Family in crisis: 
A narrative analysis of gender roles and family hierarchy in the movie Turist

Author: Emil Andersson
Supervisor: Emilio Audissino
Examiner: Kristoffer Holt
Term: VT 2021
Subject: Media and communications
Level: Bachelor
Course code: 2MK10E
Abstract
This study conducts a narrative analysis of the film Turist, in order to explore how its portrayal of a contemporary Scandinavian family could provide insight into how gender roles are constructed. Drawing on classical feminist theory, film theory and giving special focus to explore how masculinity and the father’s role is portrayed in relation to femininity this essay uses a theoretical angle that is less explored than others.

In the methodology, this study examines both the film’s characters and the many technical aspects that a film is constructed from. When relevant to the analysis in its entirety the study will consider parameters such as dialogue, editing, camera movement, framing of scenes and music.

The results of the research show that the film is self-aware when constructing stereotypical gender roles that aligns itself with classical feminist theories. In the end the film implies that the family is comfortable to return to the traditional family hierarchy, because this is something they believe is expected from them.

Keywords
Feminist theory, masculinity, film theory, narrative analysis, family hierarchy

Thanks
I would like to give special thanks to my tutor Emilio Audissino, who helped guide this study and provided welcomed insight into the field of film studies.

Emil Andersson
Table of contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 4
2 Problematization ........................................................................................................... 4
3 Literature review ......................................................................................................... 5
  3.1 Previous research ..................................................................................................... 5
  3.2 Theory ....................................................................................................................... 6
    3.2.1 Feminist theory .................................................................................................. 6
    3.2.2 Freeland ............................................................................................................ 6
    3.2.3 Feminist film theory .......................................................................................... 7
    3.2.4 Connell & masculinity ...................................................................................... 7
4 Purpose and research questions ................................................................................. 8
  4.1 Research questions .................................................................................................. 8
5 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 9
  5.1 Qualitative method ................................................................................................... 9
  5.2 Sample ...................................................................................................................... 9
  5.3 Narrative analysis .................................................................................................... 9
    5.3.1 Steps of the analysis ......................................................................................... 10
  5.4 Reliability and validity ............................................................................................. 11
    5.4.1 Research ethics ................................................................................................. 11
6 Results & analysis ........................................................................................................ 11
  6.1 Introduction to Turist ............................................................................................... 12
  6.2 The avalanche .......................................................................................................... 13
  6.3 The restaurant .......................................................................................................... 15
  6.4 Changes .................................................................................................................... 16
  6.5 Polar opposites ........................................................................................................ 17
  6.6 The dinner ................................................................................................................ 18
    6.6.1 Mats and Fanny ................................................................................................. 20
  6.7 The breakdown ........................................................................................................ 20
  6.8 The ending ................................................................................................................ 22
    6.8.1 Epilogue .......................................................................................................... 22
7 Discussion & conclusion ............................................................................................. 23
  7.1 Answering research questions ................................................................................. 23
  7.2 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 24
  7.3 Future research ........................................................................................................ 24
8 Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 26
1 Introduction

What happens when the family father fails to fulfil his traditional responsibility to protect his family? The movie *Turist* (Ruben Östlund, 2014) tries to answer this question in its depiction of a Swedish family in crisis during a ski trip in the Alps. During the first act, an avalanche seemingly threatens to cause the death of the entire family and the father runs in panic trying to save himself. When the dust settles, it is revealed that the avalanche was controlled, and everybody is safe. The father’s actions, however, will have serious repercussions on the entire family.

*Turist* was released in 2014 to mostly positive reviews (Eklund, 2014, 15 August; Geijerstam, 2014, 8 August; Sahlin, 2014, 15 August), and a warm reception internationally that sparked the public’s interest for further work by the director. In interviews Östlund said that his aim with the film’s theme and topic is to challenge the idea of the core family that is still prevalent in contemporary Sweden (Wennö, 2014, 16 May). The core family, which also is named the nuclear family, is defined by a family which consist of one man, one woman and their children. These comments from the director seem to strive after criticizing the societal pressure on people to fall into certain molds, which raises the interest of examining if this goal is accomplished or if the filmmakers fall into the same pitfalls themselves tries to defy. Using *Turist* as a lens to give an understanding of how a family is expected to look like, the film as a miniature of our society, could provide deeper understanding of how we could release the pressure of conforming to specific, traditional roles.

This essay will conduct a qualitative analysis of *Turist* and examine how its central characters, the family, is portrayed. The aim is to explore how depicting a family in crisis will reveal how family hierarchy and gender roles are constructed in the film.

2 Problematization

Research and articles in this area tend to focus on the portrayal of women, such as Disney princesses and characters constructed from a male gaze (Funnell, 2018; Sumera, 2009). To differentiate this analysis from the norm and explore less frequently discussed angle, this essay will use the work of Raewyn Connell as a basis. Since the analysis of *Turist* mainly focus on the father of the family, studying the ways masculinity is explored in the film will be a more suitable approach.

Studying how stories about family is told in contemporary society is a good way to understand how people expect a family to look like. Jarlbro (2006) explain how the mainstream media today, still do not represent gender equally. Women, not just in Sweden are severely underrepresented in media, and as a consequence not everyone has the same claim to the public sphere as others. Jarlbro explain how this leads to a media climate where men often control how women are depicted, and therefore often reinforces a stereotypical view of society and gender roles. By conducting research in the field of family hierarchy and feminist theories this essay will discuss the eventual problems that exist when portraying a modern family. The analysis could potentially
also highlight how a film can help enlighten the public in how gender roles in a family does not need to be bound to traditional perceptions.

