



Essay

Storm Power, an Icy Tower and Elsa's Bower: The Winds of Change in Disney's *Frozen*

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Received: 8 May 2018; Accepted: 25 May 2018; Published: 31 May 2018



Abstract: In Disney's box office sensation *Frozen* (2013), Elsa conjures powers rivaling those of Zeus, which is an echo of the shifting gender dynamics at the time of the film's release. By independently creating offspring Olaf and Marshmallow through whirlwinds, Elsa's parthenogenesis (virgin birth) evokes wind-driven pollination, allowing her to circumvent any male role in creation. However, Elsa's autonomy clashes with the traditional gender hierarchy, which is reinforced by a cultural context replete with latent symbolic meanings. Examples include both carrots and carats as phallic symbols, eggs as representations of the procreative potential that is appropriated by men and devalued in women, gender bias in perceptions of magic and enchantment, and the value of the nubile nymph over the tempestuous termagant. The normalcy of male dominance likely drives the resolution of the plot, in which Elsa learns to wield power in a non-threatening manner. In addition to having implications for gender roles, *Frozen* also portrays a mélange of gender symbolism through Elsa's snowmen creations, which function as an expression of the storm of controversy surrounding the subversion of binary conceptions of gender. In the end, *Frozen* serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers inherent in an unattached female as the ultimate potentate. This content analysis suggests that the film reflects fears surrounding the maelstrom of societal changes including expanding fertility options and the re-conceptualization of gender identity—pressing issues likely to sustain *Frozen's* relevance.

Keywords: Elsa; Kristoff; Olaf; Marshmallow; Let it Go; enchantment; applause; engagement ring; diamond; gender; snowmen; wedding toast; bullroarer; fireworks; witches; magic; standing ovation; fertility; parthenogenesis; gender nonconformity; non-binary; storms; family jewels; snowflake; feminism

1. Introduction

Among Disney's blockbusters, *Frozen* (2013) has achieved resounding success as its most popular animated feature yet. Earnings exceeded a billion United States (US) dollars (Hibberd 2017) and YouTube views of just one version of its musical chart-topping hit, 'Let it Go', approached the 1.5 billion mark within five years of the film's debut (YouTube 2018). In the years subsequent to its release, interest in the movie has prompted plans for a *Frozen* sequel (due out in 2019 (Gander 2018)), as brisk sales of *Frozen* merchandise continue to drive this "cultural behemoth" (Perry 2017). with influence that has been compared to Shakespeare (Dockterman 2018). The term "Disneyfication" encapsulates Disney films' putative ability to inculcate a commodified utopian vision of society (Bryman 2004; Fjellman 1992; Giroux 1995; Giroux and Pollock 2010; Griffin et al. 2018; Rojek 1993; Wills 2017) that persuades audiences to "long nostalgically for neatly ordered patriarchal realms" (Zipes 1995,

p. 40). According to Zipes (2011), “The telos of all Disney’s fairy-tale films is to shape the vision of spectators so that they are convinced and believe that they share in the values and accomplishments of the narrative, thus obviating any or all contradictions . . . through the systematic dissemination of images in books, advertising, toys, clothing, houseware articles, posters, postcards, radio, and other artifacts that have mesmerized us” (pp. 25–26). Yet despite delivering an “annexed” version of family entertainment based on pre-existing fairy tales (Schickel 1997), *Frozen* has struck a chord in audiences, resulting in cultural tintinnabulation at a deep—and likely unconscious—level. Although the *de facto* star of *Frozen*, Queen Elsa, is endowed with magical powers that she struggles to control, she has been heralded as empowering to women.¹ Indeed, some analysts suggest that her lack of romantic interests and her avoidance of the “male gaze” (Macaluso 2016) constitute a welcome departure from stereotypical gender roles (Law 2014), while the sisterly love portrayed in the film purportedly aligns with “traditional notions of family” (Wills 2017, p. 105).

However, this essay presents a critical content analysis of the film, complementing literature that demonstrates how Disney films provide a window into the cultural landscape of their era including such issues as the valorization of the white heteropatriarchal family (Dundes and Dundes 2005; Garlen and Sandlin 2017; Streiff and Dundes 2017b; Zurcher et al. 2018) and allegedly anachronistic but entrenched gender roles (e.g., Coyne et al. 2016; Dundes and Streiff 2016; England et al. 2011; Hoerrner 1996; Rowe 1979; Rudloff 2016; Sellers 2001; Zipes 2007, 2012). Even though Elsa is in some sense a castrating woman socialized to become more conventionally feminine and nurturing (Streiff and Dundes 2017a), she is nevertheless marketed as *au courant* with modern gender roles (Dockterman 2018), as relayed in the following movie trailer tagline for *Frozen*: “Who will save the day? The ice guy, the nice guy, the snowman, or no man?” (see Wilde 2014, p. 146 for an insightful analysis of this tagline). The premise of the tagline is that it is simply shocking or inconceivable that “no man” is the answer. Furthermore, when Elsa “saves the day”, it is at the end of the movie rather than during the iconic song ‘Let it Go’ (Vincent 2016), at which time she does not exhibit the full array of her powers. In fact, at the film’s conclusion, when the lesson of the film emerges, she has become nurturing, demonstrating that the force she must defeat consists primarily of her own internal demons.

At the center of *Frozen*’s plot is Elsa’s harmful unleashing of emotional turmoil in the form of storms. Her redemption comes when she scales back her use of power and supernatural abilities, suggesting that restrained power is apropos for a woman, and brings serenity to those around her. These same powers allow her to conceive without male input. She produces two non-human sons, Olaf and Marshmallow, through parthenogenesis (from Greek *parthenos* “virgin” + *genesis* “creation”). Elsa draws this procreative potential from the male-associated domain of wind and storms, weather conditions that she touts in the song, ‘Let it Go’.

When Elsa initially harnesses the seminal power of the weather and parthenogenesis, her independence from men is depicted as anomalous, which is consistent with her original conception as a villain (and as a brainchild of males) in early pre-release plans (Acuna 2014; Solomon 2013). These early plans involved a jilted Elsa left at the altar (Hibberd 2017). Thus, it is not surprising that Elsa conceives without a male—although this act of subversion results in her having fatherless, gender non-conforming sons. Despite that her snowman son Olaf clearly is a male character, there is overt queer coding, from his pronouncement that he likes “warm hugs” to jokes about being impaled and asking Anna’s love interest, Kristoff, to “grab his butt” (see Streiff and Dundes 2017a). Elsa’s other son, Marshmallow, mixes truculence with the underlying meaning of his name, traits culminating in *sub rosa* cross-dressing after the credits roll. These themes that reflect anxieties that are prevalent at the

¹ Elsa’s traits are not unique, as her powers resemble those of Storm, a black character who first appeared in 1975 as a member of the Marvel Comics X-Men, a group of mutant heroes. When Storm cannot control her emotions or succumbs to a fit of rage, violent weather can ensue, a characterization based on a Yoruba deity linked to “lightning and gale force winds, radical change, and sudden retribution that verges on the unmanageable” (Scott 2006, p. 310).

time of the film's 2013 release are part of its titular message—*Frozen*—that is, the consequences of an eternal winter that is tied to threats to the gender hierarchy.

In this paper, we present a mythopoetic analysis of *Frozen* given the film's recapitulation of themes of Greek mythology. Myths are known for their adaptability and ability to "encapsulate cultural patterns . . . [and] projections of basic human dilemmas or impulses" (Dundes 1984, p. 3). In fact, archetypes from Greek mythology arguably bridge millennia with lasting resonance. Since popular Disney films tap into an "era's complex and evolving" mores, they capture cultural shifts, especially gender-related conflicts (Davis 2007, p. 17). Our methodology involves content analysis with an unconventional emphasis on the symbolic and lexicographic manifestations of masculinity and effeminacy. Our analysis includes an examination of the portrayal of Olaf and Marshmallow, the snowflake emblem of Elsa's ice palace, and storm symbolism. A major theme explored is Elsa's command of storms as representative of her subversion of male power, which is imitative of the symbolism of Zeus, the Olympian king. As the Snow Queen, Elsa emulates Zeus in his position at the top of the social hierarchy in a cloud palace above Mount Olympus; Elsa lives in her palace atop the North Mountain, complete with a soaring steeple mounted on a phallic spire. Elsa conjures storm power associated with Zeus that denotes his consummate manhood (as symbolized by his phallic thunderbolt insignia). In taking on the role of Zeus, Elsa bucks the seemingly entrenched social order that defines males as the ultimate creators, with females as secondary.

