

Stella's Motherhood in the Film *Let Go* (2024)

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Abstrak

Let Go (2024), sebuah film, menggambarkan kompleksitas peran keibuan melalui karakter Stella, seorang ibu yang menghadapi tantangan emosional di tengah keluarga yang berada di ambang kehancuran. Studi ini menganalisis bagaimana peran keibuan Stella digambarkan dan bagaimana peran keibuannya mempengaruhi hubungan keluarga secara keseluruhan. Menggunakan pendekatan feminis matriks sentris Andrea O'Reilly, studi ini mengeksplorasi penggambaran keibuan Stella melalui metode deskriptif kualitatif dan analisis film, dengan memanfaatkan dialog dan elemen visual untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh keibuannya terhadap dinamika keluarga. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa peran Stella sebagai ibu tidak hanya dijalankan secara tradisional, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai agen transformasi, menciptakan ruang untuk rekonsiliasi antara suaminya dan anak-anaknya. Kesimpulannya, studi ini menegaskan bahwa peran keibuan Stella memainkan peran kunci dalam membentuk struktur dan ikatan keluarga dalam film *Let Go* (2024).

Kata Kunci: Keibuan, feminisme matrikentris, keibuan yang transformatif, hubungan keluarga

Abstract

Let Go (2024), a film, depicts complex motherhood through the character of Stella, a mother who experiences emotional challenges in the midst of a family on the verge of breaking apart. This study analyzed how Stella's motherhood is represented and how her motherhood influences the family relationship as a whole. Using Andrea O'Reilly's matricentric feminist approach, the study examined Stella's portrayal of motherhood through qualitative descriptive methods and film analysis, utilizing dialogue and visual elements to identify the influence of her motherhood on the family dynamic. The findings reveal that Stella's role as a mother is performed not only traditionally but also serves as an agent of transformation, creating a space for reconciliation between her husband and children. In conclusion, this study asserts that Stella's maternal role plays a pivotal role in shaping the structure and bonds of the family in the film *Let Go* (2024).

Keywords: Motherhood, matricentric feminism, transformative motherhood, family relationship

1. INTRODUCTION

Questions like "Should I be a mom?", "Will I be a good mom?", and "Will being a mom make me happy?" often have a wide variety of answers for each woman. For some women, becoming a mother is a source of pride, a dream, and even a significant achievement in life. However, other women assume that being a woman who earns the title of motherhood can be a burden or a way of life that they never imagined before. Becoming a mother is an experience that goes beyond the stages of pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, motherhood also involves adapting to new physical, cultural, intellectual, social, and political experiences (Hwang et al., 2022).

Motherhood is recognized as a dynamic process that changes every aspect of a woman's life. It requires her to discover the balance of motherhood, which occurs not only

during pregnancy, but also throughout her life (Kuipers et al., 2021). Becoming a mother means entering a role often defined by societal expectations, patriarchal norms, and cultural idealizations that are deeply rooted in historical and cultural contexts (Bhat, 2021). For example, mothers are expected to be the primary caregivers, managing day-to-day tasks, providing emotional support, and maintaining family warmth. In some traditional roles, mothers are expected to be subordinate to fathers or husbands in decision-making and care provision.

Popular entertainment media like film or series still widely portray mothers as figures reduced to a narrow, traditional framework. The media also portrays mothers as strong and full of unconditional love. This reinforces the "good mother" and "bad mother" stereotypes that influence public perceptions and attitudes (Lehner-Mear, 2021). Society positions mothers who embody the ideal of

a devoted caregiver, prioritizing the needs of their children and family over their own, as good and ideal mothers. Meanwhile, mothers who deviate from this ideal, exhibiting impatience or abuse and prioritizing themselves, fall into the bad mother category (Lehner-Mear, 2021).