It is important to emphasis that gender roles are a complex topic that could be explored from many different angles and theories. This essay does not provide an answer or explanation the problem – only the angle that the time and scope of the essay could enable.

This study also acknowledges that sex and gender are different concepts and will not be used interchangeably. Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female, but gender often refer to the cultural, societal attributes that are assigned or adopted by people (Hirdman, 1988). A person’s sex does not necessarily have to be related to their gender identity.

3 Literature review

In this chapter the theoretical foundation of the essay is presented. First, similar research in the same field is mentioned and then the theoretical framework that will guide this study is summarized.

3.1 Previous research

When examining narratives about family hierarchy in television and cinema that surrounds zombies, Cady and Oates (2016) draws interesting conclusions about their construction. Even though many of the narratives featured strong female characters, they often tend to fall back into the same heteronormative family structures as before their societies fell. Cady and Oates discuss how these shows and films that where analyzed depicts an image that suggests that the traditional, nuclear family, is still necessary in order to build up a functioning community.

Beloso (2014) provides, to an extent, a contrast to this conclusion by discussing how E.T., a film made in the 80s, present a narrative which show that a child could grow up in the absence of the nuclear family structure and still be okay. The study however, highlights that the child still struggles with being alone and ignored, opening up for different readings of the film. Examining this study show that films are complex in their structure and different readings of the narrative could provide different results.

The research mentioned above all provide insight into how narratives about family are told in mainstream media and in cinema, but they often do this from a North American point of view. By conducting this study on Scandinavian film and by providing extra focus on masculinity, a new angle in this field will be explored.
3.2 Theory

3.2.1 Feminist theory

In deriving the arguments that will build up the analysis, the reasoning turns to feminist theories. When depicting gender roles in popular culture there has traditionally been a clear difference between men and women. Jarlbro’s (2006) summary of the gaps that exist between gender in popular culture, mainstream media and advertising is still relevant today - 15 years later. Jarlbro untangles how media that turn to men and women, despite criticism in later years, continue to consolidate stereotypical characteristics. Jarlbro challenges that fact that advertisement and media just mirror reality, instead they enforce beauty ideals and unrealistic standards for people by selecting which topics to focus on. When discussing gender equality in the public sphere, Jarlbro highlights that by not having equal representation there is no true democracy in media. Even though women in fields such as news reporting has increased, Jarlbro maintain that the reporting itself has not changed. This suggests that there is a societal structure that maintain the traditional views on gender roles, that is hard to break free from.

3.2.2 Freeland

Traditionally, studying film from a feminist point of view, has been psychoanalytic in its methodology, which means that they focus on the viewer’s perspective and the effects the film in turn has on the viewer (Freeland, 1996). Freeland explains that these approaches in some ways acknowledge narrative and the film itself as more technical artefacts, but these technical parameters often took the backseat in favor of other aspects such as the reception by the audience or the construction of character.

When Freeland highlighted the existing problems with feminist analysis of horror film that existed at the time, she proposed a new way approaching these analyses. Previous approaches tended to get too focused on pre-established theories and missed many of the nuances that films consist of. In Freeland’s proposed way of approaching feminist film analysis there is attention given to the fact that film is more than the characters that fill the screen. Editing, sound design, set design, lighting and camera movement all give meaning to film. These factors, if relevant, should therefore also be considered important for film analysis. Freeland suggest that a deeper reading of the text, the film, should be more reactive and flexible according to the specific film. This means that a specific theory does not constrain the analysis, and this fact gives the reader more room to make conclusions on a deeper level - closer to the film.

This study adopts many of the suggestions made by Freeland (1996), meaning that the analysis is less bound to a specific set of theories. As a complement to this approach, however, the research needs to be based on several clearly related theories and literary sources to ensure that the process has a direction. These theories and literature will be the backbone of the study and will be summarized in the following paragraphs.
3.2.3 Feminist film theory

Going further and turning to the area of feminist film theory examines how film traditionally is constructed from viewpoint that is, in its core, sexist (Collier, 2009). Collier highlights the problem with filmmaking that generally portrays women and men differently in actions, editing and camera movement. Collier describes this phenomenon as an industry standard in which women are more erotically objectified in their depiction in contrast to men.

The male gaze, as first mentioned by Mulvey (1975), is commonly used to describe the phenomenon surrounding the skewed way women are portrayed in relation to men in media and cinema. When describing the male gaze, Mulvey splits looking at the screen into active/male and passive/female. The fantasy of men is projected onto women in film and the female characters is constructed from these fantasies. This suggests that women are traditionally portrayed in a manner which only purpose is to serve men. Mulvey argues that there could be drawn a parallel between the screen and women, and the viewer and men. Collier (2009) confirms this point of view by highlighting that the control the camera and spectator have over film closely relates to the same aspects that build up patriarchy. According to Mulvey, the ways in which women are depicted in cinema traditionally show that their only clear goal that provide meaning is to bear children. Once this goal is achieved their relevance is neglected. Therefore, the woman in cinema exists only as a reaction to the man and she can never step out of her given place in order to challenge patriarchy.

McRobbie (2004) also uses theories in this area such as female individualization to explain how characters in movies can be portrayed to highlight the social constructs that are often repeated in popular cinema. Women and men in film often strive for specific and different goals in life and do not feel complete until the goals are accomplished. Most films romanticize these stereotypical tropes, but they could also be used to highlight and criticize these problems using irony or comedy. Using the film Bridget Jones as an example of this approach to feminist cinema, McRobbie explain how the film exaggerate women’s desire to not be alone and longing after a man to marry to show that this way of thinking is beginning to become obsolete.