Elsa's lack of romantic interest in men, her parthenogenesis, and her gender non-conforming sons portray a female that can dispense with men, especially in contrast to her romantically-inclined sister. Related anxieties about male expendability are consonant with the perspective of prominent feminist philosopher Sara Ruddick, who suggested that women's ability to give birth "inspires in men a fear that women will do it virtually without them and [that women could] exploit the real powers they would get if they were not socially dominated (and until recently, dominated by a reproductive body which they could not harness to their own uses)" (Kittay 1984, citing personal communication with Ruddick).

Gilmore (2010) echoes Ruddick's assessment, arguing that misogynistic practices reflect entrenched male anxieties surrounding men's simultaneous dependence on women and their loathing for how these needs are seen as degrading to their masculinity. Nevertheless, men's pride in their role in conception may sometimes supersede concerns about their manhood, resulting in the declaration, "We're pregnant." However, in *Frozen*, female parthenogenesis presents an interesting reversal of men's so-called 'womb envy', which plays out at an unconscious level, revealing the complexity of gender dynamics. Indeed, were such thoughts conscious, they could not sublimate unacceptable anxieties coinciding with the film's zeitgeist.

This paper elucidates these motifs that reflect the film's social context, specifically how Elsa challenges and terrorizes her people, hers by virtue of succeeding her father, when she usurps the domain of Zeus—specifically, control over the weather and fertility. Georg Simmel (1858–1918), one of the German 'fathers' of sociology, discusses related themes surrounding gender dynamics. Simmel posits that "the will of the *pater familias* . . . imposed upon the home appears as 'authority' endowing men with a 'logical superiority'" (Simmel and Oakes 1984, p. 24). However, a gradual shift away from this model of male dominance may create "nostalgia for the past, a sort of eschatology in which the present is subject to a *wind* of total destruction" (Elliott and Turner 2012, p. 20, emphasis added), a nostalgia that may fuel angst about revised gender roles.

2. Images of Conception: the Fireworks of When the Sperm Meet the Egg

Storms represent divine power manifested in a variety of sounds including simulated gunfire and other explosions. Storms' visual effects include firework-like lightning bolts (such as Harry Potter's lightning bolt forehead scar). *Frozen* opens with the "iconic Disney castle" (Do Rozario 2004) with fireworks erupting over its phallic minarets (that connote creation reminiscent of the Biblical fiat, "Let there be light"). This imagery suggests conception, which is a phenomenon long associated with fireworks with good reason: "Human life begins in a bright flash of light as a sperm meets an egg,

[which] scientists have shown for the first time, after capturing the astonishing ‘fireworks’ on film. [. . . as] an explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception” (Knapton 2016, para. 1–2 regarding Duncan et al. 2016). Note that firework displays and explosions tend to be the dominion of males, including firecrackers that explode in blasts (Keller 2014), simulating lightning and thunder.² These audiovisuals reminiscent of Independence Day set the stage for other related themes in *Frozen*, including how control over the weather is associated with masculinity.

3. The Bullroarer and the Wind–Fertility Link

The links between storms, wind, and gender dynamics found in *Frozen* are also exemplified in an ancient and sacred male instrument, the bullroarer. It is a device that is whirled in a circle as part of a male-only ritual associated with thunder and wind (Dundes 1976), which is consistent with the multiple Greek gods of the wind (such as Aeolus and the Anemoi, or The Winds), all of whom are male. The sound made by the bullroarer is considered a form of thunder that represents the voice of a deity during a ritual in which boys become men through rebirth. However, this rebirth entails being born from men, not women.³ Since the origin of the bullroarer is ascribed to women, male appropriation of the device may reflect male jealousy of female parturition (Dundes 1976). The reconceptualization of male identity through male rebirth erases the connotations of a mama’s boy, as the absence of the term ‘mama’s man’ implies that becoming a man entails effectuating freedom from maternal influence, and downplays women’s procreative power. Thus, to create men symbolically, men (and exclusively men) are required; women can create only boys.

Males mimic female procreativity in symbolic form through the making of noise, wind, thunder, etc. (Dundes 1976). That is, blowing (breath, wind) is a critical act that is parallel to the fertilizing power of wind, simulating plants’ pollination (see Motif T 524, Conception from Wind, e.g., Hera’s impregnation by wind to conceive Hephaistos (Dundes 1976)).⁴ Similarly, so-called extending party ‘blowout noisemakers’ link blowing, noise, and erections (necessary for fertilization), while the well-known celebration emoji shows sperm-like confetti spewing from a horn (that is blown to commemorate victory). This is a variant of a cornucopia or horn of plenty marking conception as celebratory. It is also within the context of the horn’s etymology as “an erection of the penis” (Horn 2018), which is part of the constellation of male power, blowing, and fertility that is commandeered by Elsa.

4. Wind and the Soul

At the close of the song ‘Let it Go’, Elsa invokes her power over the weather, singing, “Let the Storm Rage On”. The origins of the word rage are “spirit and passion” (as in a fashion that is all the rage). Rage is also linked etymologically to hydrophobia (Rage 2018), which contextualizes the term ‘raging storm’.

Psyche is also connected to the weather in its meaning of life in the sense of breath formed—from *psycho*, “to blow” (in Greek) as well as spirit, soul, ghost, and self (Psyche 2018). This same fundamental connection between life and breath is found in *pneuma*, an ancient Greek word for breath with a religious meaning of spirit or soul, while in Hebrew, *ruach* means wind, breath, and spirit (likely related to the significance of the shofar, a traditional Jewish trumpet made from a ram’s horn). Similarly, spirit and

² *Son et lumière* (French: sound and light shows) recreate weather-related phenomena, especially those that include pyrotechnics at French châteaux.

³ The psychology of the bullroarer may explain the appeal of roaring leaf blowers as well as why male flatulence and the removal of mufflers on vehicles are markers of masculinity (Dundes 1976). ‘Breaking wind’ (also known as pumping) as a form of anal creation is connected to conceptions of male anal birth, connoted in the term ‘thunderbox’, a makeshift toilet. For more on anal birth, see Dundes (1984).

⁴ Weather vanes show the direction of the wind, traditionally fashioned as a cock with a penetrative arrow given that the wind is an agent of fertilization. Dundes (1994) notes that the cock’s reputation for resurrection explains its placement atop penile architectural constructions such as church towers. In addition, a number of idioms connect wind and fertility, e.g., how “shooting blanks” can “take the wind out of [a man’s] sails” (Szadek 2017, para. 17).

breath are also found in the Chinese character for spirit and soul (hún), combining (ytextgreek ún) and (guǐ) and related to the word for clouds as well as breath in expressions denoting smoking or vaping (François 2008).⁵

On a smaller (human) scale, the connection between wind and breath is manifested in the term to be winded, meaning out of breath. The words *inspiration* (breathing in air), *mind blowing*, and *afflatus* (a divine creative impulse, from Latin: *afflare*: to blow) are also related to wind power (that is, air as opposed to liquid, as in creative juices). In fact, the idiom ‘brainstorm’ in Spanish reveals these interconnections in the form of *lluvia de ideas*, a rainstorm of ideas, while the word idea is represented by a light bulb emoji as well, which is consistent with metaphors about inspiration that involve light bulbs (that simulate lightning), and show how conceptions of the weather permeate the everyday English lexicon.

Connections between spirit and breath were developed independently by disparate cultures (Liddell and Scott 1897), showing the cross-cultural resonance of the power of weather phenomena. Wind is personified in the word window (from Old Norse) wind + *auga* “eye” (Window 2018), which is akin to the eye of a storm. The wind in the sense of a spirit or ghost channeling male power helps explain why lesbians and spinsters are associated with these supernatural phenomena, since neither group accedes to men’s domination, explaining why the connection in women is stigmatized (see the conceptualization of “ghostly and witchy lesbians” and “spinster witch[es]” in Cuomo 1995, p. 222). In other words, unmarried women have the freedom to appropriate male power, but must bear the social costs associated with this independence as old maids or queer women.

5. Wind as Fertilizing and Gender

Historically, the wind as a fecundating agent explains the role of the Holy Ghost (or spirit) in the pregnancy of the Virgin Mary (see Jones 1951; Zirkle 1936). *Geist* (ghost) is related to spirit, breath, or wind, given the belief in wind-eggs (Zirkle 1936). *Spiritus* meant either breath or ghost with the “consistent element that men seek to live without recourse to women” (Dundes 1976, p. 234). In *Genesis*, a wind moved over the waters (v1:2), after which God animated Adam by breathing life into his nostrils (v2:7).⁶ The conflation of breath and soul lends meaning to a newborn’s initial breath that allows the spirit into the body while a person’s last breath (or rattle) signals the spirit’s exit from the body (Ryrie 1997). Wind power is also evident in the notion of fanning the flames (of passion or anger), as well as the expression “as the spirit moves me”, denoting when a person feels a sort of supernatural motivation that is beyond logic or consciousness.