Countering this narrative is the matricentric feminism developed by Andrea O'Reilly. Matricentric feminism places motherhood at the center of gender and family analysis and study. It defines motherhood as a social, political, and cultural institution rather than just a personal and individual experience (O'Reilly, 2016). *Let Go* (2024) is a relevant film because it explores the complexities of motherhood. This Swedish drama focuses on Stella, a mother of two who is facing a marital and family crisis, as well as her husband's emotional absence. Through the dynamics of a conflicted and emotional family, the film presents a portrait of Stella as the emotional, moral, and strength center of her family. The film does not require her to embody the dichotomy of a "good" or "perfect" mother. Stella plays an important role in maintaining her family's emotional stability and becomes the driving force in reuniting her family.

As the study of motherhood has developed, various studies have addressed the representation of mothers in film and other popular media. Several previous studies have also discussed motherhood in their research. One such study, conducted by Lee et al. (2024), employs Critical Feminist Theory to analyze and challenge traditional representations of motherhood in society through the film *Titli* (2020). The study explores the mother-child relationship and emphasizes the complexity and imperfection of mothers, subverting the traditional idea of pure maternal sacrifice (Lee et al., 2024). The second study was conducted by Ann-Kathrin Ruff (2020). This study uses radical feminist theory to analyze the role of mothers in the TV series *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019). The results show that the portrayal of mothers is still defined by the dichotomy of "good" and "bad," and that mothers are unique sources of power in the private sphere (Ruff, 2020).

The third study, conducted by Angela Emily Sebastian in 2024, employed an ecofeminist approach. It aimed to analyze *The New Wilderness* (2020) and explore the depiction of motherhood in ecodystopia. The results revealed the challenges and anxieties that mothers face, highlighting the interconnectedness of the environment, gender, and reproduction (Sebastian, 2024). A study conducted by Upasna Maharaj in 2024 also exists. This study uses qualitative methods to analyze the narratives and visuals of the film *The Lost Daughter* (2021) to explore the representation of motherhood using feminist theory. The analysis revealed that *The Lost Daughter*

(2021) portrays the reality of motherhood, challenging the traditional idealization of mothers as selfless individuals. This study also illustrates criticism of patriarchal control that dominates the role of mothers (Maharaj, 2024).

Elbayiyeva (2023) conducted a study that analyzed motherhood in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker using a matricentric approach. The results revealed that motherhood is portrayed in various ways, including empowering motherhood, community, and the relationship between mothers and their children, which allows them to express their artistic abilities (Elbayiyeva, 2023). Additionally, Rehana Gaffar and Huba Muhammed (2025) examined patriarchal motherhood practices experienced by Afghan mothers in the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi, exploring concepts such as intensive motherhood, motherwork, and maternal empowerment (Rehana et al., 2025).

Previous research has shown that the topic of motherhood has been explored repeatedly in literary works using various approaches and theories. Since no previous research has aimed to explore motherhood as a transformational agent within the family, this study intends to fill this void by analyzing Stella's motherhood and its influence on her relationships with her husband and children, as well as her efforts to restore her nearly broken family. Moreover, *Let Go* is a new film released in 2024, enabling this study to contribute to the evolution of motherhood representation in modern film. Adopting a matricentric feminist approach proposed by Andea O'Reilly, this study demonstrates that a mother's role extends beyond physical and emotional presence during childbirth, breastfeeding, nurturing, and raising children. She can also initiate family recovery, create spaces for reconciliation, and transmit values that can rebuild a family's integrity after it has been destroyed.

Andrea O'Reilly, a renowned women's scholar and feminist activist, has dedicated her academic career to challenging traditional feminist perspectives that trivialize or marginalize motherhood. With her groundbreaking books, such as *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, and Practice* (2016), which made a significant impact on the field. This essential guide offers a comprehensive understanding of motherhood studies and matricentric feminism, demonstrating O'Reilly's commitment to advancing these fields.

Matricentric feminism is a feminist lens that focuses on mothers and prioritizes the presence, voice, and reality of mothers (Baldwin, 2021). Matricentric feminism centers the experiences, needs, and concerns of mothers. It is committed to addressing the specific challenges that are often overlooked in traditional feminist theory and politics. Matricentric feminism asserts maternal subjectivity, arguing that mothers should be viewed as

autonomous individuals rather than as mere objects of analysis or victims of social structures. Mothers are complete individuals with a voice, a vision of life, and the capacity for independence. O'Reilly, (2016) states that the concept of subjectivity is central to the matricentric framework, which encompasses the unique experiences, perspectives, and needs that shape identity. She believes that motherhood is not a one-size-fits-all experience but rather a unique experience shaped by one's own circumstances, personal history, and interactions with others.

