

ON “LOVE EXPERTS,”
EVIL PRINCES, GULLIBLE
PRINCESSES, AND *FROZEN*

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C31.P1

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sold as a complete package.”⁷ Clearly, these numbers suggest that the *Frozen* franchise has been enthusiastically embraced by audiences around the world and across multiple demographics in a way that few movies have before, with the strong bonds of sisterhood between its central protagonists, Anna and Elsa of Arendelle, named by fans as one of the most appealing parts. *Frozen*’s characters and its positioning of sisterly and familial love as being at least as important as (if not more important than) romantic love have made it seem revolutionary. Certainly, the love the sisters have for each another is central to both films (and, of course, it saves the day), but love—as well as the harm that comes from being bereft of love—is depicted in many forms throughout the films and expressed in many ways by its characters. Its importance is such that it carries over as a major theme in all three (to date) of the first film’s sequels: the shorts “Frozen Fever” (Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck, 2015), “Lego/Disney: Frozen Northern Lights” (Steven Spencer, 2016), “Olaf’s Frozen Adventure” (Stevie Wermers and Kevin Deters, 2017), “Myth: A Frozen Tale” (Jeff Gipson, 2019), the feature film *Frozen II*, “Once Upon a Snowman” (Dan Abraham and Trent Correy, 2020), and the limited series *Olaf Presents* (Hyrum Osmond, 2021).⁸ Love’s role throughout the *Frozen* saga, therefore, is the focus of this chapter.

EVIL PRINCES AND GULLIBLE PRINCESSES

C₃₁.S₁C₃₁.P₃

Certainly, one of the things that seemed to surprise most of the audience in 2013 was the romantic misdirection that starts the trouble in Arendelle: the arrival of Prince Hans (Santino Fontana) of the Southern Isles, his quickie romance and engagement to Princess Anna (Kristen Bell), and Queen Elsa’s (Idina Menzel) refusal to bless their betrothal. Even before we learn later that Hans is using Anna to gain the throne of Arendelle, Anna and Hans’s engagement is depicted as mightily naive and stupid. When Elsa hears about it, she is disgusted and angered. When, later, Anna mentions it to Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), whom she has met only a little while before, he is openly shocked and horrified. He is so deeply appalled by the prospect that, shortly afterward, when he and Anna realize that their sleigh is being pursued by wolves, Kristoff initially rejects Anna’s help, telling her that he does not trust her judgement, citing her hasty decision to marry; indeed, he is so horrified by it that he even mentions it again in *Frozen II* (during one of his series of clumsy, aborted attempts to propose to Anna). Many people saw the narrative’s characterization of the speed of Hans and Anna’s relationship as rash and imprudent as a comment on the fairy-tale trope of love at first sight, as well as on Disney’s inclusion of this trope in many of its fairy-tale adaptations.

C₃₁.P₄

Nonetheless, it should be remembered that one of the few firsts that *Frozen* can lay claim to within the Disney canon is that it is the first Disney film in which the (apparent) romantic leads become engaged on the same day they meet. The Prince may serenade Snow White at the beginning of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937), but there is no actual betrothal in the film; indeed, months pass between the day

they meet and the day the Prince awakens Snow White. Granted, they spend most of that time apart; but even when the Prince rescues her with “Love’s First Kiss” and breaks the witch’s spell, they only ride away together, presumably to go to one or the other of their kingdoms. Marriage is only implied (or assumed by the audience, who are familiar with the trope), not discussed. Cinderella and Prince Charming *are* quick, but they at least wait a day to become engaged, after the Grand Duke has found Cinderella at her stepmother’s house and identified her as the mystery woman who stole Prince Charming’s heart. As for Princess Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi, 1959), she is betrothed to Prince Phillip as an infant, so their engagement (such as it is) lasts a good 16 years! For Anna and Hans, however, the decision to marry comes only hours after they first meet—Anna is wearing the same dress when Hans proposes that she was wearing when she met him. While, eventually, Kristoff will propose to Anna (and be accepted), this does not happen until near the end of *Frozen II*, some 3 years (we learn that Elsa’s coronation took place 3 years prior to the start of *Frozen II*) after they first met, and after they have spent time as a couple and come to know one another. In fact, Kristoff’s failed attempts to propose to Anna become a semi-comic subplot of *Frozen II*, helping to impress on its audience that, this time at least, the lead couple’s decision to marry will not be a rash move born of infatuation or desperation, but—to borrow a theme from the first film—an act of true love.

C₃₁.P₅ Yet in many online and popular discussions of Anna’s decision in *Frozen* to accept the hand of a man she has known only for a few hours, almost none acknowledge the reasons why Anna clearly feels so compelled to agree so quickly to marry a stranger. This is despite the fact that the film itself provides numerous clues as to Anna’s motivation. The first sign that Anna is very much a bird in a gilded cage is the song and montage “Do You Want to Build a Snow Man.” The song begins just after the King (and Queen, one presumes, though we do not hear her speak until *Frozen II*) have shut Elsa away from Anna (supposedly for Anna’s protection) and, without understanding why, Anna suddenly—and for the first time—finds herself without a friend to play with. It is also made very clear that Anna absolutely adores her older sister, and finds this abrupt change in their relationship confusing, singing to her sister in the first part of the song, shortly after Elsa is shut away, “We used to be best buddies, and now we’re not / I wish you would tell me why!” Over the course of this increasingly emotional song, Anna knocks at Elsa’s door, seeking her company. In the first verse, Anna expresses the feeling that “It’s like [Elsa has] gone away.” Next, she notes:

C₃₁.P₆ I think some company is overdue
 C₃₁.P₇ I’ve started talking to the pictures on the walls!
 C₃₁.P₈ It gets a little lonely—all these empty rooms—just watching the hours tick by!

C₃₁.P₉ In the song’s next section, as Anna passes Elsa’s closed door, she pauses briefly as if she would like to knock, but years of rejection have taught her not to bother, and so she moves on to bid her parents good-bye as they prepare for their ill-fated trip. After they are lost at sea, Anna is utterly alone, a solitary, forlorn figure standing next to their

memorial stones during the funeral service; the shot transitions to show her alone and grieving in the palace's huge, dim corridors. She approaches Elsa's door, knocks quietly (and with just three ordinary knocks, rather than the jauntier "Tap Tap Ta-Tap Tap" that she uses at the start of the song's earlier verses), and sings:

C ₃₁ .P ₁₀	Please—I know you're in there.
C ₃₁ .P ₁₁	People are asking where you've been.
C ₃₁ .P ₁₂	They say have courage, and I'm trying to—
C ₃₁ .P ₁₃	I'm right out here for you—
C ₃₁ .P ₁₄	Just let me in!
C ₃₁ .P ₁₅	We only have each other—
C ₃₁ .P ₁₆	It's just you and me—
C ₃₁ .P ₁₇	What are we gonna do?
C ₃₁ .P ₁₈	Do you want to build a snowman . . . ?