3.2.4 Connell & masculinity

As stated in the introduction, Turist focus on the father’s place in the family hierarchy and his actions that may enforce or dispute what is expected from him from a traditional perspective. As this is the case, analyzing the portrayal of masculinity in the film is logical.

This essay looks to the work of Raewyn Connell and the idea that masculinity and femininity are directly intertwined and give meaning from and in relation to each other (Connell, 2005). Studying the portrayal of both femininity and masculinity should therefore be able to complement and give a better understanding of the other’s complexities. Wedgewood (2009) summarizes the impact Connell’s work has had on the field of exploring feminist theories by looking at masculinity and Connell’s work of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is described by Connell as the structure which attempts to motivate men as being dominant over women in society.
Hegemonic masculinity also covers the homophobic notion that homosexuality and other gender identities that are traditionally regarded as feminine in society should be subordinated to traditional masculinity.

Griffin (2009) explains that scholars who study feminist theories, by looking from the perspective of masculinity, find that communication norms can prohibit individuals from breaking free from the molds that communication practices lock them into. This is a suitable angle to explore considering the main character of the film is fighting the pressure of society's norms about how a family father should behave and act.

The "crisis of masculinity", as summarized by Winter (2004), is the concept of a movement that was first mentioned in the 1960s and describes the insecurity men were experiencing about masculinity at the time. This crisis is in part theorized to be a reaction to feminism and changes in how masculinity was constructed. Women rights movement were gaining popularity and men’s previous control and power of the public sphere was questioned. Even though Winter raises some valid criticism of the crisis of masculinity that has emerged in later years, mainly about how the theory relies on masculinity and femininity as separate constructs, the theory is still interesting to explore when discussing film. The theory clearly highlights the fear of losing their masculinity men were experiencing.

Cook (1982) uses the theory of the crisis of masculinity in practice when analyzing the film Raging Bull and discusses how film can question what it takes to be a man and what happens when traditional barriers are challenged. Cook reaches the conclusion that the viewer is expected to relate to and empathize when the main character in that film loses the traits of masculinity a man is expected to have.

4 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the study is to examine how gender roles and family hierarchy is portrayed in the film Turist. The representation of men and women in this film can provide insight in how gender roles in contemporary society balance equality (modern family structures) with traditional family structures in its choices when it comes to filmmaking and constructing character.

4.1 Research questions

In order to fully cover the purpose of the study and clarify the aspects that will be the focus - two research questions are formulated. These questions will motivate the choices of which parts of the film to analyze and help summarize the essay in the conclusion. The questions are as follows:

Q1: How is masculinity and the father’s role in a family portrayed in the film Turist?
Q2: How is femininity and the mother’s role in a family portrayed from a feminist point of view in the film Turist?
The first research question is designed to focus on the main character of the film, the father. By looking at this character’s portrayal of his actions and behavior, the study will strive to reach its goal of giving specific attention to masculinity in its analysis.

Since the essay has established in the literature review that masculinity does not exist on its own, but as a counterpart to femininity the second research question will look at the female characters surrounding the main character. This also means that the mother will be given equal focus in order to provide more accurate results in the study.

5 Methodology

In the following paragraphs, the motivation for the choice of method for this essay will be summarized and its relevance to the topic of the essay clarified.

5.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative method is described by Bryman (2016) to tend to be more open as a research strategy in comparison to quantitative method. Bryman describes how qualitative research is the only method that is suitable to combine with feminist research. Quantitative in contrast to qualitative research lack the tools to uncover the aspects that feminist theories need in order to be examined, and most knowledge and nuance would be lost in statistics. Considering these factors, the logical choice for this study is to use the methods provided by a qualitative point of view.

Specially, this essay will conduct a close reading of Turist which according to Boréus and Bergström (2018) is a method named qualitative text analysis. This approach focuses on which factors of the text that create meaning in different contexts. Esiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns & Wångerud (2017) explain that using qualitative text analysis over quantitative content analysis will give the reader the ability to reveal information that is not only based upon summarizing all the parts of a text. Instead, the researcher will be able to sort out parts of the text that is not relevant and focus on finding meaning beneath the surface in more significant parts.

5.2 Sample

The sample for this study is as previously stated the film Turist. Since the aim of the study from the beginning was to examine one contemporary Scandinavian film that could provide insight on feminist topics, this film was a natural choice. Since the sample only consist of one film there was no need to define any further rules of the sampling method. The aim, research questions and methodology were all formulated with this specific film as the intended material.

5.3 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is the specific form of text analysis this essay will conduct. This method will focus on how the film creates meaning using a more nuanced approach
than other methods. The term narrative itself is according to Boréus and Bergström (2018) not very defined in the academic world and is often adapted in a variety of fields. Narrative could be found in text, film, interviews, news articles, history, stories and in many other forms of communication. Its definition could be so broadly defined that some researchers argue that narrative could be found everywhere.

When discussing narrative, Johansson (2005) shares the conclusion that its definition is too spread out across different fields and therefore does not intend to give it a single definition. Instead, Johansson tries to interweave different definitions to give a clearer picture of how narrative could be explained. The findings summarized by Johansson show that narrative could be explained as a text, and different types of text could be categorized in five different categories: narrative, argumentative, instructive, conversing and reflective. Johansson explain that the category of narrative contains film, novels, drama and stories in conversation. This definition clearly supports that regarding film as a text and analyze its narrative is strongly motivated.