Matricentric feminism challenges the traditional view of mothers as passive by emphasizing their empowerment as active individuals in decision-making and shaping experiences. Agency, or the capacity to act and make choices, is an important aspect of motherhood. Empowering mothers means giving them control over decisions related to their bodies (e.g., pregnancy, abortion, and contraception), lives (e.g., education and work), and families (e.g., childcare, finances, and housing). Mothers' perspectives and needs should be recognized in every aspect of decision-making. However, maternal agency is limited by societal expectations, norms, and culture, and all decisions are shaped by personal aspirations and influenced by external factors, such as economics, social policies, and cultural norms (O'Reilly, 2010).

O'Reilly also asserts the concept of transformative motherhood, which emphasizes the potential of mothers to initiate change within individuals and communities. It is actively reflective of change and has the power to transform motherhood from an undervalued personal activity into a respected and significant force for change. This transformation also crowns motherhood as a revolutionary practice capable of challenging and reshaping the traditional, oppressive feminist system. It focuses on empowering and helping mothers grow personally by increasing their self-awareness, resilience, and understanding of their purpose.

Matricentric feminism challenges the traditional binary of "good mother" and "bad mother" because it reinforces patriarchal norms, shames women for not meeting unrealistic expectations, and is incompatible with empowering women. The "good mother" is portrayed as selfless, nurturing, and always obedient, an image that is unrealistic and unattainable. This leaves mothers feeling guilty, unsuccessful, and insecure. This binary aligns with patriarchal norms, expecting the "good mother" to prioritize her family's needs over her own, suppress her individuality, and conform to traditional gender roles. The label of a "bad mother" is used to shame women who cannot live up to the ideal of a "good mother." This stigma is often placed on working mothers, those who prioritize themselves over family, impulsive individuals, those in

chaotic states, emotionally distant people, and those who defy societal expectations and subvert patriarchal norms and power structures (Schmidt et al., 2023).

2. METHODS

This study is based on the 2024 film, *Let Go*, which tells the story of Stella, a mother who strives to keep her family intact. Her husband, Gustav, moves away from his roles as husband and father, and her children are in conflict with their parents. Through a series of conflicts and reconciliations, Stella becomes the main character who encourages the transformation of all her family members.

Using a feminist approach and film analysis, this study examines Stella's motherhood and its effect on family relationships through the matricentric concepts proposed by Andrea O'Reilly (2016).

The data source is the entire 1-hour-and-50-minute movie, and two types of data are used: textual data from subtitles and visual data from scenes in the movie.

First, the data is identified and classified according to the components of matricentric feminism. Then, the data is reduced and selected to find the strongest evidence to support the analysis. The TEEL technique was used for the analysis, with topics followed by evidence and elaboration. Conclusions were then drawn to ensure the research objectives were met.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Stella's Motherhood

Stella is portrayed as a mother under considerable emotional strain due to Gustav's absence as both a husband and a father. Under these circumstances, she must take on the full responsibility of caring for and raising her two children while trying to maintain the integrity of her household and the stability of her family. This section discusses how motherhood is represented through Stella in the film *Let Go* (2024).

3.1.1 Stella's Maternal Subjectivity and Identity

Stella is a complex and multidimensional character, a mother whose personality is far from the stereotypical feminist stigma that mothers are passive caregivers. However, Stella does not succumb to this stereotype. She has a strong identity, life vision, and commitment, and she makes crucial decisions in navigating her family.

Gustav: Let's sit down here. I think we should talk—

Stella: No, there's nothing to talk about. You're coming. This competition might not mean anything to you, but it does to her. So, we're going. That's it. End of discussion.