Critical to this analysis is the portrayal of Elsa’s various special powers derived through wind and storms as a curse. According to *Frozen* co-director Jennifer Lee, “One sister [has] a superpower—or an affliction—and one [is] ignored because her sister’s taking up all the energy in the room” (Solomon 2013, emphasis added).⁷ Her power serves as an apparently frightening reversal of traditional gender hierarchy in which a woman controls procreation in the context of a *Frozen* atmosphere, given that the title serves as a constant reminder that Elsa’s “affliction” resulted in an “eternal winter”, as Anna says (56:52), which is notable since creating something everlasting is normally enviable.

⁵ Smoking makes the breath visible, creating a cloud of smoke that may give the smoker a feeling of power and creation, as when Mushu (in Disney’s *Mulan*) blows smoke rings around the emasculated falcon of the villain, before riding him as an act of dominance (Mulan 1998, 1:13:45).

⁶ Adam was “animated” by the breath of life just as (mostly) male Disney animators create life, especially given that the characters may seem real to children.

⁷ Jennifer Lee, the only woman to direct a Disney animated feature film, went from screenwriter to co-director, increasing her role in *Frozen*’s story. Born as Jennifer Rebecchi, she took her mother’s name (Lee) after her parents’ divorce. Her only daughter (with her ex-husband), Agatha Lee Monn, sings the middle verse of ‘Do You Want to Build a Snowman?’ a song celebrating Elsa’s childhood magical powers. As Lee is also the voice of Elsa and Anna’s mother, the story could reflect Lee’s worldview about gender. A final sign that Lee’s life may have influenced the story was the traumatic death of her boyfriend in a boating accident her junior year of college (reminiscent of the death by shipwreck of Elsa and Anna’s parents) (UNH 2014). These factors illustrate the proverbial connection between art and life.

Elsa's power is clearly an affliction, because she initially abuses it to the detriment of the whole society, selfishly inviting the storm to "rage" on while she grapples with the consequences of her emotional lability (in defiance of the expectation of women's self-sacrifice and altruism (Dundes 2001)); at one point, when she and Anna talk in her ice palace, she confesses to her sister, "I can't control the curse" (57:16–18). Shortly thereafter, in a soliloquy, she watches in frustration as sharp icicles⁸ emerge from the walls of her palace, as she chants in vain, "Control it. Don't feel—don't feel—don't feel." In the film's representation of the 2013 zeitgeist (the ghost or spirit of the time), anxieties about rising female power (reflected in Elsa's selfishness and lack of control) may have been conflated⁹ with growing concerns that storms presage anthropogenic climate anomalies, especially during the "boreal" cold season (Cohen et al. 2009; Cohen et al. 2018), with boreal derived from Boreas, the god of the north wind.

6. The Hand as Surrogate Phallus

Elsa's manipulation of the weather occurs manually. However, this power is not unleashed until she frees herself of her father's order to metaphorically repress her sexuality, which had been accomplished by covering her hands with gloves (Streiff and Dundes 2017a).¹⁰ After Anna accidentally pulls off one of Elsa's gloves at the coronation ball, an act that wreaks havoc, Elsa removes the second glove during the song 'Let it Go'. Elsa is then capable of female parthenogenesis since earlier, until the gloves come off, her sexuality is stifled.¹¹ This symbolism is clear in the popular saying "no glove, no love", which refers to condoms as metaphorical sheaths given the phallic association of hands. Indeed, the word man is cognate with manual meaning managing by using the hands (Hempl 1901). "The figurative use of the hand for the whole man is very natural and appears in almost every language. It refers to the hand as the skillful *member* and generally designates a laborer or a skillful person. Thus, deckhand, farmhand" (Hempl 1901, p. 426, emphasis added). The word *hand* is a metonym for authority with phallic connotations, as revealed in the name Benjamin, as *ben* means "son of" + *yamin* "right hand". "Ben" as the son of the right hand also connotes the celestial power of gods, as the word "ben" also means "mountain peak".

When Elsa executes parthenogenesis using her ungloved hands, she reveals them not only as phallic, but also as capable of magic, which is also known as prestidigitation, meaning fast fingers, or legerdemain, from French, *léger de main*, meaning literally "light (weight) of hand" (Legerdemain 2018). She accomplishes these feats without the use of a *handbook*, but rather as a so-called "phallic woman" (Steele 2001, p. 76).

7. Let it Go—Bucking the Trend of Songs as Evoking Romantic Enchantment

Elsa's first act of parthenogenesis occurs during 'Let it Go'. As a song, it is a form of incantation or en-chant-ment (see *chanter*, *cantar*, or *cantor*, related to singing). Typically, songs in Disney princess movies promote the heterosexual coupling of a female with a dominant male that can cause relative strangers to fall in love, especially in a magically short period of time; this phenomenon is parodied in *Frozen*'s song 'Love is an Open Door', which precipitates the engagement of Hans and Anna the same day they met. 'Love is an Open Door' mocks characters such as *Sleeping Beauty*'s Aurora, who

⁸ Icicle is slang for penis, according to both male and female college students (see Cameron 1992, p. 381). Other penile pet names relevant to this essay include: thunder-log; thunder-stick; love horn; love wand; leaning tower of please-her; as well as firearms such as guns, rifles, and pistols (Cameron 1992, pp. 379–81).

⁹ *Conflate*: from *con-* "together" + *flare* "to blow," is linked to the word *afflatus* or divine inspiration.

¹⁰ Likewise, the ageless (and childless) Mickey Mouse always wears gloves and has a high-pitched voice, revealing that he has not gone through puberty and that gloves may symbolize repressed sexuality.

¹¹ Elsa's parthenogenesis is castrating because she usurps the putative role of men: "to father" a son means to provide the sperm, whereas the term "to mother" a son means to bring up a child with solicitude and affection. This then puts the emphasis on the men's role in ensuring their DNA is passed on (given doubts of paternity: see Horn 2004, p. 49) rather than input in the day-to-day care, which in the context of *Frozen* implies that Elsa's parthenogenesis calls into question the need for men.

falls for Prince Philip during a song in which they dance in the woods, and most classically Cinderella, who loves Prince “Charming” after their ballroom dance, which is accompanied by singing. Why the prince is “charming” is related to both the word’s etymology from Latin *carmen* (“song, incantation”) and to Old French *charme* (“chant, magic, spell”) ([Charm 2018](#)). Thus, the magic of singing is related to its ability to magically ‘charm’ a person (or ‘charm’ a snake in the case of blowing a phallic wind instrument called a *pungi*). The result is a person who might say he is *enchanté* (enchanted) by a woman who makes him feel spellbound. This is a fundamental concept in Disney princess movies, given the ubiquity of enchantment, a phenomenon linked to wind in the sense that the word ‘air’ is a synonym for song. Moreover, it indicates how the magic associated with men is charming, whereas magic performed by women is chilling (discussed below).

However, Elsa and her propensity for inducing freezing are the antithesis of an enchantress that mesmerizes men. At her coronation ball, Elsa tells Anna, “No one is getting married” (26:22–23) after Anna and Hans tell her of their nuptial plans. Note that she does not say, “It’s too soon to get married” or “You must ensure you’ve found the right person”. Instead, she implies permanent restrictions on sexual behavior for both her sister and herself, suggesting her own lack of interest in bewitching a man. In fact, Anna criticizes Elsa’s tendency “to shut people out” (26:41–43).

8. The Powerful Woman as Castrating Witch

Women who do not aim to please in social situations may feel marginalized, as shown in Elsa’s coronation party, where she clearly does not have a ball. She refuses to dance with anyone and offers her sister as an alternative dance partner to the bloviating Duke of Weselton, since it seems to be impolite to ‘stiff’ a man, even one who is clearly undesirable—a “man in heels,” as Anna calls the duke derisively (22:03–04). Elsa’s discomfort intensifies when she loses one of her gloves, fearing what her bare hand will unleash. She ends the ball, decreeing, “The party [ball] is over. Close the gates” (26:54–57) (two sentences that are uttered consecutively with good [symbolic] reason). At this point, she is quite literally a ball-buster, with a metaphorical meaning of “a dominating or threatening woman who destroys a man’s self-confidence” ([Ball-buster 2018](#)). Note that a dominating woman destroys (rather than just shakes) a man’s confidence, since power shifts are a zero sum game—women apparently gain power at the expense of men. Shortly thereafter, Elsa loses her master status as queen when the duke accuses her of sorcery (27:31–32), and later refers to her powers as a “curse” (29:39–45). At this point, Elsa’s power elicits fear as she is portrayed as a type of witch who flies off the (broom?) handle, bringing to mind witches’ incantations and chanting¹² over a boiling cauldron (with cauldrons connoting a situation characterized by instability and strong emotions). Elsa is an echo of witches of the Middle Ages, many of whom were killed as they were perceived as too threatening according to the witchhunting manual, the *Malleus Malficarum*.¹³ The manual describes witches’ penis envy as they straddled broomsticks and castrated men, storing the phalluses in a bird’s nest. Thus, the phalluses were a nest egg of sorts in lieu of actual eggs since witches coveted the power of phalluses rather than ova, helping them displace men. These images were invented to express male fears stemming from

¹² When fans or cheerleaders chant, there may be an unconscious connection between chanting and the power of en-chant-ment to bring good fortune to the preferred team (analogous to protestors that chant). On a similar note, in the Disney ride *It’s a Small World*, “three hundred audio-animatronic children chant the ride’s title song . . . [which was] crafted in response to the Cuba Missile Crisis” ([Wills 2017](#), p. 52), illustrating how ‘chanting’ is a form of enchantment with prayer-like qualities. It is a mantra of sorts that reflects belief in the magic of the ‘omnipotence of thought’ (see [Pumpian-Mindlin 1969](#); and [Dundes 2003b](#) for how some individuals believe that their decision to bring—or not to bring—an umbrella will affect the weather).

