordinated to men and that which is associated with men. At the same time "women" are not a coherent group, living under identical circumstances. Feminist thinking must therefore be understood as different modes of resistance. But this thinking also has to find ways to change this situation, presupposing the possibility of a social situation where the oppression of women no longer exists. Feminist thinking, then, is always utopian in this sense of the word.**

**As the main focus of my study I have chosen two women, who are central figures in swedish history, Elin Wägner (1882-1949) and Alva Myrdal (1902-1986). Elin Wägner and Alva Myrdal are known to have diverging views on women and society. During the 30s they were both prominent public personalities, as well as active within different parts of the women's movement. I have tried to understand the ideas of these women, both in relation to important processes and changes in society and in relation to the feminist discourse of the time. This involves both a presentation of this discourse, through the journals of four women's organizations, and a overview of the societal changes in the 30s.**

**While both Elin Wägner and Alva Myrdal can be seen as feminists, in that they both were fighting against the oppression of women in society, they meant quite different things with both "women" and "society", and they advocated different courses of action to change women's situation. In this study I have found it important to maintain respect of their differences, and not force their ideas into a synthesis. But it is also important to keep in mind the fact that their visions had in common, that they both wanted to see a future where women could realize their influence on the whole order of society. In that respect, none of their visions have been realized.**

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**Key words: Elin Wägner, Alva Myrdal, feminism, sociology of knowledge, social criticism, utopia, Sweden in the 1930s**

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