(09.31 – 09.42)

Matricentric feminism is based on the idea that a mother should be seen as a whole person and an autonomous

individual with her own identity, values, vision, mission, and ability to make her own decisions. The dialogue between Stella and Gustav demonstrates that she can voice her thoughts without interference and make crucial decisions that affect her entire family independently. She demonstrates her strength as a mother who acts as an active subject, reflecting a unique maternal autonomy. Stella is a testament to matricentric feminism. She demonstrates that a mother can have a strong identity, vision, and agency. She also challenges traditional norms that have historically expected mothers to submit to their partners, rules, and other authorities. By asserting her voice as an absolute truth, Stella challenges the traditional norms that undermine maternal subjectivity. She rejects the narrative and stigma that mothers are passive and weak.

3.1.2 Stella's Motherwork

Stella embodies a complex and structured form of motherhood that is highly valued. She plays the traditional role of a mother, naturally giving birth, breastfeeding, and providing long-term care and affection while raising children. Stella also actively acts as a household manager, mediator of family conflicts, and guardian of emotional stability. Stella embodies motherhood as an active role and has the capacity to manage family dynamics in various situations, going beyond performing her domestic duties as a mother.

Gustav's Mother: Everyone's so picky these days. I mean...

Stella: Manne has just been diagnosed with coeliac disease, so it means that he can't have any bread at all because he is completely intolerant.

Stella: Please don't worry. I always bring a bag of food with me, so it's all right.

(18.33 – 19.13)

According to O'Reilly, the domestic work of mothers, such as caring for their families, is often invisible, unappreciated, and uncompensated. The dialogue between Stella and Gustav's mother reveals the complexity and structure of Stella's work as a mother. She truly understands what Manne needs and plans special logistics for her gluten-free diet. She does more than feed her child; she pays attention to Manne's health condition and conducts research to ensure that Manne is safe from gluten-containing foods. Stella's work as a mother involves both medical and psychological elements. Traditional norms view her work managing Manne's food as a "natural maternal instinct," but matricentric feminism asserts that it is real labor demanding time, effort, skills, and attention.

The motherhood she embodies knows no spatial boundaries. She acts as an active mother figure, engaging in complex work centered on empathy, strategy, and medical knowledge, all without relying on Gustav or other external parties. Her motherhood cannot be reduced to domestic labor; rather, it is an act of love, responsibility, and careful, strategic planning that establishes her as an active agent in managing her family life.

Stella demonstrates that a mother can be a moral figure and a shaper of moral values within the family. Her motherhood encompasses not only physical and emotional values, but also serves as a guardian of the family's moral boundaries.



Figure 1. Stella was advising Anna not to forge her signature. (03.30)

Matricentric feminism, proposed by Andrea O'Reilly, states that motherhood is not only centered on the daily care of children and family, or the management of household logistics, but also includes the role of moral authority within the family. As shown in the figure, Anna and Stella are arguing because Stella found out that Anna forged the parents' signature so that she could participate in the pole dance competition.

Although Stella supported Anna's decision to join the pole dance, she didn't let Anna forge her signature. Stella supports Anna by respecting her autonomy without sacrificing it for conservative morality. However, she also doesn't allow Anna to act without limits. By acting as Anna's moral guardian and defending her rights and wishes, Stella exemplifies a complex, authentic, and political form of motherhood. Stella's motherhood should be understood as not only a nurturing role, but also as that of an ethical leader and moral shaper within the family unit.

3.1.3 Stella's Dual Roles

Due to Gustav's absence, Stella must live her life as a mother who has to fulfill the roles of both mother and father. She should be raising the children and running the household with Gustav. However, Gustav consciously withdrew from his role as a husband and father, and as a result, he was only physically present in the family without fulfilling his responsibilities.