¹³ In the *Malleus Malficarum*, “the field of masculine magic is dramatically limited and male magicians are pointedly marginalized” ([Broedel 2003](#), p. 175). The book targeted women, revealed by the titular use of ‘maleficarum,’ versus ‘maleficorum,’ a spelling that denoted a feminine gender and “hostility toward women” (see [Pavlac 2009](#), p. 57). This hostility is evident in the rarely used full title of the *Malleus Malficarum*: “The Hammer of Witches which destroyeth Witches and their heresy as with a two-edged sword,” with a sword bringing to mind the need to re-feminize these usurpers of male-associated power.

societal shifts in which women were scapegoats (Ben-Yehuda 1980; Zika 1989), and have parallels to how Elsa's community reacts to her phallic powers.

Not surprisingly, the special powers of men were seen differently, as the word magic derives from *magos* and is the basis of the word *magi* meaning men, specifically the Wise Men and “māga”, magicians, from Old Persian *magush*, possibly from the root *magh-* “to have power” (Magic 2018). Yet the word *māg* means not only “relative or kinsman”, but also means “son” (Hempl 1901, p. 427). With these etymologies, then, we can understand a classic magic trick as an expression of womb envy: pulling a live rabbit out of a hat.¹⁴ Thus, the magic and enchantment that is part of Disney's male-associated ‘Magic’ Kingdom can be seen within the context of male creation fantasy.

Elsa's use of her hands to create is the usurpation of male power associated with the ‘stroke’ of a magic wand and the phallic power of pens, a form of handiwork reflected in the creation of holy scripture (writing).¹⁵ This phenomenon relates to the term pen name and the import of signing ceremonies (Mayer 2002) with multiple ballpoint or fountain pens (with a font of ink) that are given out as phallic trophies after the signer has issued his John Hancock. Pencils, which are etymologically “little penises”, have lower status, as the province of pusillanimous pencil-pushers (see Pencil 2018).

The phallic use of hands—and specifically pens—links to the weather given that a stroke of a pen also means a stroke in the sense of striking someone or something: a blow, e.g., a stroke of genius (related to “inspiration” from wind), or a stroke or blow of a cane (Stroke 2018). As such, a *strike* of lightning or winds that *blow* connote storm power and fertility; similar to the stroke of (phallic) pens, they are part of unconscious gendered symbolism as when Elsa eventually uses her hands to defrost Arendelle, first looking down at them (1:27:53) before ending her rebellion against paternal pressure to be the perfect daughter, which entailed concealing her power (Streff and Dundes 2017a) to be stereotypically ladylike.

9. Son (Sown) Versus Daughter and Conception Via Whirlwinds

Elsa's status as a daughter is a key element of the plot. The word daughter is etymologically associated with the adjectives “mild; gentle; meek”, while the word son (*sōn*) is related to procreative powers as in “to bear; give birth” (Son 2018). Specifically, to sow or to “scatter, disperse, or plant” (seeds) is related to semen “seed”, which is a suffixed form of the root **sē-* “to sow” (Seed 2018). Sow is also commonly invoked in common parlance: “You reap what you sow”, or “sowing wild oats”. Thus, sons are etymologically imbued with hopes for fertility. Sowing is also linked to the wind as reproductive. For example, in *Hosea* 8:7: “They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” Thus, the act of sowing (fertilizing) results in a whirlwind (a mini-tornado), which is linked to creation.

However, Elsa as a daughter independently produces two snowmen sons by using her ungloved hands to create whirlwinds and sparkles (i.e., sparks) that transform into Olaf and Marshmallow, without male input (see Figure 1). The twinkling that emanates from her hands as they create snowflakes and Olaf are reminiscent of the billions of zinc sparks that occur when a sperm connects with an egg during a successful egg-to-embryo transition (Que et al. 2015). Without gloves, Elsa can procreate, using wind power. In fact, the movement of wind was central enough to *Frozen* to spawn a whole article devoted to techniques used to simulate wind effects in the film (Wilson et al. 2014).

¹⁴ This trick requires (1) pulling, which connotes the delivery of a child at birth; (2) the use of rabbits, which are fertility symbols; and (3) hats (Rabbit hat 2018) that are slang for vagina in German (Borneman 1971) and conceptually related to the infamous ‘pussy hats’ as vaginas or uterus (see Brewer and Dundes 2018 for the controversy over these hats as an appropriate feminist symbol). Finally, when a female performs a trick, prostitution is implied, as opposed to men who are encouraged to ‘wear many hats’.

¹⁵ Hand idioms are ubiquitous. For example, the word hand is mentioned in the Bible over 1000 times, and those with manifold skills (factotums) are called handymen, to provide just one example.



Figure 1. The creation of Olaf.

Elsa's act of conception shows her as a "tempestress" of sorts, reflecting her ability to conjure storms and make herself seemingly an object of desire. Her swagger in her form-fitting dress signals her temptress capabilities that remind the audience of women's power to entice men. Her makeover includes stiletto heels, connoting danger and sexuality symbolized by stilettos as pumps, but also as daggers (Praz 1970; Steele 2001) (33:07–09; see 1:02:33 for a close up of Elsa's stiletto spike). Thus, her foot, along with her hands, allows her to express her creative power in a way that combines male *and* female aspects that are usually involved in creation. Elsa stomps on ice as the first "step" in making her castle (33:22), a *mise-en-scène* in which her sexual appeal and ability to create are striking. This mix of Elsa's power with creation is likely related to fears about controlling women's sexuality, especially the role of a woman's eggs. Due to conflicted feelings about women's power in this regard, men's integral role, including in conception, is normally emphasized.

Historical sociology provides some perspective on this age-old tension. Vromen (1987) explains how sociologist Georg Simmel viewed gender dynamics: "Women are expected to please, serve and complement men . . . Outside of their relationship to men, Simmel insisted, women are seen as *nothing*" (Vromen 1987, p. 570, emphasis added). Simmel's proposed solution to gender inequality is ironic in light of our analysis: "There is room for cultural creativity by women only 'if they accomplish something that *men cannot do*' (Simmel's emphasis) . . . eliminat[ing] women as competitors against men" (Vromen 1987, p. 571). Simmel suggests that women reduce the competition over "creativity" by both presiding over the home and socializing men since "only to the extent that woman differs from man is her autonomy assured" (Vromen 1987, p. 575); this assessment omits women's unique procreative abilities. The idea that women are seen as "nothing" outside of their relationship with men, or as a metaphorical zero, raises the question of whether women's indispensable role in conception is devalued to avoid acknowledging men's dependence on women for procreation (that is, men's lack of worth without women).

10. The Devaluation of Women's Eggs and Fertility

When Elsa creates independently (without men), she symbolically contributes an egg without a complementary male fertilizing agent (besides the wind)—a zero of sorts, with a distinct egg shape in certain cultures: ٠: the Arabic zero. This implies that an egg, similar to a zero, has no value by itself (until another numeral is added in the case of a zero). The connection between female eggs and zeroes is seen in the term goose egg, which applies to games that feminize those shut out from scoring (a blow out).¹⁶

¹⁶ The custom of egging houses humiliates the target through feminization, just like having egg on one's face connotes humiliation. Breaking eggs, however, can also be propitious as in Mexico, when *cascarones*—hollowed eggshells filled with confetti—are crushed on people's heads, bringing good luck (specifically fertility) (Contreras et al. 2015), which is likely due to the sperm-like associations of confetti (that are paired with eggs penetrated by sperm as part of conception).