C₃₁.P₁₉ What we learn from "Do You Want to Build a Snowman," and from the hopes Anna expresses subsequently during one of her "I Want" songs, "The First Time in Forever," is that Anna has spent years essentially on her own. She may live in an opulent palace with servants to wait upon her—and she seems to have a pleasant relationship with the servants—but Anna, clearly an extroverted, affectionate person, has no one with whom she can share her life. Indeed, her song's title implies that she cannot remember the last time that she has shared genuine closeness with another person, suggesting that her status as princess, as well as the fact that the palace's gates have been closed since they were children, has cut her off from forming relationships with any of the people of Arendelle. Certainly, we hear nothing of any friends, nor does Anna seem to have a pet or sidekick. Anna notes that Elsa's Coronation Day and the Coronation Ball—and the fact that people will be joining them in the palace—are the first time she has had the opportunity to meet someone with whom she can share her life. She also expresses her concern that this might be her only opportunity to do so, singing, "I know it all ends tomorrow / So it has to be today!" So, when she is wooed by the charming, handsome, funny Prince Hans—apparently the first person to express friendliness to her on socially-equal terms (since he is, too, is a royal), it appears to her—and to the audience—that her wishes have come true at last, and she seizes the opportunity with both hands before it can slip away.

C₃₁.P₂₀ Her decision to rush into a betrothal may well be highly problematic (particularly to modern Western sensibilities), but one could argue that it is also very pro-active. Essentially, Anna has lost her family and is alone in the world in the sense that her only surviving relative has both metaphorically and (by and large) literally shut her out. She and Elsa may both still live under the same roof, but it is evident that they almost never see each other. This is demonstrated by the scene at the Coronation Ball when Elsa and Anna are announced to the guests, and Anna displays an awkward hesitance at being asked to stand next to Elsa on the dais, then makes small talk with her before her overture—her wishing that they could leave the gates open all the time—is rejected.

Of course, unbeknownst to Anna, Elsa would love to be closer, too, but she is terrified of allowing Anna into her life for fear of harming her further after nearly accidentally freezing Anna's head when they were children. We see Elsa's struggles with isolation and loneliness throughout her childhood during scenes intercut with Anna's singing “Do You Want to Build a Snowman” when, in between each of the song's verses, we see Elsa's struggles to control her powers: her learning from her father (Maurice LaMarche) her mantra “conceal it, don't feel it—don't let it show”; her fear of hurting her parents physically, which makes her push them away as well; her formal (and nervous) good-bye to her parents before their trip; and, lastly, her depression and isolation in a barren room scarred with ice, Elsa holding herself and sobbing with her back to the door, the closest she can get to Anna (who sits against the other side, equally alone). But while the audience may be aware of the true reasons for Elsa's separation from Anna, Anna herself has no idea; indeed, later, in a conversation with Hans, Anna remarks that, “We used to be really close, but then, one day, she just shut me out.” So, while Anna's decision to accept Hans's proposal may seem rash (not to mention glaringly poor judgement) to both Elsa and the audience, who know Elsa's reasons for keeping her distance, in Anna's mind, it makes sense. For her, as far as she knows, Hans is her last chance for love, closeness with another, and—through their marriage—a chance to create a new family of her own. She is determined to make the most of this vanishingly rare opportunity, and will not be put off by Elsa's condemnation, particularly given her belief that Elsa only knows how to shut people out, not how to give and receive love.

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Of course, the film foreshadows that, contrary to Anna's hopes, Hans will *not* be “The One.” The first clue that this is the case comes just seconds before Anna meets Hans. As she sings the final lines of “The First Time in Forever”—“For the first time in forever / Nothing's in my way!”—she bumps into Hans's horse. It may appear to be a goofy, funny “meet cute,” but in fact it functions as a clue that, when it comes to finding True Love, it will be Hans who gets in Anna's way for most of the film. The fact of his existence, and his role as Anna's fiancé throughout the entire middle section of the film, keeps her apart (romantically) from Kristoff, the young man with whom she forms a genuine attachment during their quest to find Elsa, and who brings her to the Trolls for help after Elsa has accidentally frozen Anna's heart. Kristoff's knowledge that Anna has a fiancé means that, when he becomes aware of his growing feelings for Anna, he holds back from expressing them. Though the Trolls observe in their song “Fixer-Upper,” “Her quote ‘engagement’ is a flex arrangement / And by the way, I don't see no ring!” and try to marry Anna and Kristoff to one another on the spot, Anna's fainting—whether this is just shock at the Trolls' forwardness or a result of her heart freezing further—puts paid to such ideas. Grand Pabbie's (Ciarán Hinds) declaration that “Only an act of true love can thaw a frozen heart” will give Kristoff the opportunity to bundle Anna up and ride away on Sven the reindeer to get her safely to Hans so that she can be saved by Hans's giving her a true love's kiss. In doing so, Kristoff demonstrates his true love for Anna, as well as creating a scenario for Hans to show that his love for Anna, ultimately, is an opportunistic sham. Granted, Anna's love for Hans is likewise opportunistic—she wants

love and intimacy and, as a smart, funny, handsome prince, he'll do the job nicely. But whereas Anna enters their relationship with hope, Hans does so cynically; as he will confess later, he wants a kingdom of his own, and is willing to do away with Elsa and Anna to gain theirs.

C₃₁.P₂₂ Ironically, another possible clue that they are wrong for each other is Hans and Anna's duet "Love Is an Open Door." Unlike the other songs in *Frozen*, "Love Is an Open Door" has a kind of cutesie, pop duet style. Though they say things that, on the surface, sound very playful and romantic, those sentiments are expressed in such a conventional musical form that little genuine emotion comes through. It is as if both characters are acting out a pantomime of love to convince themselves and each other that there is something real between them. Interestingly, during the lines "Say goodbye to the pain of the past / We don't have to feel it anymore," we see the couple dancing at a distance; on the word "pain," the camera actually cuts from watching them dance on the top balcony of a lighthouse to a shot of them in silhouette behind the sails of a ship, again possibly implying that such sentiments are not genuine, but only shadows.