Figure 2. Anna asking Stella for help as a trusted figure. (15.01-15.05)

The scene at the airport, in which Anna encounters difficulties when her pole-dancing equipment triggers the security check sensor, reflects Stella's dual roles. Anna reflexively calls out to Stella for help and explains the situation. Gustav is present in this scene but does not respond verbally or non-verbally. He stands passively in the background, unwilling to get involved. He does not offer help or show empathy toward Anna as a father would. He shows no intention or action to clarify or defend Anna, even though the incident occurred right in front of him. In this situation, Stella acts not only as a mother who protects her children and their belongings, but also as an emotional advocate who represents Anna in addressing social issues. Stella's role as a reliable figure and emotional caregiver for Anna is similar to her role for her youngest child, Manne.

Gustav: Okay. It's okay, Okay. Whoa. It's all right. Whatever it is, we can fix it.

Manne: Tell mummy, she knows what to do.

Gustav: Yeah, but daddy also know what to do. Come on, let's go.

(1.06.10 – 1.06.20)

In the above dialogue, Manne spontaneously says, "Tell Mummy; she knows what to do," even though Gustav is standing right in front of him. This indicates Manne's low level of trust and security toward his father. Manne does not mention his father, suggesting that Gustav is not considered an emotionally relevant father figure and that no attachment has been established between them. There is no indication that Gustav is a savior to Manne or that Manne can rely on him in times of crisis or when he feels unsafe.

This shows that the emotional labor in their family has fallen entirely to Stella. In matricentric feminism, the mother's role as the family's emotional support is often equated with love or nature, and is considered a duty of mothers. However, it is actually an important aspect of emotional labor that plays a crucial role in family psychology. Stella's role as guardian of her family's stability during crises and in everyday life is an unavoidable response to Gustav's absence.

3.1.4 Stella's Embodied Experience

As a mother and wife, Stella must prioritize her children's and family's stability over her own physical needs and emotional well-being. The pressures she faces as a mother are often overlooked in social discourse. Matricentric believes that motherhood is not only about caregiving and housework, but also about hidden, exhausting physical and mental labor.



Figure 3. Stella cried alone in the bathroom to maintain her family's emotional stability. (7.23)

The figure illustrates the lowest point in a mother's experience: the quietest and most painful reality of motherhood. Here, a mother must manage, postpone, and hide her pain and disappointment alone. This pain is caused by a system that denies her the social space to acknowledge failure, vulnerability, or to openly express negative emotions. The hand covering her mouth, blank stare, and falling tears are honest expressions of maternal self-silencing, a process in which a mother learns to prioritize her family's psychological stability over her own emotional needs.



Figure 4. Stella's smiles as a symbol to rise and survive. (20.23)

This scene takes place amid a commotion at the dinner table. Stella feels dizzy and hears ringing in her ears. She isolates herself as a form of self-protection. The most complex and crucial representation of embodied motherhood is her decision to hide her cancer, take a deep breath, and smile again after looking inside her medicine bag.

The moment depicted in the figure is heart-wrenching. Stella decides to save herself by stepping away from the chaos. She sits alone and takes a deep breath, then exhales slowly. After briefly glancing at the bag that likely contains medication, she smiles. This is not just a regular breathing exercise, but rather an internal ritual that Stella performs to reset herself and keep moving forward—a

profound form of struggle and decision for a mother. The deep breath Stella takes provides her with a moment of reflection, during which she acknowledges and accepts her illness, fragility, sadness, and despair, yet she forces herself to return to her family.

Stella embodies the maternal instinct to care for her family despite her limitations. She is always present and fulfills all of her family's needs. She does this not because she never gets tired, but because she realizes her presence is very much needed and her body is the main source of stability for her family.

3.1.5 Good Mother vs Bad Mother

Although Stella's portrayal in the 2024 film *Let Go* does not explicitly state that she labels herself as a "good" or "bad" mother, the narrative and events surrounding her portray the idea that mothers are always subject to social judgment. She becomes a form of resistance against the patriarchal narrative that makes motherhood an idealistic and rigid function that oppresses women.

Stella: As a mother, your job is to say that everything will be all right. Even if you know it won't be.

(1.40.12 – 1.40.20)

In a patriarchal system, a good mother is expected to exhibit positive traits such as patience, forgiveness, and steadfastness. Stella's line, "Your job is to say that everything will be all right...", encapsulates the notion that mothers are a source of hope, even when they are under pressure and struggling.