While the term goose egg is an insult, the link between a zero and an egg could be examined within the context of how the time in utero prior to birth is not typically counted. In other words, when babies are born, they are not considered to be nine months old (if they are full term). This both empowers and demeans women. Prior to the baby's birth, when the fetus is in utero, the woman has virtually complete control over the growing being (which is empowering). However, the fact that the pre-natal time in utero is *not* counted in a child's age in the US could be construed as demeaning, since this time when women do have complete control over the fetus is not credited as the beginning of life. As such, we pose the following question regarding a hypothetical Father Gander instead of Mother Goose: if men were associated with fictional pseudo-birds that incubated fertilized eggs, would the newborn still be age zero at birth? Perhaps what happens before birth is a metaphorical goose egg, not because of any biological realities, but rather because following fertilization, men are not involved in pregnancy (and may even be unaware that they have fathered a child). In other words, personhood seems to require independence from the mother, akin to "oppositional self-assertion and separation . . . of the toddler or adolescent male vis-à-vis the parent, usually the mother" (Eurich-Rascoe and Kemp 1997, p. 12). The separation is also interpreted as respect for patriarchy (Creed 1993). Thus, the term goose egg likely reflects androcentrism in the English lexicon as well as in larger society. Just as zeroes (metaphorical eggs) have no value without another numeral attached to them, women ostensibly need male input for their eggs to be viable—unless that woman is Elsa running amuck with snowmen spawn. These assertions are consistent with calling someone a bad egg if they misbehave, an expression that implicitly attributes flaws entirely to the woman. In other words, it is her fault if the rascalion is 'rotten', since the female provides the egg.

11. Women as Nubile

Elsa's lack of interest in males in any capacity stands in sharp contradistinction to her sister, Anna. Elsa is more termagant than nubile nymph; she is the storm, raging on (as she sings in 'Let it Go').¹⁷ She has no interest in assuming the passive female role in a union with a man who penetrates the female to fertilize her. Instead, similar to Zeus, she is capable of parthenogenesis, while wielding power that intimidates, and indeed emasculates men such as the unemployed icemen that describe Elsa as an "icy force" in the first line of the film (in *The Frozen Heart: Ice Worker's Song*) and who see her as sexually inaccessible (see Streiff and Dundes 2017a). She not only prevents them from working, but also usurps their role, as we see when Anna knocks on the doors of Elsa's ice palace. The doors open for her, but Kristoff is told not to enter. Anna is nervous about how Elsa will react to him and thus instructs him not to come inside, prompting him to stammer with frustration, "But, but . . . come on! It's a palace made of ice. Ice is my life" (53:36–38). Thus, Anna goes in alone (initially), showing that Elsa has both eclipsed the male role of ice harvester and has no desire for males to enter her (ice palace).

This scene cues the audience to see Elsa as hostile to men, tempestuous rather than nubile (meaning not just like a cloud, but also like a young, sexually mature woman that is suitable for marriage). Nubile women are highly prized, and even likely to incite envy. We see ritualized protection against invidious reactions to their desirability in wedding 'toasts' that connote metaphorical drying, perhaps related to the evil eye in which enviable situations risk inviting desiccation committed by those who (often inadvertently) covet another person's good fortune (e.g., presumed impending fertility for newlyweds).¹⁸ Note that nubile women are young (not older, presumably infertile women). As cloudlike, they augur marital bliss of ascendance to the mythical cloud nine.

¹⁷ Similarly, colds have been popularly associated with frigid temperatures, while the idiom catching a cold hints at the airborne spread of viruses via wind-like manifestations of illness. These symptoms, such as "blowing" one's nose, coughing, and sneezing, may cause others to feel dis-ease, while among children, avoidance is played out in the game tag in which youth flee con-tag-ion, the game's etymological derivation (Contagion 2018).

¹⁸ The best man typically gives a wedding toast that makes fun of the groom, as a public performance meant to both convey knowledge of the groom based on friendship but also as a means to present a façade that implies that the groom is not worthy of envy.

As nubile (that is, cloudlike), these ostensibly fertile women are similar to water vapor that condenses, preventing dryness. Yet because a toast is metaphorically drying, there is a compensatory need for fluids to counteract any drying associated with envy (that is, the evil eye). As such, it is strictly socially mandated that all wedding guests drink following a toast. An empty glass or refusal to join in the toast is taboo; all guests must imbibe fluid that is dedicated to the hydration and thus fertility of the couple (Sakkas et al. 2015) traditionally mandated to be fruitful and multiply. Wine (or *sparkling* wine) is the drink of choice, which is likely because Dionysus, the god of wine who was born from Zeus' thigh, promotes fertility. It is perhaps because of Zeus's parthenogenesis of the god, also known as Bacchus, that this begotten¹⁹ son became the eponymous facilitator of intoxication-fueled ecstasy. The loud popping of a champagne cork exiting a bottle prefigures the male climax that is traditionally expected on the wedding night.

12. Alcohol as Spirits that Reinforce Conventional Masculinity

The latent gender implications of Bacchus's origins and the underlying meaning of wedding toasts are hardly isolated examples of how beverages evoke the gender hierarchy, albeit unconsciously. Elsa is powerful because her conflicts are no tempest in a teapot, as befits a woman (cf. *Beauty and the Beast*'s even-keeled Mrs. Potts). Likewise, the analogous term storm in a cream bowl (Bartlett 1891) implies that women's volatility is normally less consequential than that of males, as cream is from milk; even drinking coffee with milk is arguably a form of feminizing it, versus drinking an espresso "black" with a double shot. A tempest in a teapot differs from the storm power associated with concoctions such as Hurricanes as well as Dark n' Stormy 'cocktails'. Distilled liquor (rum, brandy, whiskey, gin, and vodka), so-called spirits, are hard liquor that contrast with soft drinks (that is, soda). Moonshine, which was originally a slang term for high-proof distilled spirits, was known as white lightning. Pressure for men to imbibe hard liquor is manifested in men competing in taking shots, as in taking bullets from a gunshot (since the idiom is not drinking a shot). Males who take shots competitively show their ability to be symbolically impaled by a projectile and survive; the man who stops drinking or passes out is feminized. In this regard, it is notable that the term abstinence applies both to restraint in alcohol consumption and sex. When Zeus or Thor releases the power of a storm, no restraint is expected (as Zeus is not a drop in the bucket kind of being).²⁰ Male drinkers are encouraged to get blasted or smashed, words that can be used to describe storm damage. This is why excessive alcohol is commonly part of fraternity hazing in which establishing masculinity is central (see Dundes and Dundes 2002 for more on this topic). The term aspirational blackout (Carrick 2016) from binge drinking is as if the drinker unconsciously invokes the power of lightning strikes.

Frozen includes a gender-coded drink in its provocative beach scene in which Elsa's gender non-conforming son, Olaf, imagines luxuriating on a beach under an umbrella, with a pink drink in hand, garnished with an orange slice on a straw, and diluted with ice cubes. It is clearly not a stiff drink that is served straight up, but rather more of a fruity drink (a descriptor with queer coding as the word fruit is a derogatory term for gay males). This fantasy beach scene (47:52–53) is celebrated in products such as Disney's "*Frozen* Tablecloth featuring Summer Olaf" and the "*Frozen* Olaf Loves Heat Bath Towel" (available on Amazon.com). Although we have no way of knowing if Olaf's pink drink had value-added masculinity by being "spiked", as an effeminate male, Olaf was under no pressure to

¹⁹ By definition, beget (or begotten) may imply parthenogenesis: "typically of a man, sometimes of a man and a woman: bring (a child) into existence by the process of reproduction" (Begotten 2018).

²⁰ Elsa's control of the weather conjures Zeus's unparalleled power, as reflected in his Roman name, Jupiter. The planet Jupiter is 2.5 times the size of all of the other planets in the solar system combined. It is made primarily of gases, and thus is a gas giant (Rogers 1995). It is perhaps related conceptually to thunder, which is compressed air (wind) that powerfully explodes, connoting the metaphor of the Big Bang believed to mark the beginning of the universe, with sexual overtones that hint at male sexual release (and guns as phallic). In the case of Thor, as the god of thunder, storms, and wind (for whom Thursday is named), it is significant that he is also a fertility god, linking control of the weather and fertility, likely because of the role of the wind in plant fertilization (Violatti 2014).

prove himself by consuming a macho beverage. This is consistent with research showing that men drink more when their masculinity is threatened by shifting gender roles. According to Lyons et al. (2006), “Young men who feel that their identity is threatened [by] changes and [that] their traditional roles are being challenged take up masculine values more strongly than previously [and display] stronger versions of masculinity [that] distinguish men’s drinking from women’s” (p. 230).