C₃₁.P₂₃ In this section of the film, in fact, it is interesting to observe the number of risky behaviours the couple engage in as they sing of their "love" for one another: in addition to dancing on the lighthouse balcony and one of the booms of a ship's masts, they also leap between balconies, slide in their stocking feet across wooden floors (and nearly fall while doing so), sit on the ridge of part of the palace's roof, leap about on the edge of a bridge, dance among the moving parts of a giant clock, and dance on the edge of a small cliff. It's on the cliff, surrounded by a waterfall, that Hans proposes and Anna accepts; mirroring the beginning of the song, Hans prefaces his proposal with "Can I say something crazy?"; although it comes across initially as sweet and goofy, Anna's reply is itself a foreshadowing of trouble to come: "Can I say something even crazier? Yes!" This indicates that, deep down, Anna recognizes that leaping into an engagement with Hans is not a wise choice. But for Anna, her life has been such a lonely, empty existence, marrying Hans seems like her only means of escape and change. Indeed, the thing that precipitates Anna going off with Hans during the ball is yet another rejection from Elsa, when Anna says she wishes that they could always be sociable and spend time together, and Elsa almost forcefully rejects the notion:

C₃₁.P₂₄ ANNA: This is so nice! I wish it could be like this all the time.
 C₃₁.P₂₅ ELSA: Me too. But it can't. [looks away]
 C₃₁.P₂₆ ANNA: Well, why not? I mean...
 C₃₁.P₂₇ ELSA: [Interrupting angrily, turning her back on Anna] It just can't.
 C₃₁.P₂₈ ANNA: [Nods quietly to herself, as if hurt but not terribly surprised] Excuse me for a minute.

C₃₁.P₂₉ Anna walks away from the dais and is accidentally knocked into Hans by a careless guest; symbolically, she is pushed into Hans's arms, and he instantly turns on the charm, catching her and pulling her toward him to lead her in a waltz. Yet Hans's obvious sophistication and panache—in a single move, he catches Anna by the hand before she

can hit the ground, bows, places his champagne flute on the tray of a passing servant, and pulls her into his arms as romantic music swells—hint that he is a smooth operator, and there is something of a performance about his actions that belies their authenticity. Anna, being very sheltered and naive, has no way of noticing this; more importantly, she has no desire to notice it. This is her “chance to change [her] lonely world—a chance to find true love,” and Hans seems like the answer to her prayers.

PRINCE HANS OF THE SOUTHERN ISLES

C₃₁.S₂

C₃₁.P₃₀

So yes, there are many clues (if one cares to see them) before the revelation that Hans is a threat who will seek to destroy the sisters and take control of Arendelle. And yet, for all that (ultimately) we are encouraged in *Frozen* to see Hans as a dangerous villain, it is important to note the many links between Anna and Hans. They are both the younger children of royal rulers. They both have difficult relationships with their older siblings that lead them to feel more-or-less alone in the world. Hans and Anna even resemble one another physically to a greater degree than Anna and Elsa. They both wish to improve their lives and to make a change...and they both see a marriage as the way to bring about that change.

C₃₁.P₃₁

It is this combination of the ties between Anna and Hans and his cruel, devious plans that positions Hans within the trope of the Demon Lover, and as an expression of Anna's own dark side. According to Wyatt Bonikowski, “The demon lover might be described as the representation of a part of the mind that has been split off and projected outwards, which then returns to pursue the subject with the force of the death drive.”⁹ Bonikowski links the Demon Lover to Lacan's idea of The Thing, arguing that it is “a development of that aspect of Freud's *Nebenmensch*, the ‘neighbour’ or ‘fellow human being,’ which, in the subject's encounter with reality, is split off ‘*als Ding*,’ ‘as a Thing’; one aspect of the neighbour is assimilated to consciousness but the Thing cannot be assimilated and remains resistant to representation.”¹⁰ In fact, *Nebenmensch* is better understood, not as a “neighbor” or “fellow human being,” but as something more akin to Plato's idea of the Split Apart (sometimes termed the “Soul Mate,” though without the romantic connotations that idea has acquired).

C₃₁.P₃₂

In this case, Hans serves as Anna's shadow self. Indeed, once could argue that his attempt to take the throne of Arendelle by nefarious means foreshadows Anna's eventual (and more reputable) rise to the throne of Arendelle at the end of *Frozen II* (thus serving as a further link between them). As we see over the course of *Frozen* and *Frozen II*, Anna is the sister who most aligns with patriarchal norms and expectations (whereas Elsa will ultimately align with the feminine and matriarchal). This is stressed through Anna's need for a romantic attachment to a man, as well as (more symbolically) through her rising to occupy her father's throne when Elsa chooses to live among their mother's people. That Hans and Anna are equally drawn to one another is stressed, however, in a moment that *may* be characterized as audience misdirection, but which serves no

function of deception within the film itself. After their first meeting, as Anna hurries away to the palace for Elsa's coronation, Hans's horse takes his foot off the boat Hans is standing in and it falls into the water, landing on top of Hans. Hidden from the view of all the other characters—and therefore with no reason to pretend (after all, he is unaware that a non-diegetic audience is watching the story unfold)—Hans watches Anna walk away, and a sweet, goofy expression appears on his face as he sighs; Hans is smitten (Figure 31.1). While much of his subsequent behaviour can be read as an act—after all, other characters are around, and he has his part to play—this moment seems to be for himself alone.

C31.P33

Anna's initial attachment to Hans, as well as his reveal as the film's villain later in the narrative, casts Hans in the unusual role of being both the Prince and the villain of the story. Although, certainly, he is not the only evil princely figure in folklore and fairy tales—indeed, figures such as Bluebeard spring to mind (Marina Warner devotes an entire chapter of *From the Beast to the Blonde* to a discussion of Bluebeard as a Demon Lover)—his appearance in a film, especially a Disney animated feature, is very unusual.¹¹ There have been earlier male villains, but they have not played any kind of romantic role (genuine or false), even when they have had (or at least pretended) sexual feelings for the heroine. But as Anna's demon lover/shadow self, Hans offers a chance for Anna to emerge as the true heroine of the story, both in the short term (in *Frozen*) and in the long term (in *Frozen II*). Hans is the shadow self that Anna must reject, just as in more traditional fairy-tale narratives, the hero(ine) must reject and defeat the villain to sublimate her better, more heroic self. Anna does this in a number of ways throughout *Frozen*, such as through her quest to save her sister, her willingness to sacrifice herself to save Elsa, and (in a moment that is as funny as it is important to the narrative's symbolism) when she punches Hans in the face and knocks him into the fjord. This rejection of Hans *cannot* be read as a rejection of Patriarchy as a whole. As Anna and Elsa embrace following the



C31.F1

FIGURE 31.1. Hans, hidden under a boat, watches as Anna returns to the palace. *Frozen* (Disney, 2013). Frame-grab.

punch, Anna looks back over her shoulder at Kristoff and smiles warmly. Only a minute later, having given Kristoff a new sled, she kisses him on the cheek, encouraging him to kiss her romantically. Her links to Kristoff remain strong throughout, and by the end of *Frozen II* are made permanent through their decision to marry. But in Hans’s role as villain (and initially as Demon Lover), he creates a foil for both Anna and Elsa: he is the entitled side of Patriarchy who will try to take whatever he wants and either kill or condemn whoever tries to stand in his way regardless of the greater claim they may have. That Anna has rejected fully this aspect of Patriarchy is confirmed in *Frozen II* by his failure to return; though he receives a brief mention early in the film and later reappears, in ice form, in Ahtohallan (in a roomful of Elsa’s memories; Elsa takes this opportunity to punch him, too), he plays no role whatsoever in the narrative to follow. What is happening here is not necessarily that Hans is fooling us; he does seem to like Anna (indeed, she is hard not to like). The villain is not incapable of love, after all. Rather, what makes the villain wrong, or bad, or a threat, within the fairy tale usually is their inability to value love above desire, and to let go of selfish impulses in favour of helping and caring for others (as a romantic partner, a parent, or as a good citizen of his community).