Analyzing narrative can uncover results that would be overlooked or lost using a more statistical and strict approach (Esiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns & Wängnerud, 2017). This means that the essay will be more attentive to smaller, and maybe more relevant, details that shape narrative and meaning in the way the story is told. A narrative analysis also closely resembles the approach proposed by Freeland (1996), which is the approach this study aims to follow, and is the reason why narrative analysis was chosen as a method over other viable alternatives.

Specifically adapting narrative analysis as a method to understand how meaning is created in film has been utilized in studies by Hu (2020) who studied the ways in which a woman in a male-dominated line of work is portrayed.

5.3.1 Steps of the analysis

Before the main part of the analysis can begin, the initial steps of the process must take place. Esiasson et al. (2017) points out that this part of the process does not have any clear guidelines, but in order to withhold good reliability it is important to approach the analysis with an open mind. Having any predetermined opinions or judging the material in advance could affect the results of the study in unexpected directions. These first readings of the text, or viewings of the film, should give the researcher an extensive insight of the film in order to make the deeper analysis of specific parts more approachable. Esiasson et al. explain that this will help the researcher not to make specific conclusions when analyzing smaller, fragmentized parts of the text, and not to forget to look at the part of the text as a whole.

To help the process to focus on the parts that are relevant for this study and the research questions it is also important to decide which parts of the film that should be analyzed. Johansson (2005) explain that looking at specific parts of a text and highlight different parts is a viable option. In the case of this study, this mean that not every scene needs to be analyzed, and time could be more efficiently planned to focus on relevant portions of the film.
When looking at specific scenes, in order to conduct the complex and deep-diving analysis of the text that is required by the method, all aspects of the scenes must be taken into consideration before selecting which parts are most important. This means that the researcher must consider dialogue, the behavior of the characters, framing of the scene, choice of music and the overall choices of what is included and not included in a scene. When this is done, you can begin to draw parallels within the film and look at the film as an entirety.

5.4 Reliability and validity

A common critique of using a narrative analysis as the method for a scientific study is mentioned by Böréus and Bergström (2018). The method is almost entirely interpretive in its design, which means that it is difficult for two researchers to reach the same conclusion with the same material. However, some argue that the possibility of giving an extensive analysis of a text will be more than sufficient to shed a light on the many elements that build and give meaning to a text. This means that if this essay roots itself closely to relevant theory, motivates every conclusion and does this by providing evidence from the film text it will be sufficient to meet the requirement of a scientific study.

5.4.1 Research ethics

This study aims to follow all guidelines in order to conduct an ethically sound process and, uphold good research practice and not to include personal or biased opinions (Swedish Research Council, 2021). This study does not include any interviews or direct involvement from other people which mean that all requirement for anonymity is either fulfilled or not relevant in this case.

6 Results & analysis

In the following paragraphs the main analysis will be performed, guided by the methodology described in previous chapter.

To start the analysis and to give the more technical parts of the study some structure, the characters that will the main focus of the study will be listed below (see figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tomas</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ebba</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mats</td>
<td>Friend of Tomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanny</td>
<td>Mats’s partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Ebba’s friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera &amp; Harry</td>
<td>Children of Tomas &amp; Ebba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Main characters

When the analysis is referencing “The family” this study is referring to Tomas, Ebba, Vera and Harry in order to make reading easier. Vera and Harry, the children in the
family, will not be given the same focus as the adult characters and only discussed when integral to the narrative.

The film and the characters as a whole will be factored in the analysis, but to further structure the process, a few key scenes will be given especial focus (see figure 2). This is done to align process to the chosen method, which states that not all parts of the film need to be given equal attention if they are not estimated to benefit the analysis. These scenes were assessed to be interesting to look at after repeated viewings of the film and put in relation to the questions the study aims to answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The avalanche</td>
<td>Inciting incidence of the film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The restaurant</td>
<td>Dinner at the restaurant with Tomas, Ebba, Charlotte and her partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>A series of important events between the main scenes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polar opposites</td>
<td>Conversation with Ebba and Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dinner</td>
<td>Dinner with Tomas, Ebba, Mats and Fanny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The breakdown</td>
<td>Tomas final breakdown in front of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ending</td>
<td>The final scenes of the film</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Main scenes*

To introduce each part of the analysis the overall plot and each main scene will be summarized in short in order to make it more accessible for the reader.

### 6.1 Introduction to Turist

The family is on a ski trip in the Alps, living at a luxurious hotel up in the snowy mountains, close to the ski slopes. Together, they seem to have a good vacation until the inciting incident occurs.

In the very first shot the viewer is introduced to a photographer who is directing the family into taking a portrait in front of the mountains. Dressed in snow clothes the family lines up with Tomas in the far left - followed by Ebba, Vera and Harry (see figure 3).
Figure 3. The family posing for a photograph (Östlund, 2014)

Everyone is smiling, seemingly feeling both amused and awkward by the photographer’s manner when giving instructions. This short scene is important to look at since it in a way summarizes the status quo of the characters. The almost stereotypical line up of the family consisting of a father, mother, daughter and son set to no background music and a fixed camera angle, is immediately contrasted with the following montage with loud music. The music playing throughout the film is actually the same piece, “The Four Seasons” originally composed by Antonio Vivaldi, arranged for solo accordion. The specific part of the concerto is called “Summer”. The meaning of this choice of music over the scenes of snowy mountains could be interpreted as the warmth of summer thawing the snow and destroying the vacation. It is interesting that the filmmaker chose the summer part of the concerto, when there is a part which is called “Winter”. By making this ironic choice for the soundtrack, and then using it almost exclusively throughout the film, the filmmakers are conveying a sense of conflict. The family is, at least on the surface, happy with their current situation – but something is about to change. Later in the film, the music will act more like an echo over the characters, always reminding of the avalanche that would fraction the family entirely.