13. Kristoff and Sven as Masculine

Olaf’s open effeminacy is a useful foil to bolster Kristoff’s masculinity, especially as Kristoff is an iceman emasculated by Elsa’s eternal winter, which puts him out of work (Streiff and Dundes 2017a). In addition, Kristoff benefits from compensatory virility when he is compared to his competitor, Hans. Hans woos Anna only because he craves power; he is a classic “false hero” (in line with the *dramatis personae* articulated by Propp (1958)). As a false hero slated for deportation back to his country of origin (1:29:41–42), he exemplifies the 2013-era “solutions” for dealing with *persona non gratae* in the wake of immigration concerns. Kristoff, a name that is a form of Christopher (bearer of Christ), burnishes his masculinity by playing a stereotypically important role (although not the sole role) in aiding the damsel in distress, as he rushes a deathly-ill Anna back to Arendelle atop a galloping Sven.

Since Kristoff is not hypermasculine, it is critical that his sidekick Sven be unambiguously masculine in his traits. In fact, Sven is Kristoff’s equal and *not* truly his sidekick. This is because Sven (Old Norse for young warrior) enhances Kristoff’s machismo as a big animal well endowed with impressive, multi-pointed antlers (a masculinity-affirming trophy often mounted for display in man caves (Dundes 1997b)).

14. Elsa’s Snowflake

The points (or spikes) that are characteristic of the antlers or horns of such beasts as Sven are also salient in Elsa’s snowflake emblem—and with good (symbolic) reason. The snowflake is on frequent display, but most noticeably on Elsa’s ice palace ceiling, which is featured for a full five seconds of the film (53:57–54:01). It is a non-standard form, a shape that was distinct by design, since *Frozen*’s artists wanted Elsa to have an extraordinary snowflake: “Elsa [has] a signature snowflake shape. If you saw it anywhere in the movie, you’d know it wasn’t nature, it was her” (Solomon 2013) (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Elsa’s signature snowflake.

Her emblem is also featured as a phallic-shaped, spiked snowflake chandelier hanging impressively from the ceiling of her ice palace (33:53–55) (in a design that departs from the conventional spider of lights—*araña de luces*—style). In “How to Draw Elsa’s Snowflake” (Draw 2018), a how-to video depicts how the snowflake resembles a flower surrounded by arrows. Hence, symbolically, Elsa is deep down a delicate flower, but one with petals that extrude manifold barbs and arrowheads with clearly depicted *diamond*-shaped arrowheads—a shape that is specifically identified as a “diamond” in the aforementioned how-to video.

15. Elsa's Snowflake and "Ice" as a Substitute Diamond Engagement Ring

The diamonds that are salient in Elsa's snowflake are highly significant, albeit at an unconscious level. Like the points on antlers that represent threatening masculinity, angularly cut diamonds on engagement rings carry an important latent meaning that helps elucidate the symbolism of snowflakes in the plot. A rock is a metonym of the engagement ring due to its hardness (hard as a rock) and its use as a primordial tool of male dominance, as connoted in its selection as the moniker of the 2016 Sexiest Man Alive winner, Dwayne Johnson, "The Rock" (and voice of the hypermasculine Maui in *Moana* (see [Streiff and Dundes 2017b](#))). The expression "diamonds are forever" perhaps is more about diamonds' reputation as a hard substance rather than relationships, which clearly have questionable longevity (as divorce rates indicate). Investment in this custom of diamond engagement rings is so deeply rooted that despite publicity about conflict diamonds, couples remain wedded to this choice of gem.

The traditional rules of engagement (rings) require that a man give the ring to a woman to indicate his claim on her virginity. Its shininess (and size) reflect the male's masculinity, while its reputation for hardness—given the etymology of carat as a 'horn'—wards off and intimidates rivals that threaten the woman's virginity. Similar to the classic red rose, with buds ready to open but protected by spikes that threaten to draw blood to protect the flower, the engagement ring also has 'points', which are a symbol of phallic masculinity. When discussing diamonds, points refer not to the number facets in a diamond, but rather to its weight: e.g., a 10-point diamond weighs 1/10th of a carat, and a 50-point stone weighs one-half of a carat. Thus, diamond rings have a carat that is etymologically related to horns (that are phallic), while the word point (from Latin *punctum*) is related to puncturing or pricking connoting phallic aggression with sexual innuendo (see [Figure 3](#)).

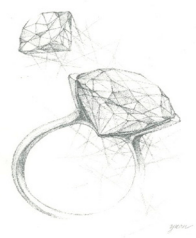


Figure 3. The elements of an engagement ring.

An engagement ring is broached in *Frozen* in the scene in which the trolls (Kristoff's surrogate family) try unsuccessfully to rush Anna and Kristoff through a marriage ceremony. When Kristoff informs them that Anna is engaged (to Hans), a troll questions Anna's availability, noting, "I don't see no ring" (1:07:15–17). Yet we would not expect Hans, a false hero, to have given Anna a ring, due to its symbolism. As the trolls intuit, "This quote 'engagement' is a flex arrangement", meaning that the engagement is not a firm commitment. These allusions to questionable masculinity are consistent with a pattern in which the Disney villain is feminized ([Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 2003](#); [Putnam 2015](#); [Thompson and Zerbinos 1995](#); [McLeod 2016](#); [Towbin et al. 2004](#); [Patterson and Spencer 2017](#)). This trope is relevant to Hans, who at the end is humiliated when Anna punches him in front of a gallery of men (1:29:16–22), whose ensuing laughter effectively completes his emasculation ([Abedinifard 2016](#)). Anna's lack of an engagement ring indicates that Hans is only using her to gain power, and is not concerned with fending off suitors from Anna. Thus, the unconscious symbolic value of an engagement ring is not relevant for Hans. However, the symbolism of engagement rings is relevant to Elsa, whose self-created snowflake emblem embodies her singular independence, which is most notably defined by her refusal to be dominated by a male.

Elsa's ice palace has a number of parallels with diamonds. Her palace has "frozen fractals all around", (according to her narration in 'Let it Go'). *Frozen's* lighting director designed the palace to be "all refractive" ([Solomon 2013](#), p. 121), akin to diamonds that have the highest refractive index

amongst natural minerals (Zaitsev 2001). In fact, according to *Frozen*'s assistant art director Lisa Keene, the ice is "like a roomful of diamonds" (Solomon 2013, p. 122). In addition, Elsa says in the song that her thoughts "crystallize", which is of note since diamonds are a crystal. There is nothing *beforehand*, that is, all is created with only the use of her ungloved hands, releasing their procreative power as manifested in sharp ice shards and icicles that resemble crystals.

Elsa has no need for ice (slang for diamonds) from a man. Her sparkling snowflake emblem is an enhanced version of an engagement ring, but does not carry with it the connotation that a male controls or dominates her. Her surrogate diamond wards off all suitors (from the Latin *sequi*: to follow, or pursue). Notably, her ice palace is an artistic creation, and not a place that is inviting (for example, it lacks a kitchen or other rooms denoting conventional female duties). Her palace is almost dream-like in representing Elsa's soul rather than a home with stereotypical connotations of warmth and nurturing. In fact, her new home is more of a bower: a woman's private quarters, especially in a medieval castle, with privacy implied when she unceremoniously shuts out the audience at the end of 'Let it Go'. This is consistent with her bower as boudoir (from French: *bouder*, to sulk or pout), which is a place to retreat. In some sense, Elsa's whole ice palace is her bower, since she has no interest in entertaining guests and even creates her son Marshmallow as a guard to fend off anyone that attempts to storm her private retreat.

Her spikey snowflake with its ice (metaphorical and literal) seems effective in deterring male suitors, given a total dearth of male interest in the attractive, even seductive Elsa. Despite this absence of romantic entanglements, Disney markets a diamond engagement ring, the "Enchanted Disney Elsa's Snowflake Diamond Engagement Ring" with a diamond that has "the resemblance of a snowflake" (for \$4499; Reeds 2018), supporting the interpretation of Elsa's "ice" or snowflake as a symbolic diamond.

It is important within the context of Elsa producing her own diamond to note that it usually represents the male, and *not* the female. This assertion is consistent with Disney's prior portrayal of Aladdin as "a diamond in the rough". In its non-shiny state, a diamond is just a hard surface with the ability to cut, but that lacks the shininess that makes a man an appropriate suitor for a woman, since Aladdin has work to do before he is a suitable mate—or a knight in shining armor or otherwise metaphorically shiny—for Princess Jasmine. Thus, the sparkling diamond (and not a pearl or other stone) signifies that a male has made a claim on a woman, and as such, the conspicuousness of the ring deters male rivals.

Yet another indication that a diamond is symbolic of a male with impressive metaphorical antlers or points that show off manhood and threaten competitors is the well-known term "family jewels":

When "gonads are equated with expensive gems, male heterosexuality turns into a cost-effective experience in need of a tally sheet and maybe even insurance. The overwhelming emphasis on performance and the portrayal of the penis as a mechanical device, whether tool or weapon, [creates a] heteronormative discourse on masculinity wherein men control the behavior of other men . . . and rely on this misogynist discourse." (Murphy 2001, p. 122).