Anna: You do everything wrong, Mum. Just everything. You're always on at me. You're always on at everyone else too! And you're always nagging. It's like you don't give a fuck what we really want... Stop controlling my life! You're suffocating me! Suffocating me!

Stella: I was trying to have a good time. But I fucked up. I'm sorry. But, do you know what, Anna? I'm only human. I fail sometimes.

(1.08.43-1.09.50)

The relationship between Anna and Stella demonstrates that the perception of a "bad mother" may stem from an immature child's perspective. Over time, Anna realizes that Stella's actions, which Anna initially perceived as a "bad mother," are actually her way of showing love and affection. In the above dialogue, the phrase "I'm only human. I fail sometimes" represents Stella's desire to be seen as an ordinary human being who acknowledges herself as a subject rather than a symbol. She does not want to be seen merely as a caregiver, but

rather as an individual with feelings of fatigue and wounds who desires understanding.

Stella is a mother who firmly rejects the extreme "good mother" and "bad mother" narratives by showing that all mothers deserve love, even if they are imperfect. She represents a mother who dares to fail and dares to try again, even at the cost of her own well-being. Through her efforts to reclaim the identity of motherhood from the patriarchal system that divides motherhood into the two extreme categories of "good" and "bad" mother, she embodies the symbol of motherhood.

3.2 Stella's Motherhood Affects the Family Relationship

After analyzing how motherhood is portrayed for Stella in the film, this subchapter will discuss the impact of Stella's motherhood on family relationships. The analysis will explore the direct impact of Stella's motherhood on her husband, Anna, and Manne. It will also discuss how Stella becomes the center of reconciliation and stability in her family.

3.2.1 The Transformation of Gustav & Stella's Relationship

Stella's motherhood has been instrumental in rebuilding her family's domestic relationships, including her relationship with her husband, Gustav. She has become a key figure in enabling Gustav to experience repentance, self-reflection, and reengagement with the family.

Gustav: My kids don't ever answer me

Stella: Gustav, have you considered that there's a reason for that?

Gustav: and u know, I suppose?

Stella: I do, yeah. You're distracted. Your mind is completely elsewhere! You haven't a clue what's going on with them, cause you're always apart. They see! They see that you don't see them. That you always... that you don't listen to me.

(29.40 – 30.00)

According to the evidence data, this occurred when Stella finally let go of all the emotions she had been holding back. This incident became a turning point in her transformation, revealing motherhood as a force of resistance rather than merely a source of support. Although Stella had always been quiet and reserved, she did not lack a voice. She believed that strategic silence was the most appropriate way to protect her family. Her outburst reveals that motherhood does not have to be silent and graceful. A maternal outcry can express pain and demand changes within the family. The statement "You don't listen to me" shows that Gustav's emotional decisions impact not only the children, but Stella as well.

Stella: it's harder to fight than you realise when you don't feel seen.

Gustav: but I see you. Believe me, I see you. I see what you've done for this family. And I'm very, very sorry for what I've put you through. And what I've done to our family.

(12.32.41- 1.33.17)

This evidence shows that Gustav recognizes and validates Stella's existence and what she does. The sentence "I see what you've done for this family" is important because it validates Stella's motherhood as emotional work and a structural pillar that maintains the family's integrity. This validation is important, not because it can instantly repair their relationship, but because it gives

Stella what she has lacked all this time. This validation is not just empathy; it shifts the perspective that a mother's role is merely supporting, but also holding the relational structure. Rather than waiting for Gustav to change, Stella created the conditions for change, using her maternal strength to reformulate her relationship with him. She became the center of her family, not because she was controlling, but because she healed, spoke up, and refused to disappear behind the narrative of an invisible, unappreciated mother.

3.2.2 The Transformation of Stella and Anna's Relationship

The relationship between Stella and Anna is initially tense due to the difference in authority between motherhood and the needs of adolescence. This causes Anna to become a moody teenager who is not close to Stella or other family members.