C31.P34 As Rothman notes in his discussion of Voldemort (a villain who *does* love—not other people—but power, revenge, and himself most of all), “His moral unsightedness resulted in part from a failure to value sexuality, love . . . and human life in particular—and in part from a failure to engage in moral choice, weighing and if necessary choosing between values.”¹² Anna will give all of herself to help others, but Hans is incapable of such sacrifice. Yet that moment when we glimpse what seems to be Hans’s genuine affection for Anna may be the moment that allows the narrative to spare his life. Hans is not killed off, after all. Rather, he is thrown into a cell and returned to his twelve older brothers for punishment. In a brief mention in *Frozen II*, we know that his punishment is ongoing. His dreamy gaze from under the boat in *Frozen* is Hans’s potential redemption because it indicates that he is not wholly evil. He must be punished, but perhaps will be reformed through his labours. This is different from the fate of the evil King Runeard (Jeremy Sisto)—Anna and Elsa’s paternal grandfather—whose selfish desire to capture the lands of the Northuldra people leads to his death and to his soldiers’ imprisonment within the Enchanted Forest for 34 years (and 5 months and 22 days). But just as Anna rejects Hans, she also rejects—and she and Elsa work to redress—the sins of the past in order to save the present and protect the future.

THAWING A FROZEN HEART

C31.S3

C31.P35 Toward the end of the film, Hans declares to Anna his intent to allow her to die in an act of passive-aggressive murder/betrayal so that he can seize control of Arendelle; by locking her in a room to die, he almost keeps Anna from the Act of True Love that will save her, Elsa, and Arendelle. But until Hans reveals his scheming to Anna, there are few clues (all easily missed on initial viewing) as to Hans’s true nature. He has played his part

well, and has Anna, the people of Arendelle, and the visiting dignitaries believing his sincerity as Anna's true love, as a dutiful and altruistic royal (he is even chastised by the Duke of Weselton [Alan Tudyk], the film's red-herring villain, for giving away Arendelle's tradable goods to the suffering people of the kingdom, defending his upholding and interpretation of Anna's orders to protect the kingdom, and even leading a search party to rescue Anna when her riderless horse returns). Later, when he locks Anna in a cold room to die alone and returns to the gathered dignitaries, feigning (as the audience now realizes) his shock and distress that Anna has died (noting that the two had time to say their marriage vows to one another before her death, thereby legitimizing his claim to the throne) before "reluctantly" charging Queen Elsa with treason and sentencing her to death "with a heavy heart," none of the officials question his claim to have married Anna, though there were no witnesses. Likewise, none object to his assumption of the power to charge the queen—the legal and *actual* ruler—with treason, and none insist upon a trial before imposing a sentence on her. In a slightly earlier scene, even Elsa believes Hans's sincerity when he tells her that he is protecting her from the cries for her death from the visiting dignitaries, as well as his worries for the still-missing Anna. In other words, everyone—not just Anna—take Hans at his word, and no one takes any steps to question him, let alone stop him. No one, that is, except for Anna.

Initially, because she falls so quickly and easily for Hans's smooth talk, Anna comes across as gullible. Particularly when she rejects Elsa's condemnation of her decision to marry Hans, Anna seems naive even for someone who has spent most of her life sequestered in a palace.

- C₃₁.P₃₆
- C₃₁.P₃₇ ELSA: [Disdainfully] You can't marry a man you just met.
- C₃₁.P₃₈ ANNA: [Angrily] You *can* if it's true love.
- C₃₁.P₃₉ ELSA: [Dismissively] Anna, what do *you* know about true love.
- C₃₁.P₄₀ ANNA: More than you! All you know is how to shut people out!

Elsa's reaction to Anna's cutting remark shows that, from Elsa's point of view, it is particularly hurtful, given Elsa's and the audience's (privileged) knowledge. We know that Elsa has kept her distance in order to keep Anna safe—that Elsa loves her sister so dearly that she has sacrificed her happiness for Anna's well-being. Though she must know that Anna does not and cannot know this, to be told that she knows nothing of true love clearly wounds Elsa. We have evidence throughout *Frozen* that Elsa misses her sister deeply, and "Olaf's Frozen Adventure" strengthens this argument when we see that, every Christmas, Elsa has come to look forward with joy to the Olaf-themed cards and gifts that Anna makes for her each year and slips under her door, and that Elsa has kept them and treasures them (Figure 31.2). During "Do You Want to Build a Snowman," we see Elsa's loneliness first-hand. Later, during "Let It Go," we see that Elsa's first conscious use of her powers after fleeing Arendelle is—at long last—to build a snowman: Olaf (Josh Gadd), the character she and Anna had created as children. It is a tangible signal that Elsa's apparent joy in her first flush of freedom is tempered by her love and homesickness for her sister, and her longing for their days of childhood closeness before the accident that led to their separation for Anna's protection.

C31.P2



FIGURE 31.2. Elsa, holding a homemade Olaf doll from Anna, gazes with a bittersweet expression at the door that keeps her necessarily—but sadly—separated from the sister she loves and misses, but for whom she must sacrifice her happiness to keep safe. “Olaf’s Frozen Adventure” (Disney, 2018). Frame-grab.

C31.P42

Though this loneliness and love for her sister help to humanize Elsa, ultimately—and particularly within *Frozen II*—Elsa is shown to be a character who is less a fairy-tale princess/queen and more of a figure from mythology. She is linked with the Nokk (the water horse), the Giants, the powers of the Enchanted Forest, and the spirits of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water (indeed, Elsa learns that she is the fifth element, and that she and Anna are meant to serve as a bridge—through their bonds with each other and with their own spheres—between the human and magical worlds). Yet one could argue that it is Elsa’s increasing identification with her mother and her mother’s people (the Northuldra) that keeps her story rooted in the fairy-tale genre. Sheldon Cashdan claims that “fairy tales are about women and the important role they play in the child’s emerging sense of self.”¹³ Certainly, this becomes a hugely important aspect of Elsa’s story in *Frozen II*, an idea that is indicated by the reprising of the song “Vuelie,” which begins both films; while the first film has a more masculine version, the second film’s reprise is characterized by being an all-female version of the piece’s choral element. We learn early in the film that it is a sign that Elsa is worried about something when she wraps herself in her mother’s shawl. Indeed, the film begins with us hearing from Iduna (Evan Rachel Wood)—Elsa and Anna’s mother—for the very first time. She also sings the first song in *Frozen II*, “All Is Found,” which will serve as Elsa’s guide when, as adults, she and Anna, Olaf, Kristoff, and Sven go on a quest to learn the source of Elsa’s powers. From the beginning, Elsa’s greater link to her mother is stressed when Iduna helps little Anna to fall asleep first by stroking her eyes, and then singing “All Is Found” for Elsa alone.