In addition to the gonads as an instrument of aggression and control, the term family jewels also "place[s] significant value on the reproductive function of the male²¹ [without] any comparable slang term for ovaries" (Murphy 2001, p. 35). Furthermore, the term implies that men are "irreplaceable", which could be a form of "womb envy" (Murphy 2001, p. 36): "Men may refer to their gonads as jewels to compensate for their latent realization that the testicles do not hold the same significance in reproduction as does the uterus. That is, men's value in work as in reproduction remains in question and thus a phrase like 'family jewels' is required to assert men's worth" (Murphy 2001, p. 37). Specifically, the "family" jewels denote a man's ability to create a family, that is, offspring that provide a legacy of possible genetic immortality, which is an aspiration modeled by Zeus.

²¹ In the expression son of a gun, guns as phalluses (Trnka 1995) minimize women's procreative role.

We assert that the flashy diamond on display is thus part of the *man's* jewel collection on loan, presumably on permanent loan, to the female of interest. While wedding bands imply sexual exclusivity for both partners, the diamond engagement ring uses a phallic threat as a sometimes ostentatious means of promulgating the man's sole rights of entry. This interpretation is dependent on the custom of the man giving a woman an engagement ring, but never vice versa. Yet in reality, not only is the tradition of engagement rings unidirectional, but it is also culturally proscribed for a woman to pick out and buy the engagement ring herself. This tradition is so inculcated that the man normally presents the ring to his prospective fiancée, sometimes publically, in a display of masculinity that marks his proposal. The ring even has a special, designated finger where it must be displayed to avoid ambiguity in its symbolic significance, which clarifies that it was given to the woman by her suitor and is not part of her collection of gems.

These underlying factors explain the tradition of giving back the ring if the engagement does not culminate in marriage. While women sometimes do keep the ring, it is recognized as counter to custom. Returning the ring restores the man's family jewels. This makes sense given that when couples break up, other jewelry is usually not returned (even if it is given away or sold by the woman). In fact, mothers may give their engagement ring to their sons to give to their future wives, but they usually will not give it to their prospective sons-in-law to give to their daughters, in accordance with traditional rules of family lineage in which the same last name carries on as an unspoken mandate inherent in a male's family jewels. The custom of returning the engagement ring to the man if the wedding is called off acknowledges that it ultimately belongs to him—a part of him that is displayed on 'his' woman to show her status relative to him.²²

16. Clapping: Sounds of Weather Equals Power

In reality, while women cannot engage in parthenogenesis, they are at least seemingly closer to it than men, as the ones who experience pregnancy and whose role is perforce more extended than a single brief encounter, but rather lasts nine months. Perhaps to compensate for women's more visible role in creation, it is male gods that control the weather or that may independently procreate. However, beyond the symbolic level, compensatory substitutes have emerged, in particular, applause in its simulation of a rainstorm. While light applause (or snapping) sounds like falling rain (a point explained by audio experts (Zhang and Kuo 2013, p. 113)), more enthusiastic applause sounds even more like a storm. We surmise that the power of applause: *ad* 'to' + *plaudere* "to strike, clap" is based on a lightning "strike" and a "clap" of thunder. The connection between the sounds of weather and human-made sounds shows respect for the power of phenomena such as storms (associated with Thor and Zeus). Furthermore, verbal cheers, chants, and shouts may sound similar to rushing water heard from a distance.

In the case of a curtain call, continued applause is a request for performers to return to the stage at the end of a show to acknowledge plaudits. The lights are turned off and then on again; these actions are often accompanied by thunderous applause. Performers presumably feel a rush from being empowered to see effects resembling lightning elicit the sounds of a storm—a stagecraft technique called "fast blackout/lights up cues" (Glossary 2018). In contemporary times, flashing cell phone flashlights replicate this function for concert-goers. This theory is corroborated by alternatives to clapping: stomping of feet or rapping of fists or hands on a table, which also are storm-like sounds. Sometimes, a thunderous burst of applause can "bring down the house", implying a storm. In addition, applause accompanied by whistling resembles whistling wind that enhances storm simulation and

²² The symbolism of the family jewel is a serious matter that may require court intervention. For example, in New York, "once a marriage proposal is extended and accepted—once the promise is made—no matter what day of the year, that ring is no longer considered a gift. It's a contract to enter into marriage" and must be returned (Julien 2018). Thus, while the ring is ostensibly a gift and a purported expression of love and commitment, it apparently possesses enough deep-rooted meaning to be the equivalent of a penned signature in a legal agreement.

connotes power (just as whistleblowers wield power).²³ The use of body percussion-like clapping to simulate rain (e.g., Poole 2016) is remarkable (and available in auditory form in a number of sites on YouTube under keywords body percussion rainstorm). ‘Snap to it’ is a command reflecting weather-related cause and effect given that the sound of snapping resembles both applause and rain (and is the usual sound that signals the start of a tempest as simulated in a body percussion storm).

17. Ova and Standing Ovation

The assertion that applause is traditional because it sounds like a storm and thus connotes power can be augmented by an analysis of the term ‘standing ovation’. First, we note that the word ova means eggs (related to oval, ovoid, or ovate, which pertain to eggs). An ovation, from the Latin word *ovare*, means to lay eggs or to impregnate, but it also means to rejoice (Ovare 2018). Since ova is plural for eggs and *ovada* means pregnant (in Spanish, said of birds) (Roberts 2014, p. 288), then ova + “tion” might combine rejoicing with laying eggs and pregnancy. The original meaning of ovation was the honor accorded to Roman army generals after great victories. Thus, we speculate that their honor may have been linked to fertility-related prowess.

In other words, a standing ovation is applause that sounds like a storm *and* is associated with laying eggs, that is, a type of creation (that occurs when birds are in a standing position). This symbolism was evident when *Frozen* animator John Ripa pitched the climax of the movie in which Anna thwarted Hans’ efforts to kill Elsa: the ecstatic production team reportedly gave him “a standing ovation” (Solomon 2013). This connection seems to have been recognized already by a fertility company, *Ovation Fertility*, which specializes in “removing the obstacles that prevent conception” (that as of 2015 offers services similar to Carrot—see footnote 35). However, the connection between applause as it relates to male parthenogenesis does not seem to have been previously suggested—although it is not unusual for creation myths to have an egg theme (see Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (1955–1958): Motif A641: Universe brought forth from an egg, and Motif A1222: Mankind originates from eggs (noted by Dundes 1997a)), a link also conveyed by the Latin dictum: *Omne vivum ex ovo*: All life from an egg.

This connection between males, eggs, and procreativity is also manifested in the Easter Bunny, a male with eggs analogous to a male stork, which is said to use a chimney (birth canal) to ‘deliver’ babies (Dundes 1980, 2007). These males associated with eggs and fertility unconsciously usurp female powers. Not coincidentally, the term couvade,²⁴ in which men take on the role of the parturient, is from French *couver*, ‘to hatch’ (Dundes 2003a). In this regard, the word ‘*ovada*’, which is said of birds, makes sense when applied to humans (men, in this case). This is not to say that a standing ovation means that the audience is consciously invoking powers associated with female fertility, but rather shows that so many elements of the cultural milieu reinforce various subtle as well as blatant patterns that recapitulate historical gender politics. The word innovation, with ‘*nova*’ meaning new, may also connote creativity and newness, but with more gender neutrality in the absence of the implications of a returning Roman army rejoicing in triumph in association with laying eggs or impregnation.

18. Elsa’s Parthenogenesis in ‘Let it Go’

In a reversal of male womb envy, Elsa circumvents any male control as she explains in ‘Let it Go’. She describes a howling wind and “a swirling storm inside” as she lets loose her creative potential in the birth of Olaf (32:09–10), which is marked by a swirly gust (including a whooshing sound simulating

²³ The Wizard of Oz creates a display of power by simulating the sounds of a storm, including flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, which is consistent with the meaning behind the wizard’s request that Dorothy bring him the wicked witch’s broomstick: to keep males atop the power hierarchy.

²⁴ Couvade involves men participating in rituals as if they themselves were giving birth to their child (Dundes 2003a). *Faire la couvade* means in French to sit doing nothing, which shows the ambivalence toward the female role in that they are seen as not doing anything (from a male perspective).

wind that is blowing snow). Shortly thereafter, she uses her ungloved hands to send out gusts and release sparks that create a swirling whirlwind that morphs into Marshmallow (accompanied by the sound effects of a breath/small gust of wind) (58:12–15). The power of wind is also manifested in the terms ‘whirlwind romance’ and ‘windfall’, which are phenomena that suggest a supernatural element. Parthenogenesis through wind is an ancient concept: “Most classical and medieval philosophers believed that certain mammals and birds could be impregnated by wind”; the wind’s breath allowed conception “without copulation” attributable to anemophily or wind pollination (Zirkle 1936, p. 95). The wind that Elsa conjures is similar to the Holy Spirit (or breath) responsible for Christ’s virgin birth, and many other examples of impregnation by the wind in myths (Zirkle 1936).