6.2 The avalanche

On the third day of skiing the family is having lunch on an outdoor deck in the mountains. Suddenly an avalanche appears to endanger the family and the rest of the crowd on the restaurant deck. When the danger seems to come closer Tomas flees along with several of the people, leaving the rest of the family behind. The entire scene is covered in a mist of snow, which slowly clears and reveal that everybody is okay.

When the avalanche slowly moves closer to the scene Ebba and the children look worriedly towards Tomas and questions if the situation is safe. Tomas, until the last second before the snow cloud hits, reassures his family that everything is going to be okay and that the avalanche is controlled. His voice is calm, and in that moment, he seems to believe that no harm can be done to his family – that he is in control. As soon as the danger seems to be unavoidable however, Tomas lets go of Harry who he
has been holding his arm around, and start running away from the danger. During this action, Tomas pushes another person out (see figure 4) of his way and lets out a near animalistic scream with an expression of fear. The raw nature of his behavior connotate that his actions are made out of pure instinct and not with the intention of leaving his family behind. It is also important to note that even though Tomas seem to act without thinking, he holds a firm grip of his phone the entire time.

Figure 4. Tomas running away from the avalanche and his family (Östlund, 2014)

During this entire scene, the camera is fixed in the same position, in a long shot, refusing to move or change perspective. These cinematic choices of long, unbroken shots and no close-ups are all consistent for the first act. This way of framing the film provides a sense of calm, which will change after the event of the avalanche. Framing the beginning of the film in wide and unbroken shots also convey a sense of the family being part of a group. The family almost always seen together in the same frame in the beginning of the film, and when they start to drift apart, we are given our first close ups of individual characters. By choosing this cinematic technique, the filmmakers first connotate unity, and then switching to connotate fragmentation.

When Tomas returns to his family and sits down to finish his meal, he tries to lighten the mood by talking about the event in a light manner. Ebba and the children do not say a single word in reply. Tomas lets out a nervous laughter, and the silence from Ebba is especially telling that something has drastically changed. The nervous, deflective behavior of Tomas shows that he is well aware of his actions and his family’s reaction to it. The tense atmosphere continues on the way back to the hotel, with no one saying a word until the silence is broken with Ebba and Tomas talking in private outside their room (my translation):

Tomas: I think you seem a bit irritated.
Ebba: Okay.
Tomas: Well, are you?
Ebba: No, I don’t know. Should I be?
Tomas: No, I don’t think so.
Ebba: No.
Neither Tomas nor Ebba confronts each other about Tomas’s actions. They both act as if they have more to say, but no one is willing to be the one to do it. In fact, after this conversation, the tension between the family members eases a bit. Ebba has a very passive tone in this conversation, with Tomas giving the illusion of being in control by saying that he does not think she has a reason to be irritated. An important factor to mention in regard to the quote above is that Tomas is speaking Swedish and Ebba is speaking Norwegian. They understand each other very well but as soon as they start to drift a part this choice by the filmmakers is emphasizing the distance that is growing between them.

6.3 The restaurant

Later that evening, Tomas, Ebba, Charlotte & partner that she has met on the trip is having dinner at the hotel’s restaurant. Since Charlotte’s partner does not speak neither Swedish nor Norwegian, they are all conversing in English.

The couples are casually talking about their respective days when Tomas mentions that he and Ebba were involved in an event during lunch. Tomas starts to talk about what he and the family had witnessed, that they thought they would be hit by an avalanche, when Ebba starts to laugh. She says that she laughs because the word avalanche, in her mind, sounds funny. Tomas loses what to say by Ebba’s comment for a moment but keeps telling the story.

Up until this point, the camera has been fixed from two angles – both medium shots on the respective couples with Tomas and Ebba in one shot and Charlotte and her partner in the other. These two camera angles isolate the two couples from each other so that the following confrontation between Tomas and Ebba takes the center seat of the scene. This is enforced by the editing rarely cutting to Charlotte and her partner, even when there is audible dialogue from their side. When Tomas continues to talk however, there is a most subtle camera pan towards Ebba. This movement implies that we are in Ebba’s head for a moment. She is thinking about something, almost drifting away from what Tomas is saying. In a way, she fights with herself if she should confront her husband or remain passive. Before speaking, Ebba laughs a second time:

\[
\text{Tomas: It was controlled. They know what they do.} \\
\text{Ebba: He got so scared that he ran away from the table.} \\
\text{Tomas: What? No. I did not. No. No. No.} \\
\text{Ebba: Come on.}
\]

Ebba is sounds like she is sincerely not upset in the beginning of this confrontation, but when she realizes that Tomas completely denies her version of the truth, she is
shocked. When Tomas continues to deflect her, Ebba keeps pushing him. During this entire conversation, the other couple seem uncomfortable by the situation, lost for words and searching for something to say.

Instead of the confrontation getting a conclusion, the scene is interrupted by a birthday celebration in the background. Tomas looks at the distraction welcome, as a savior from the situation he has found himself in. Ebba, however, keeps looking down and laughing to herself. She is still fully focused on Tomas. At this point, the laughing could be explained as a defensive act, the only way for her not to get obviously angry with Tomas. Tomas, who noticed her laughing, pushes her wineglass away from her (see figure 5) and asking if he should take away Ebba’s wine.