C31.P43

This linking to the mother—and through the Northuldra people and Iduna’s status among them, to the Matriarchal—speaks to a growing desire to reject patriarchal roles

and constraints that hold women back, and through that rejection, to find true freedom and fulfilment. As Tanya Krzwinska notes, “[Films about good witches] can be read as articulating desires and conflicts, which cannot easily be separated from a patriarchal context, within contemporary women’s lives, and providing a means to symbolize the experience of such contradictions. The seductions of the witch film are indeed bitter-sweet as they speak of very real conflicts between freedom and constraint.”¹⁴ Certainly, this is hinted at even in *Frozen*, before we know anything at all about the silent young queen who dies alongside her husband while away from her daughters. After all, one of the major themes of *Frozen* is the bond of love and sisterhood Elsa and Anna share. Thanks to the well-intentioned but misguided advice given by Grand Pabbie, the leader of the Trolls, and by Elsa’s father, Elsa’s initial (and, one might argue, forced) alignment with Patriarchy has weakened her and Anna’s bond by cutting them off from one another and teaching them to focus more on men. But their triumphing over such toxic masculine characters as Prince Hans and the Duke of Weselton restores and makes permanent their bond—their sisterhood. Certainly, the narratives of all the films in the *Frozen* saga refrain from pitting the sisters against one another. As is typical in films featuring a good witch, Krzwinska notes, “They may occasionally argue with one another, but there is no significant competition set up between the women in [such narratives].”¹⁵ Likewise, though many in Arendelle initially fear Elsa and her powers, the audience knows from early on in *Frozen* that Elsa’s powers, though capable of harm, are not at all evil, and that she seeks only to bring joy and happiness to her sister through her use of them. Though she is discussing *Practical Magic* (Griffin Dunne, 1998) here, Krzwinska could easily be describing Elsa: “Witchcraft is rendered Californian-style in terms of healing and protection, and through a very un-postmodern investment in being ‘yourself,’ which some women regard as empowering.”¹⁶ After all, another important theme that runs throughout the saga is of finding and being true to oneself. This idea is at the heart of the song “Let It Go,” as well as of “Into the Unknown” and “Show Yourself.” Indeed, the reason for the journey in *Frozen II* is the quest to find out the source of Elsa’s powers—to learn how and why she is who and what she is.

C31.P44

While Anna aligns with Patriarchy (albeit in what is likely a more enlightened version than that of her father and grandfather) through her marriage with Kristoff and her rise to the throne of Arendelle, Elsa’s story arc is one of alignment with the Feminine and Matriarchy. When looked at across the saga as a whole, Elsa’s story follows very closely the idea posited by Maureen Murdock (in response to Joseph Campbell’s phallogocentric “Hero’s Journey”) as the “Heroine’s Journey.” As Murdock notes, “This journey is described from... the perspective of many of the women... who have sought validation from patriarchal systems and found them not only lacking but terribly destructive.”¹⁷ Murdock’s “Heroine’s Journey” entails the following:

C31.P45

- Separation from the Feminine
- Identification with the Masculine and gathering of allies
- Road of trials: meeting ogres and dragons
- Finding the boon of success

C31.P46

C31.P47

C31.P48

- C₃₁.P₄₉ • Awakening to feelings of spiritual aridity—death
- C₃₁.P₅₀ • Initiation and descent to the Goddess
- C₃₁.P₅₁ • Urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine
- C₃₁.P₅₂ • Healing the mother/daughter split
- C₃₁.P₅₃ • Healing the wounded masculine
- C₃₁.P₅₄ • Integration of masculine and feminine¹⁸

C₃₁.P₅₅ For Elsa, this journey can be charted as follows:

- C₃₁.P₅₆ • Her magic nearly harms Anna permanently, compelling her parents to follow Grand Pabbie’s advice to keep Elsa and Anna apart.
- C₃₁.P₅₇ • Elsa then follows her father’s advice to repress her magic, and also begins her preparations for her eventual role as Queen.
- C₃₁.P₅₈ • Elsa undergoes her coronation, which brings external threats (i.e., Prince Hans and the Duke of Weselton); she flees, but ultimately finds that they follow her to arrest or destroy her. She is imprisoned, escapes, and is nearly murdered by Prince Hans.
- C₃₁.P₅₉ • Anna saves Elsa; they embrace, and Elsa realizes that love is how she can control her magic. She restores Arendelle, resuming her role as Queen.
- C₃₁.P₆₀ • Elsa serves as queen for a time but is not happy. One night, she hears a woman’s voice calling out to her from the distance.
- C₃₁.P₆₁ • Elsa embarks “Into the Unknown” by going on a quest to discover her magic’s source. She separates herself from her companions, journeying beyond the human world into Ahtohallan, where she encounters her mother’s spirit and learns of the events that led to her parents’ union and her birth. There, she learns that she is the Fifth Element.
- C₃₁.P₆₂ • Meanwhile, Anna seeks to find her sister and works to save her; Elsa sings with her mother’s spirit in the song “Show Yourself” (which is far more about true self-discovery than “Let It Go”) as she seeks answers.
- C₃₁.P₆₃ • Elsa and her mother, Iduna, are linked, and Elsa’s learning the truth of her grandfather’s actions toward the Northuldra causes Elsa to freeze and die.
- C₃₁.P₆₄ • Anna realizes her sister has died when Olaf (who was brought to life by Elsa’s magic) likewise dies. She mourns deeply but decides to “Do the Next Right Thing.” She determines to undo the wrong her grandfather did and finds a way to destroy the dam. This revives Elsa, who comes to save Arendelle from the flood of the burst dam and free the Northuldra people from being trapped in the Enchanted Forest.
- C₃₁.P₆₅ • Elsa and Anna hug, bring Olaf back to life, and embrace their new, separate roles as leader of the Northuldra (Elsa) and Queen of Arendelle (Anna), as well as their conjoined role as a bridge between the worlds of Magic and Humanity.