Anna: You do everything wrong, Mum. Just everything. You're always on at me. You're always on at everyone else too! And you're always nagging. It's like you don't give a fuck what we really want... Stop controlling my life! You're suffocating me! Suffocating me!

(1.08.43 – 1.09.54)

The evidence shows that Anna perceives Stella's presence as an invasion of her personal space and a symbol of control. The patriarchal frame interprets overly controlling mothers as "bad mothers." However, through Stella, motherhood asserts that overly caring mothers are not necessarily bad or oppressive; rather, it emphasizes that Stella's emotional control and forms of affection are valuable and strategic.



Figure 5. Anna and Stella who have successfully fixed their relationship. (1.14.38)

The figure becomes an important point in showing that the values and presence of "too much" mothers are actually born out of love and affection, not domination that seeks to suffocate. Anna's embrace is the culmination of Stella's transformation. It shows that her motherhood creates an emotional space that transforms resistance into acceptance. The initial conflict between mother and child is not the end of the relationship but rather a new understanding of motherhood. Stella proves that motherhood involves actively reshaping the relationship with one's child.

3.2.3 The Transformation of Gustav and His Children's Relationship

Stella's role as a mother created an opportunity for Gustav to return to Anna's life as a father. This demonstrates that mothers can facilitate connections between children and fathers, providing opportunities for meaningful interactions.

Anna: You've ruined everything! You always ruined everything!

Anna: You're so fucking useless, you know that?
 (35.50 – 36.55)

Gustav's absence was both physical and emotional. He failed to understand her needs, interests, and talents, neglecting to provide her with the necessities and important items she needed for pole dancing. "You're so fucking useless," Anna said, expressing her frustration with Gustav. However, Gustav did not remain passive. He tried to take on the role of a father by taking Anna to buy her necessities again, demonstrating his responsibility. This shows that Gustav provided a practical solution and began to take on his role as a father, demonstrating responsibility and reliability.



Figure 6. Gustav and Anna successfully transformed their relationship. (1.42.10)

Rather than deepening the disconnect between Anna and Gustav, Stella created space for Gustav to reengage, take responsibility, and decide for himself how to proceed. Figure 6 shows that transformation in the father-child relationship does not happen overnight. The mother plays an important role as an active agent who can read and create opportunities for the father to act. Though transformative motherhood does not create an instantaneous bridge for fathers and children to reconnect, Stella's initiative as a mother is crucial in fostering healing.

Stella's success as a mother is reflected in her ability to reshape the relationship between Gustav and Manne. Initially, Manne was very emotionally dependent on Stella. Stella fulfilled her role as a transformative mother by encouraging Gustav to become a reliable father figure.

Manne: Tell mummy, she knows what to do.

Gustav: Yeah, but daddy also know what to do. Come on, let's go.

(1.06.10 – 1.06.20)

This evidence shows the close bond between Manne and Stella, which resulted from Gustav's prolonged absence. Stella became the only person Manne trusted and relied on. At that point, however, Stella gave Gustav the opportunity to play his part in the family's recovery process.



Figure 7. Manne's transformation of trust in Gustav. (1.14.37)

The phrase "You're the best pal" was more than just a spontaneous expression; it symbolized the beginning of the restoration of the father-son relationship through small actions. Calling Gustav as a "pal" means that Manne considers him a friend who cares about him and can be

relied on. This demonstrates Stella's success in using her authority to create opportunities for the father's participation rather than to dominate. The repair of the relationship that occurred due to Stella's motherhood is an example of transformative motherhood, which not only aims to protect children, but also to create space for Gustav to grow.

Stella's motherhood is described not only as the actions of a mother who provides physical care and emotional support, but also as a transformative practice that creates and facilitates the foundation for reconciliation among family members. Stella transcends traditional and patriarchal feminist roles by demonstrating a motherhood that goes beyond nurturing to build emotional bonds within the family. This enables transformations in roles and relationships that involve structural shifts in the family's dynamics, values, and intergenerational connections.