Figure 5. Tomas pushing the wineglass away from Ebba (Östlund, 2014)

This act could be meant as a joke to disarm the situation but is also a way of Tomas trying to regain control by acting condescending towards Ebba. In this moment, he is therefore acting in a patriarchal way and like a father figure to her by deciding when she should stop drinking.

6.4 Changes

After the dinner, Tomas and Ebba starts talking outside their hotel room in private again. Ebba is still upset, but this time she is worried about what the situation is doing to the family (my translation):

**Ebba:** This is not us. I don’t recognize us. I don’t recognize you and I don’t recognize myself.

**Tomas:** I don’t recognize you either. *Or me.*

**Ebba:** I don’t want it to be like this.

**Tomas:** No. I am still trembling after that damn dinner.

**Ebba:** Try giving me a hug. I need a hug.
The situation has shaken them both, and their idea of how their family should be is being questioned. They both want to go back to how things were before. In the conversation above it may seem like Tomas agrees with Ebba that he don’t recognize them both but the added “Or me” is added almost like he knew that it was the right thing to say. Tomas wants to be the one who is right, and not to be questioned by Ebba.

The next day, the family is going skiing again. Ebba tells the family that she wants to ski by herself. This is met by a confused reaction by Tomas, which shows that this is not something that would happen during regular circumstances. This act by Ebba could be explained by two reasons. The first is that she needs time to think and the second is that she is trying not to be passive or confirmative. She leaves Tomas with the children, which traditionally would be left to be handled by the mother. Tomas, obviously confounded by Ebba’s request, acts like he is okay with her going alone. Before the family leaves the hotel room Tomas makes a final gesture to counter-act Ebba’s actions. He tells her to take his Visa-card, which she denies and tells him that she will use her own. She denies his effort to gain control over this conversation as well. The answer by Ebba also confuses Tomas and his reaction show that he is aware that Ebba is still upset. This emphasis on Tomas reaction is made by shooting from a long shot, which shows the back of the family but still highlighting Tomas face by his reflection in the mirror.

6.5 Polar opposites

During her time alone, Ebba meets up with Charlotte inside a bar to have a beer together. Together they discuss Charlotte’s mentality about relationships and family, which is much different to Ebba’s. Charlotte, from her perspective, is okay with her husband being with other people romantically and that the same applies to herself. She also defends and justifies being away and taking a break from her own children. (my translation):

Ebba: You have to agree that building a relationship with another person, an entire life, you have children, you get married, you create a home… That, that is so much more worth than a night with “Alberto Tomba” here in a hotel in France. Can we agree on this?
Charlotte: I don’t know why you have to choose. I haven’t chosen. I have both. I have long relationships and short relationships.
Ebba: You must understand that is very provocative? I can’t understand and believe that it’s that easy.

The character of Charlotte in this scene functions as the polar opposite of Ebba, and in turn also to her version of the family hierarchy. When Charlotte, casually, talks about how she is convinced that her family is still happy and that her way of living is good for her, Ebba literally pulls her own hair. She is physically uncomfortable with
hearing something that goes against everything she is used to. When Ebba is getting more and more upset, the camera also utilizes the same camera technique as in the restaurant scene. To show that Ebba is thinking, questioning herself, her family, and her actions the camera uses a very subtle zoom to get closer to her face. Using simple shot and reverse shots in conversations and later using small camera moves to point out changes in character is therefore made clear to be a tool often used by the filmmaker.

Charlotte is realizing that the topic of their conversation is too sensitive for Ebba right now, and against Ebba’s will they decide to end the discussion. Ebba continues her day alone, skiing in the snowy mountains. During a break to urinate in the forest next to the ski tracks she sees Tomas and their children in the distance, through the trees. Here the film also highlights an important moment with its rare use of an extreme close up on Ebba’s face. She is upset and crying when watching her family leave, unaware of her presence (see figure 6).

![Figure 6. Ebba looking at her family (Östlund, 2014)](image)

Her emotional state in this moment could be explained by the reaction in the previous scene with Charlotte. The very idea of her not being with her family, ignoring them, is tearing her apart emotionally. She is in this scene fighting between being independent and being a traditional, supportive woman and mother.

6.6 The dinner

The same evening, the family is having dinner with Mats and Fanny in their hotel room. After the dinner, which showed that Ebba was beginning to get intoxicated, the adults are sitting down and drinking wine in the sofa area.

This scene continues the theme of using a few simple medium shots to frame the narrative. In the beginning of this sequence, when Fanny is telling a story in the background, the editing refuses to cut to anyone but Ebba and Tomas. Ebba’s eyes are fixed on Tomas, and Tomas notices this but pretends to listen to Fanny instead. Then, as a chock for everyone, Ebba interrupts Fanny in the middle of her sentence by telling everyone about the avalanche. When telling her side of the story, Ebba is emotional and crying, telling everyone that she is not happy even though she is on
vacation in a luxury hotel. This statement is told more as a question. She cannot understand how it is possible not to be happy, not only in that place, but when she has a family that looks exactly like everyone expects it to look like. Every piece is there, but she still feels like something has changed or is missing.

To comfort Ebba, Fanny reaches out her hand to briefly touch her shoulder. Fanny is visually emotional, and her gesture shows that she is emphasizing with Ebba. When Mats, with a similar touch, tries to comfort Fanny she shrugs and slaps his hand away. She is reacting as if the gesture, an approach which could be interpreted as a patriarchal gesture, were patronizing towards her and rejects him. These small details show that Tomas actions during the avalanche is reacted upon by other people as well. In this case, everyone seems to think Tomas acted in the wrong.