C₃₁.P₆₆ If Elsa performs a limited version of this in *Frozen*, in *Frozen II* her story adheres to Murdock’s idea much more closely. We see Elsa’s original rejection of the Masculine in *Frozen*; though (as discussed earlier) young Elsa learns initially to identify with the masculine by allowing her father to glove her hands (and thereby repress her magic) and teach her to “conceal it, don’t feel it—don’t let it show,” in a burst of anger and desperation

Elsa lets lose her powers and runs away. At this stage, she fits the idea of the “Angry Girl” as discussed by Kimberley Roberts:

- C₃₁.P₆₇ The angry girl generally... is significant and pleasurable precisely because the expression of anger has hitherto been the unspoken domain of men and boys. The long history of the angry youth in film, canonized by James Dean, has by and large been a male story—one where the individual is valorized and set in conflict with the traditional mores of his parent and the larger society... [The expectation that girls rebel within a set of carefully contained, specific ways] leaves most teenage girls in a classic double-bind; they believe that their rebellious feelings make them improper as “young women” and, conversely, that their status as young women requires them to leave their rebellious adolescence behind before they have really experienced it.¹⁹
- C₃₁.P₆₈ This particularly comes through in the lyrics of “Let It Go,” the smash-hit song of *Frozen* and an anthem to various groups who claimed it as their own “coming out” song. Though the song can have different meanings to those who embrace it, for so many girls and women who love the song, it is likely Elsa’s expressions of anger over the control and repression that has been forced upon her for most of her life that most resonates, expressed in the song in such lines as “Don’t let them in—don’t let them see / Be the good girl you always had to be / Conceal, don’t feel—don’t let them know / Well now they know!” (said as she whips off her remaining glove and throws it to the wind). It is there, too, when she proclaims, “Turn away and slam the door! / I don’t care what they’re going to say / Let the storm rage on” and in her declaring, “It’s time to see what I can do / To test the limits and break through / No right! No wrong! No rules for me—I’m free!” Elsa is angry, and she revels in being able to express that anger for the first time.
- C₃₁.P₆₉ Yet her ability to wield her powers with true control and precision—to decide consciously when and how she will use them—will come only when she recognizes that Love is greater than Anger. Her love for her sister (and the association of the expression of that love through the character of Olaf) is her way into this, but it is a greater form of love—her love and acceptance of herself—that will bring her full control. This aligns with Bowman’s argument that,
- C₃₁.P₇₀ based upon Western fairy tales, [such] stories serve as an instruction manual for proper and improper femininity on a surface level. However, when examined from a depth psychology perspective, they articulate the inherent power of the Archetypal Feminine over the psyche, a power which women must learn to navigate within themselves.
- C₃₁.P₇₁ The splitting of the Great Mother into the princess and the witch exemplifies the dual nature of the goddess. While clearly preferring the safe, elementary, passive maternal element of the Good Mother, the archetype also offers an explication of the transformative powers of both the Good and Terrible Mother.²⁰
- C₃₁.P₇₂ It seems that it is her finally expressing years of pent-up anger and frustration that is her most appealing aspect for audiences, if their embracing of “Let It Go” is any indication.

As we learn in *Frozen II*, Elsa’s magic comes to her through her mother, as a reward for her mother’s act of love and goodness when, as a child, she saves Prince Agnarr’s life; Elsa’s ultimate transformation into her true, whole self (thereby uniting the Good and the Terrible Mother) comes only at the end of the saga when she embraces this fully and abdicates her throne to live in the Enchanted Forest. This links with Eric Neumann’s discussion of the dual nature of the Great Mother and its archetypal links to the witch:

C₃₁.P₇₃ Because the ecstatic situation of the seeress results from her being overpowered by a spirit that erupts in her, that speaks from her, or rather chants rhythmically from her, she is the center of magic, of magical song, and finally of poetry. She is the source from which Odin received the runes of wisdom; she is the Muse, the source of the words that stream upward from the depths; and she is the inspiring anima of the poets.²¹

C₃₁.P₇₄ As Sheldon Cashdan notes, “Fairy tales [typically] are essentially maternal dramas in which witches, godmothers, and other female figures function as the fantasy derivatives of early childhood.”²²

C₃₁.P₇₅ Yet, though the *Frozen* saga in particular plays with this trope—Elsa is the “witch” in the literal sense, and the sisters’ mother, Iduna, is revealed to be the conduit through which Elsa received her powers—ultimately, the narrative’s greatest twist is the way that the ties that bind the sisters are what force them apart. Because, as they learn, they are meant to serve as a bridge between worlds, the two must go their separate ways at the end of the film in order to fulfil their true destinies. In other words, the resolution of the narrative—what allows each young woman to be her true self—requires the sisters to inhabit separate worlds (though, happily, they still get to visit from time to time). Elsa, by going to live among the Northuldra in the Enchanted Forest that was their mother’s homeland, become permanently a part of the “feminine” realm of magic; Anna, by accepting the role of Queen of Arendelle and marriage with Kristoff, aligns more with the “masculine” realm of her father and grandfather’s kingdom. Her little (potentially adult-oriented) quip to the uncharacteristically elegantly dressed Kristoff at the end, that she prefers him in leather, likewise links Anna to power (and pleasure?) and similarly identifies her more with a traditionally masculine approach to overt sexuality. As for Elsa, her entire spiritual journey in *Frozen II* is foreshadowed by Iduna’s song “All Is Found”; Queen Iduna (Evan Rachel Wood) sings it for Elsa alone, and looks pointedly at her elder daughter during the line “lay the answers and a path for you,” before taking her daughter in her arms affectionately and singing the rest of the song to her:

C ₃₁ .P ₇₆	Yes, she will sing to those who hear,
C ₃₁ .P ₇₇	And in her song, all magic flows
C ₃₁ .P ₇₈	But can you brave what you most fear?
C ₃₁ .P ₇₉	Can you face what the river knows?
C ₃₁ .P ₈₀	Where the north wind meets the sea,
C ₃₁ .P ₈₁	There’s a mother full of memory
C ₃₁ .P ₈₂	Come, my darling, homeward bound
C ₃₁ .P ₈₃	When all is lost, then all is found.

C₃₁.P₈₄ Narratively, the song's function is to provide clues and information that help the sisters on their quest, but its additional function as foreshadowing is stressed by the bridge and final stanza, in the middle of which we get the film's title card, and by the end of which we arrive in the narrative's present, where Elsa, standing on a balcony, first hears the voice calling her. This song, the accompanying visual clues tell us, is the key narrative. But the theme that will enable Elsa to undertake and then complete her stated quest, as well as her greater journey of self-understanding, is Love: her mother's love, but in particular Anna's love, which saves Elsa's life once again, and thereby enables her to complete her journey and her quest.

C₃₁.S₄ ABOUT THOSE "LOVE EXPERTS" ...