Figure 8. A symbol of Stella's motherhood, a family reunited. (1.15.45)

Stella's approach to motherhood goes beyond loving and attentive parenting. She builds her family's emotional capacity to care for and connect with each other. A family doesn't have to be perfect to be whole. They can still be stable even if there are past wounds and weaknesses among family members. This idea supports the notion that a mother can be the primary moral figure in a family. This is transformative motherhood as a strategic practice for creating social change within the family.

This scene is the climax of the film *Let Go*, in which all the family members gather and laugh together in the same bed. This moment represents the culmination of a long process, maximized by Stella, a mother who dreamed of a happy family. It is a transformative process of motherhood that binds, heals, and reshapes once-strained family relationships. Stella proves that motherhood can enable transformation for Gustav, Anna, Manne, and Stella herself. Her family's transformation did not occur instantly or as a result of conflict resolution. Rather, it occurred through the accumulation of quiet, consistent, long-term motherhood efforts that improved communication, relationships, and roles.

Additionally, an important aspect of Stella's motherhood is the moral values that live on after her

physical presence through the way her family continues their lives and treats others.

Stella: I was afraid of everything. But I realise our children are in a good place. That's all I've cared about. I know that they are surrounded by people who love them more than life itself. And that those of you who are still here will take care of everything. I know that you are here. All of you for them.

(1.42.18 – 1.43.10)



Figure 9. Gustav, Anna, and Manne stayed together as a family even after Stella is no longer with them. (1.43.57)

In her monologue, Stella expresses trust, marking the transition of leadership in terms of nurturing, physical, and emotional care from herself to other family members, especially her husband, Gustav, and her children. Stella spoke these words while undergoing cancer treatment at the hospital. She entrusted Gustav with the survival of her children and the integrity of her family because she knew she would be leaving them. She passed on love, family roles, emotional bonds, and responsibility for the structure and integrity of the family she had fought for. This emotional legacy proves that motherhood continues even when the mother is no longer physically present.

Stella's family fulfills their roles well, both socially and emotionally. Gustav, Stella's husband, is now always present and caring. He is no longer indifferent to his responsibilities toward his family. Anna, who was once a moody teenager, has begun to appreciate her mother's love, improving her relationship with and communication with her father. Manne, the youngest child, no longer relies solely on Stella for physical and emotional support. She also feels safe and comfortable with Gustav. In an emotionally powerful ending, Stella demonstrates her role as the mother who is the central figure in her family's transformation. She successfully transforms broken family relationships into a new, intact foundation, redefines gender roles, and eliminates patriarchy, leaving an emotional legacy that lives on in their daily lives and relationships.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusions

In *Let Go* (2024), Stella's experience with motherhood is depicted as complex and transformative, rejecting the notion of the perfect mother. Adopting a matricentric feminist perspective, Stella emerges as a real-life figure who remains the pillar of her family despite her limitations. She juggles the roles of mother and father, serving as caregiver, emotional leader, and symbol of life. Though she is perceived as controlling, Stella employs a maternal strategy of physical sacrifice and emotional restraint. Rather than conforming to patriarchal standards, Stella chooses to be a critical and reflective mother.

Her role significantly impacts family relationships through her stable and emotional mothering. She reunites with Anna, creates space for Gustav, and strengthens family bonds. She acts as a mediator and healer, not merely a household manager. Her emotional legacy persists even after her death. A matricentric perspective highlights motherhood as a transformative force that unites the family.

4.2 Suggestion

This study explores the representation of motherhood through the character Stella in the film *Let Go* (2024), using a matricentric feminist approach. The study examines how Stella's motherhood is portrayed and its impact on the family dynamic. This study focuses on maternal subjectivity, motherwork, dual roles, bodily experience, and the capacities and opportunities that shape Stella's transformative motherhood and reconcile the relationship between spouse, child, and family structure. Due to the limited scope of the research, however, intergenerational relations, family trauma, and the spiritual dimension of motherhood were not explored in depth in *Let Go*, especially considering that it is a new film released in 2024 with many interesting issues that can be explored. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine these dimensions using theoretical approaches that focus primarily on the mother's character. Additionally, this study is expected to inspire future research exploring motherhood with other interesting topics or approaches.

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