For a while in the scene, Tomas is taking a break from the situation by spending time with his son. In the sofa area, the conversation between Ebba, Mats and Fanny continues. Mats tries to justify Tomas’s actions as instinct and behaves as a mediator between Tomas and Ebba. However, his way of doing this actually reveals that he believes that he himself would definitely defend the ones he loved when facing a crisis. Tomas, who hears this from the other room, is frustrated to listen to how a man and a father once again should act.

When Tomas returns, he is once again acting condescending towards Ebba, telling her that he does not share her experience of what happened during the avalanche. He sits in the sofa chair with his arms crossed and looks confident while letting out a small smile (see figure 7). To his surprise, Ebba tells him that they in fact have everything on video. Together, with Tomas in the center of the frame, they watch the video together. Every hint of confidence slowly fades away from his face (see figure 7). His last effort to try and act dominant is gone, and he cannot run from the truth anymore.

![Figure 7. Tomas acting condescending (left) and everyone looking at the video (right) (Östlund, 2014)](image)

The importance of the phone footage of the event is also important to link to the film’s use of simple camera angles and long shots. The avalanche scene itself was shot by an unbroken shot of the entire event. This could be done to eliminate the sense of scenes being able to be interpreted differently by different viewers. The same thing is done to Tomas, Ebba, Mats and Fanny when they watch the footage. They know what the truth is, and that Tomas ran away from his family in fear.
6.6.1 Mats and Fanny

After the dinner, the film shifts focus for a moment to explore the relationship between Mats and Fanny during their way back to their hotel room. When Fanny asks Mats if he would act the same way as Tomas, and implying that maybe he would, Mats takes offense. The conversation starts out in a curious way but shifts tone drastically as time goes on. When the couple is lying in bed later, Mats seems to be unraveling emotionally by the question made by Fanny. She wants to let it go, but he refuses. The mere suggestion that he would not act protective to his family, as a father in his eyes should be, has hurt him deeply.

In between the footage of Mats and Fanny, we get more music and scenes from the mountains. The questions raised by Tomas actions is spreading. This choice in the film, to apply the same firm views of the traditional family to Mats and Fanny, is suggesting that this is a way of thinking is spread out across more families.

6.7 The breakdown

The next day, Tomas and Mats are spending the day alone skiing. When they are standing on the side of a mountain in front wide view of the Alps, Tomas stops. He cannot breathe and needs to sit down, implied that this is because of his emotions and not his fatigue. To help him feel better, Mats suggest that Tomas should scream, and Tomas does. He screams, and curses, at the top of his lungs. To scream, in a raw an almost animalistic way, is an act which could be perceived as masculine. Tomas feels masculine and confident, which him feel better for the moment.

However, when he returns to the hotel room, he finds out that he has forgotten his room key and no one in his family opens the door. Disoriented and increasingly distraught, Thomas searches for his family in the hotel and its surrounding facilities but he never finds them. His worried expression shows that he is lost without his family and his place amongst them. This is further demonstrated when the door to their hotel room opens and he finds out that they were inside the room all along, they just did not hear him knocking. At this point, Tomas looks like he has given up hope. He feels like his family does not need him anymore. He makes one final attempt to make peace with Ebba – he holds her in his arms, caressing her in what is assumed to be an invite to sex. Ebba does not push him away and accepts his touch, but they are interrupted by the children. Tomas last hope has failed and when he and Ebba meet ones more outside the room, he suffers a complete breakdown.
Thomas is sitting on the floor, sobbing and screaming in a near comedic way, with Ebba staring down at him (see figure 8). The beginning of this scene is shot from two angles, one looking down at Tomas and one looking up at Ebba. This cinematic technique is commonly used to convey who has control in the scene, but in this case, it more suitably represents masculinity and femininity. This means that Tomas and Ebba have finally switched positions in their traditional family hierarchy. Even though this is the case, the film shows us that Ebba is not comfortable in her role as the one who has to comfort Tomas. She struggles with finding the way to handle his behavior.

Tomas breakdown continues in the room, he is still crying and his knees are so weak that he struggles to both stand and sit. At the end, he is lying on the floor with Ebba just looking at him, lost for both words and action. When the children enter the frame and start hugging Tomas on the floor (see figure 9), begging their mother to join them, Ebba still has to be physically dragged by Vera to act.

In this crucial moment, that could be seized by Ebba to be active in her role in the family hierarchy, she remains passive.
6.8 The ending

The next day, the family is going skiing for the last time, but the weather is bad and fog is covering the mountains. The mood in the family when riding the ski lift is still somber, the character clearly still shook by the breakdown of Tomas the night before. Just before they start skiing, Ebba raises concerns about the weather to Tomas, but he reassures her that it will be safe and says that he will go in advance to check. Ebba smiles back, clearly happy that Tomas steps up and want to make sure everybody is safe. This small moment conveys the sentiment that the characters is comfortable to start falling back into their old patterns.

When Tomas and the children stops later down the hill, they realize that Ebba is missing. Suddenly, they hear her calling for help and Tomas leaves the children to try and find her. The scene lingers on the children for a while in silence before the fog turns the entire screen to white. Suddenly, the music plays, and Tomas emerges with Ebba in his arms (see figure 10). The imagery here is near comedic in its dramatic tone and seems intentionally ironic. The man emerges like a hero with the woman in his arms, which is one of the most common stereotypical portrayals of men and women in cinema there is.