C₃₁.P₈₅ Though the Trolls—and subsequently the other characters—begin to speak of *an* act of true love (which the Trolls posit may mean "a true love's kiss, perhaps"), ultimately, what we see throughout the films are *multiple* acts of True Love. These acts, furthermore, are linked to multiple kinds of love. Elsa's first intentional creation—though we get only the quickest glimpse of it at the time—is Olaf, whom she conjures when she sings the line "Can't hold it back anymore" the first time she sings the chorus to "Let It Go." It turns out that Olaf has enormous significance to the sisters' childhoods; as we learn in the 2018 short "Olaf's Frozen Adventure," Olaf is in fact the centre of the sisters' Christmas traditions, as Anna has made drawings, Christmas cards, and straw dolls of Olaf to give to Elsa every Christmas during their time apart (Figure 31.3). Each time, as we see in



C₃₁.F₃ **FIGURE 31.3.** Anna's Olaf-themed Christmas present to Elsa, which Elsa has saved in a special chest in the attic. "Olaf's Frozen Adventure" (2018, Disney). Frame-grab.

flashback, Anna’s offerings of love are delivered under Elsa’s door following the leitmotif “Tap Tap Ta-Tap Tap” (as Anna knocks on Elsa’s door) that is the start of Anna’s song, “Do You Want To Build a Snowman.”

C31.P86 Through this, we know that Elsa is performing an act of True Love (however unconsciously) when she first brings Olaf to life because she is thinking foremost of her sister, from whom she has been alienated for most of their lives. It is not her first such act, however; the first is when, as a child, she agrees to hide her powers and keep herself away from Anna so that her beloved sister will be safe. Later, Anna performs her first act of true love when she rushes off to bring Elsa back to Arendelle, alone and at great personal risk. Kristoff performs the next act of True Love. Having come to know Anna over the course of their journey to find Elsa, he has fallen in love with her, and has even come to realize this (at least partially) on a conscious level. Yet when Anna collapses shortly after Grand Pabbie reveals that “Only an act of True Love will thaw a frozen heart,” Kristoff, assuming that Hans, Anna’s fiancé, is her true love, rushes to return Anna to Arendelle, sacrificing his own love for her. Kristoff, in putting Anna’s needs before his own, commits an act of True Love that is linked to romantic love, but a romantic love that is of the purest sort. Yet it is *Frozen*’s final act of True Love—Anna’s sacrificing of herself to save Elsa from Hans—that is positioned as *the* Act of True Love in the film, since it is this act which not only saves Elsa’s life, but also thaws the ice in Anna’s heart and saves her life, too, thereby restoring the sisters to one another. The characters’—and the audience’s—realization that True Love does not have to mean *romantic* love, but simply and purely means *selfless* love—putting others first, no matter what the cost—is very much *Frozen*’s climactic moment.

C31.P87 But this never comes from the Trolls, despite their being described by Kristoff as “Love Experts” when he first tells Anna about them. Interestingly, it is Anna who expresses doubt about their status as experts; when she refers to Kristoff’s friends as “Love Experts,” you can hear the implied quotation marks in the tone of her voice. This is interesting because it is Anna who will prove to be the true expert on love, both in *Frozen* and in its sequels; while initially she seems to be the most naive because of how she is taken in by Hans, once she sees what he really is, she wastes no time mourning but moves forward decisively. Though initially she runs outside to meet Kristoff, who is running toward her, she changes direction to save her sister from Hans; she sees that Elsa’s need is greater and responds accordingly. Even in *Frozen II*, which focuses on Elsa’s discovery of the source of her power, we likewise see that it is Anna who is the most selfless and the most capable of being strengthened by love. As in *Frozen*, when she journeys to the North Mountain to bring Elsa back to Arendelle, in *Frozen II* she refuses to stand by when Elsa is in danger (chastising her sister at one point by saying “You don’t want me to follow you into fire? Then don’t run into fire”). Later, when Anna realizes that Elsa has died, though she is devastated by her loss, she nonetheless resolves to “do the next right thing” and keep working to save the Northuldra, thereby fulfilling Elsa’s promise. Saving the Northuldra will ultimately save Elsa (incidentally, this emphasizes the link between Elsa and the Northuldra), and thereby becomes another great act of True Love that Anna performs.

C31.P88

That Anna is the true expert is hinted at by Kristoff in *Frozen* in his description of the Trolls as he takes Anna to meet them. As he tells her about them, he says, “They can be a little inappropriate. And loud. Very loud. They’re also stubborn at times, and a little overbearing.” Though the film does not remark upon this, Kristoff’s description of the Trolls could be of Anna herself, whose exuberance, occasional awkwardness, and open-heartedness are two of her most charming qualities. While certainly Grand Pabbie is positioned by the narrative as being wise, his wisdom seems more about magic and other elemental subjects. Love, however, is *not* an expertise of the Trolls. After all, they have *no* problem with the idea of Anna and Kristoff marrying immediately, and during their song “A Bit of a Fixer-Upper,” they dress Anna and Kristoff for their wedding. Their evaluation of Anna? “Bright eyes, working nose, strong teeth—yes! Yes! She’ll do nicely for our Kristoff!” They appraise her much as one might judge a horse; her personality, character, and temperament are apparently not important. While, admittedly, it transpires that Anna and Kristoff *are* in fact a good match, and they do eventually fall in love and decide to be married, there is no indication that the Trolls recognize that true love takes time to grow; it is not evidenced by a “working nose.” So, the Trolls are not “Love Experts”; they only seem that way to Kristoff because they were the ones to take him in and become his family when he was a very young child, and his love for them is strong because they were the ones to teach him about love.

C31.P89

That it is Anna who is the true expert is emphasized in *Frozen II* in two early scenes. The first is at the very beginning, when Anna and Elsa are children and are playing “Enchanted Forest.” Anna introduces romance into their play narrative, having the prince character proclaim, “Who cares about danger when there’s love!” much to young Elsa’s disgust. The next scene that links Anna to Love is when the trolls arrive after Arendelle has been evacuated as nature rises up in anger. Though Grand Pabbie chastises Elsa for stirring up angry magical spirits, he calls Anna aside to confide his worries about Elsa and her magic; he is a wise, guardian soul, and he speaks only to Anna as a true equal. It is also Grand Pabbie—in saying, “When one sees no future, all one can do is the next right thing”—who foreshadows Anna’s song “The Next Right Thing,” as well as her love (for her sister and for the kingdom) being strong enough to help her do what she must. Grand Pabbie may be able to see visions and understand magic, but it is Anna who understands Love, and is its greatest champion.

C31.S5

DO YOU (STILL) WANT TO BUILD A SNOWMAN?

C31.P90

One thing that *Frozen*—as both an individual film and as a saga—has been brilliant at doing is tapping into the slowly growing (but, hopefully, growing nonetheless) trend for female-centric narratives seen within the larger film and television industry. Of course, it is worth remembering that Disney’s animated features have always been good at this;

of the (at the time of writing) fifty-one single-narrative feature films made by Walt Disney Animation Studios, twenty-seven have a central female character (sometimes she co-stars with a male character, but she is central to the narrative nonetheless). This, as much as anything else, links it to the fairy-tale genre, a group of stories that, on the whole, has tended to have its female-led stories rise to the greatest prominence.