![Figure 10. Tomas carrying Ebba in his arms (Östlund, 2014)](image)

In this instance the film uses mirroring of its scenes to, at least to some part, convey the feeling of a resolution. When Tomas emerges with Ebba in his arms it is by fading in from the complete whiteness of the snow, just like the scene with the avalanche which started the events of the film. The same imagery that tore the traditional family apart has now brought them together again, or at least restored their roles their original roles in the family hierarchy.

6.8.1 Epilogue

The final scene of the film shows the family, the other characters and several other tourists sitting on the bus which is driving away from the hotel down the winding mountain road. The vacation is over, and everybody is returning home. However, when the passengers realize that the bus driver is driving unsafe down the road, everybody starts to get nervous. The most affected seem to be Ebba, who finally gets so upset and scared that she begs the driver to stop and let her out. Without giving her actions any further thought she runs of the bus by herself, leaving her husband and
children behind. As a form of group mentality, the rest of the passengers follows her initiative. Standing outside in the cold, the bus leaves without them.

Once again, the film mirrors the avalanche, by depicting an emergency that appears more dangerous than it actually is. Ebba’s actions in this scene are based on the same natural instinct as Tomas acted upon. By including this scene, the filmmaker tells the audience that everyone is capable of making decisions that favor yourself in crisis. Important to note however is that Ebba’s actions do not get close to the same reaction as Tomas’s. The mother is not as expected to save her entire family as the father in this case.

The final shot of the scene shows the crowd of people walking down the mountain road. Tomas is in the lead with his family behind him. An unknown man offers Tomas a cigarette, which he first declines but accepts with pride after a moment of thinking. There is no clear evidence that the act of smoking is in itself masculine, but the act suggest that Tomas is taking control of himself by doing it. Being in control, makes him feel secure and this by extension keeps him as the patriarch of the family. The music in this scene is calm, one of the very few exceptions to the dominant “Summer”, that had echoed over the entire film. The family members have returned to their previous roles and seem genuinely content in doing so.

7 Discussion & conclusion

In this section the results found in previous chapter will be summarized in order to clarify how the research questions have been answered. Followed by this, there will be a discussion about how this essay could be further developed or adapted to extend our knowledge about this field of research in the future.

7.1 Answering research questions

Q1: How is masculinity and the father’s role in a family portrayed in the film Turist?

Tomas, the father in the family, is portrayed as someone who is proud in his role in the family hierarchy. His reaction to his own actions shows that he is incapable of understanding why he would not do everything in his power to save his family. This denial of his actions is depicted by his repeated lies, even when faced with undisputable facts. Instead, in his attempt to remain as a patriarchal figure, he undermines his wife by acting condescending towards her. In his attempt to remain in role of power, he tries to act even more dominant over his wife. This portrayal of the man in the family aligns with the theory of crisis of masculinity (Winter, 2004). When women are empowered or challenges the position of men in the family, the man starts to feel castrated. But acting masculine is not simply enough for Tomas. He needs his wife, his feminine counterpart and family in order to feel like the patriarch he feels expected to be. This also aligns with Connell’s (2005) view of masculinity being intertwined with femininity. When Tomas is finally stripped of everything that
he believes makes him a man, he is completely broken beyond all comfort. The only thing that makes him feel like himself again is the act of saving his wife.

Q2: How is femininity and the mother’s role in a family portrayed from a feminist point of view in the film Turist?

Ebba, the mother in the family, struggles throughout the film to decide which kind of person she wants to be. She expects, just as Tomas, for the husband and the wife to act in a certain way in different situations. When Tomas tries to save himself, Ebba’s entire view of the family crumbles. She could not understand how Tomas, a husband and father, would not come to their rescue. By this reaction, the film initially portrays a woman character who is passive in her role in the family, which aligns with the stereotypical depictions of women in cinema summarized by Jarlbro (2006). In the beginning of the film, she is almost entirely passive in contrast with Tomas, who she expects to protect the family and be the active counterpart. Ebba, even though she fights with herself, is for a long time unwilling to confront her husband and resorts to laughing at the situation instead of being angry. This portrayal of a passive female character conforms to the theories formulated by Mulvey (1975).

7.2 Conclusion

The film highlights the problems of the nuclear family by putting its central characters in a situation that directly forces them to deal with being pushed out of the gender roles that are traditionally expected of them. By using techniques such as mirroring in the construction of scenes, the film often makes clear that it is self-aware when letting itself construct character from stereotypical molds. It is clear that the film is aware of its own subject matter, since the entire film is a study of how the family structure is challenged when faced with unexpected circumstances. By letting the uncertainties of the family start to spread to other characters such as Mats and Fanny the film also suggests that this is a problem that is established in society.

However, even though the film highlights the issues that comes with being locked into gender roles in the family, the film makes a statement that in some way contradict this in the final act. After Ebba’s act of self-perseverance on the bus, that mirrors the act of Tomas with the avalanche, the scale seems to have been tipped back to its former state. Even though the family dynamic seemed to be changing, everyone seemed to welcome the return of their former roles. The film suggests a view of the traditional family as something that is imprinted on the members of such a family. Breaking these roles and stepping outside of the mold is something that is hard to do. Even though people may want to, there is safety in doing what is expected from you.

7.3 Future research

This essay conducts a narrative analysis in its method to reach a conclusion about how gender roles are depicted in this specific film. Since Turist is just one side of viewing the problem of feminist theories in film, other Scandinavian films who depicts family roles should looked at under the same lens. It is also important to explore the possibility of extending or entirely changing the methodology to find out
if the conclusions made by this thesis could be found in similar materials by other researchers.
8 Bibliography


**Other sources**