C31.P91 But above this, and beginning with *Frozen*, Disney has consistently begun to show-case stories about heroines where, among other things, a romantic narrative is either sidelined, maligned, or—in the cases of *Moana* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 2016) and *Raya and the Last Dragon* (Don Hall and Carlos López Estrada, 2021)—non-existent. This is a radical choice for stories about women. As Michele Schreiber notes, “Romance itself remains the dominate concern of the contemporary woman in American cinematic narratives as she negotiates the complicated interplay between and among private and public, political and personal, and self-identity and group-identity.”²³ Indeed, to have a central heroic female character such as Elsa go through the whole of a single film—let alone two feature films and multiple shorts—and *never* associate her with a love-interest of any sort is almost unheard of. It was certainly unusual enough that, in a well-meant response, many fans began to call upon Disney to make Elsa a lesbian and/or queer. Once *Frozen II* was announced in 2016, “Give Elsa a Girlfriend” campaigns became so vocal that they generated journalistic coverage. Elle Hunt’s May 2016 article for *The Guardian*, “Frozen fans urge Disney to give Elsa a girlfriend in sequel,” claims that the hashtag #GiveElsaAGirlfriend was retweeted “more than 1,500 times” in 3 days.²⁴ The longevity of the popularity of this idea is supported by the publication on February 26, 2018 of a HuffPost article, “‘Frozen’ Director Gives Glimmer of Hope Elsa Could Get a Girlfriend.”²⁵ It implies, ultimately, that romance is associated with female characters to such a strong degree that even those who considered themselves to be campaigning for something new and radical were, in fact, arguing for something inherently regressive and—ultimately—reactionary. When, at the end of *Frozen II*, Elsa remained single, there were those in the popular press and blogosphere who expressed disappointment that a prominent secondary character from the Northuldra, Honeymaren, who they argued had been positioned in such a way that she easily could have become Elsa’s girlfriend, had not been utilized by the story as such. Some have expressed hope that there will be a *Frozen III* in which Elsa will become Disney’s first lesbian princess.²⁶

C31.P92 The fact remains that, while making Elsa a lesbian and/or queer might be seen as revolutionary in some circles, arguably the even more revolutionary move was for her to remain unattached and focused instead on coming to know and accept herself. This, ultimately, is what *Frozen* as a saga has done. For those who need a romantic narrative, this is supplied through Anna and Kristoff. But with Elsa, we get something more: rather than being compelled to project love onto another, Elsa can look within and come to know and love herself. That they have different interests is noted at the beginning of *Frozen II* when we see a young Elsa and Anna playing with snow toys Elsa has made, and the family laughs about how Anna likes to have romantic stories, but Elsa just wants adventures. This is the film letting us know right up front—even before the opening credits—that Elsa will have no time for romance yet again. As we see the narrative

unfold, it is obvious that Elsa (and even Anna, who is oblivious to Kristoff's attempts to propose to her until the very end of the film) has more important concerns. Elsa is about to embark on a quest to find out who she is, what she is, what the source of her magic is, and what her true purpose is. And that, the saga makes clear, is more than enough.

This narrative choice becomes clearer when examined from the perspective of depth psychology. As Neumann notes, "When a personality is assailed by the transformative character of the Feminine and comes into conflict with it, this means psychologically that its ego consciousness has already achieved a certain independence.... But when the personality comes into conflict with the transformative character of the Feminine, it would seem—mythologically speaking—as though the Feminine were determined to retain the ego as a mate."²⁷ In other words, Elsa must first join together the various parts of her personality; she cannot—and does not—look outside herself but rather inside, and thereby unites the two major female archetypes to be found in fairy tales such as those that Disney has typically told. As Bowman puts it,

This distinction between the Disney princess and her Terrible Mother nemesis is, ultimately, a false dichotomy. Though the films clearly code these two figures as distinct, each character offers personality features present in the Great Mother as a whole: creation and destruction, nurturance and negligence, protection and confinement. Thus, despite the eventual "happy endings" of these films, the princess and villainess figures remain inextricably linked; they are, indeed, defined by one another and thus both create and destroy each other symbolically.²⁸

It is as a Great Mother figure that Elsa becomes unique in the canon of Disney princesses. Her learning that she is the Fifth Element, and bringing together Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, position her as a true departure for Disney, and makes her unusual as a female character in cinema as a whole. She is a leader, she is self-sufficient, she is magical and powerful, and she helps to shape the world around her in the most fundamental way, doing so by uniting all aspects of the Great Mother. This is why *Frozen* as a saga so special and is why it will likely stand the test of time to become a true Disney classic.

NOTES

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2. Scott Foundas, "Film Review: 'Frozen,'" *Variety*, November 3, 2013, <https://variety.com/2013/film/reviews/frozen-review-1200782020/> [accessed March 2, 2020].
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4. Paul Bond, “A Breakdown of ‘Star Wars’ Merchandise Sales This Year,” *Hollywood Reporter*, December 17, 2015, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/a-breakdown-star-wars-merchandise-849861> [accessed March 2, 2020].
5. Viewing numbers checked on YouTube by author, June 12, 2019, 6 p.m. BST, for the Walt Disney Animation Studios YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi4LMpSDccc>.
6. Rebecca Rubin, “Frozen 2’ Is Now the Highest-Grossing Animated Movie Ever,” *Variety*, January 5, 2020, <https://variety.com/2020/film/box-office/frozen-2-biggest-animated-movie-ever-disney-box-office-1203456758/> [accessed March 2, 2020].
7. Ben Sisario, “Frozen 2’ Soundtrack Debuts at No. 1, without a ‘Let It Go’ (So Far),” *New York Times*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/arts/music/frozen-2-billboard-chart.html> [accessed March 2, 2020].
8. In summer 2020, a series of Olaf-led shorts were released online; as these shorts in no way contribute to the overarching narrative and themes of the *Frozen* saga and are instead focused on gags that rely on Olaf’s bodily plasticity, I have not included them in my discussion (amusing and charming though they are). This is likewise the case with the short Disney+ series *Olaf Presents* (2021), where Olaf re-tells the narratives of Disney animated films, albeit in his own inimitable fashion and mirroring his re-telling of *Frozen*’s narrative to the Northuldra people during *Frozen II*.
9. Wyatt Bonikowski, “‘Only One Antagonist’: The Demon Lover and the Feminine Experience in the Work of Shirley Jackson,” *Gothic Studies* 15:2 (November 2013), pp. 66–88, at 70.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
11. Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 241–257.
12. Ken Rothman, “Hearts of Darkness: Voldemort and Iago, with a Little Help from Their Friends,” in Jamey Heit (ed.), *Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains: Essays on Evil in Popular Media* (London: McFarland, 2011) Kindle eBook, location 3183.
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15. Krzwinska, *Skin for Dancing In*, p. 151.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
17. Maureen Murdock, *The Heroine’s Journey: Woman’s Quest for Wholeness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. 4.
18. Murdock, *Heroine’s Journey*, p. 5. It should be noted that, in the original, Murdock lists this as a cycle, so that the final stage then leads back to the first.
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