In ‘Let it Go’, Elsa says that her power “flurries” (i.e., blows) through the air, while her mental energy “crystallizes like an icy blast [wind]”, indicating phallic imagery of sharp crystals that work in tandem with the wind. These images suggest that she is usurping the male role in conception. Her use of male power is more visually obvious when she sings, “Let the storm [wind] rage on”, and then proceeds to use her hands to command clearly phallic icicle-like projections to rise up to become her castle, which is later decorated with a phallic snowflake (see Figure 2) with menacing sharp spokes (33:32–37).

Elsa conceives but does not carry her progeny in utero; she skips pregnancy, calling into question her ability to be a good mother. This point is demonstrated in an exchange occurring when Elsa is finally reunited with Olaf in her ice castle, where significantly more of her effort has gone (i.e., in her castle, not her children)—perhaps since it is ‘a man’s’ home that is his castle, rather than a woman who should preside over such a lofty structure. The following scene poignantly exposes Elsa’s maternal deficits:

Olaf (shyly): You built me. You remember that?

Elsa (surprised): And you’re alive?

Olaf (unsure): Um . . . I think so? (55:03–10)

Elsa then looks down at her hands, presumably contemplating their power to give life to the non-animated pre-pubescent version of the snowman in spite of her being a cold ice princess who lacks maternal warmth.²⁵ In her capacity as a Snow Queen or a queen in a surrogate parent role, she fails, as her subjects suffer under her rule. Even at the end of the film in her reformed state, she gives Olaf a protective flurry, bestowing coldness, not warmth, that ensures his ability to stay erect, much to his delight.

19. Olaf and His Phallic Carrot Nose

In accordance with his status as a male, Olaf is preoccupied with his carrot, a phallic symbol (Hines 1999) that is a recurring theme in *Frozen* (Streiff and Dundes 2017a). Its symbolic meaning perhaps suggests why it serves as motivation, that is, a carrot as enticement (as in the carrot or the stick). Similarly, sticks as symbolic phalluses (as when men are upset to “get the short end of the stick”) can express phallic punishment, as in “stick it to the man”, in which feminization results in condign retribution. When Anna first inserts the carrot into Olaf, bestowing him with a nose, she jams it in forcefully (since as a virginal woman, she does not know much about carrots and their correct positioning).²⁶ This act causes Kristoff to visibly cringe. Olaf nevertheless responds saying that he “always wanted a nose” and refers to it as a “little baby unicorn” (46:21–22), before Anna re-positions it to make it bigger (prompting Olaf to say, “I love it even more” (46:24–25)). The word corn in unicorn is cognate with horn, with a variety of phallic connotations such as with Sven’s antlers, candy corn

²⁵ The expression colder than a witch’s tit (in a brass bra) serves as a reminder that powerful women that wield magic are not only castrating, but also unable to nurture or nurse.

²⁶ Even in writing, a carat ^ is a symbol that text has been inserted.

(horn) witch costumes, and also a car horn that conveys aggression with an overlay of sexual innuendo (as in “honk if you’re horny”).²⁷ However, because Olaf has been isolated from any male influence, he is effeminate.

Olaf loves warm hugs, but without the presence of a father, warm hugs and his desire for a warm climate would be his undoing (causing loss of masculinity through melting). Olaf needs male guidance, yet has no one to teach him how to be a man, which is socialization that often occurs in gender-exclusive “boundaried collectivities” (Thorne 1993, p. 117). In fact, in his capacity as a sidekick, a type of character that is almost always a male that can be feminized for comic relief, he is the butt of jokes about his deviation from traditional masculinity, such as when he talks about his lack of bones, which is code for boner (1:01:17–19).

20. Marshmallow

Marshmallow is gender-ambiguous because despite his ferocity, he is a marshmallow made out of a delicate sweet, who in the end reveals his true nature. After the credits roll, the audience watches as he ensures that he is alone, and then withdraws his menacing spikes and teeth. Next, he dons Elsa’s tiny crown, which he finds sexually gratifying (as revealed in his grunts and body language) and the fact that this is the only time he smiles (a toothless smile).²⁸ As a male wearing a tiara, he ceases to be a threat (just like a law or rule with no teeth). It turns out that Marshmallow is all bark and no bite (as he fails to penetrate anyone in the course of the film). The crown scene is a surprise moment once the movie seems to be over, allowing viewers to laugh at their realization that his ferocity was just a front that hid his desire to act feminine. Elsa had thrown away her tiara, saying, “The past is in the past”, apparently referring to her conformity to femininity among other societal norms. Thus, it is interesting that Marshmallow wants to wear this same crown.

Originally, marshmallows were derived from a swamp (marsh) plant with sticky white sap with roots used as lozenges for sore throats, called suckets (Foster and Johnson 2008, p. 244–45), which may have created a connection between marshmallows and breasts, given sucking as a means of gratification in the oral stage. Although marshmallow breasts denote small breasts, marshmallow root, an herb that typically comes in a pill form, is believed to make breasts grow faster (see e.g., Organicfacts 2018), especially if taken following a milk thistle cleanse (Milk thistle 2018). Despite the lack of scientific testing of these herbal treatments, people believe that the remedies will work, likely due to latent psychological reasons.

As Elsa’s son and thus an extension of Elsa that is made out of marshmallows, he represents a giant breast, but one that is cold and threatening, not warm and nurturing. However, Marshmallow is a combination of both male and female stereotypical traits: he symbolizes a large breast but also possesses phallic traits; he has sharp teeth and spikes that emerge when he is threatened. He suffers downward displacement symbolic castration when Hans dramatically severs his foot, causing him to plunge into an abyss (1:10:55–1:11:06).²⁹ He thus falls outside of the gender binary, as neither nurturing nor an effective protector (as Elsa is knocked out and taken hostage despite his role as palace guard).

²⁷ To get angry or blow up is related to the word inflate (Blow up 2018). This lexical connection helps explain why letting the air out of a car’s tires is emasculating. Similarly, keying a car is a phallic affront (cf. the word play: a key that opens many locks is a master key while a lock opened by many keys is a cheap lock).

²⁸ Similarly, in *Rudolf the Rednosed Reindeer* (1964), a nerdy misfit dentist symbolically castrates the Abominable Snowman by pulling his teeth. The snowman becomes docile and performs chores as ordered (perhaps reinforcing latent castration-related odontophobia, fears exacerbated by dentists’ penetrating drills). In contrast, Rudolf eventually affirms masculinity, complete with his shiny nose, an echo of the reindeer Sven’s machismo.

²⁹ The foot as phallic equivalent is part of the story of Cinderella, whose foot fits perfectly inside a slipper that may be made out of glass (that can only be broken once—akin to virginity) or fur (a more patent vaginal reference) (Dundes 1989a, p. 139). The best-known version of the tale (AT 510A) was published by Charles Perrault in 1697 as “Contes de Ma Mère l’Oye,” or Tales of My Mother Goose (Dundes 1988, p. 14). The foot as phallus is often part of Jewish weddings when the groom breaks the glass with his foot to prefigure the bride’s loss of virginity. A light bulb in a velvet bag advertised as making a loud pop when crushed may be substituted to ensure that the glass breaks (Jewish Wedding 2018).

While both Marshmallow and especially Olaf are likeable, Disney still has not portrayed animated gay characters that are open about their sexuality, and even in *Frozen*, the gender ambiguity characterizes snow beings, not humans. Although both provide comical and somewhat positive portrayals of gender non-conforming characters, they are also quite daft at times, prompting the audience to laugh at their expense (and oftentimes because of their gender nonconforming traits). Furthermore, while neither of them is the real hero, they nevertheless serve as evidence of Elsa's creative powers sans men.

21. The Significance of Gender Non-Conforming Sons

At the end, similar to a pampered son or mama's boy (Coyle et al. 2016), Olaf receives his own personal flurry from Elsa, a salient gift that will protect him against the very-real male fears of (metaphorical) melting, but that also emasculates him, since males are supposed to take care of themselves and take risks. The need for the flurry reiterates that without men, the powerful woman's child is being reared in a way in which he will never be a real man. Although Marshmallow is a menacing palace guard, when he dons Elsa's crown, as Patterson and Spencer (2017) note, Marshmallow's cross-dressing is supposed to bring a laugh. The fact that this is a hidden scene that many viewers miss (because most people do not watch all of the credits) is a parting reminder to the audience that males who self-feminize are funny, and a means to leave audiences with a feel-good moment of superiority. A key part of this post-script is its sense of voyeurism in which Marshmallow hides his sexuality, as he furtively looks around to make sure no one sees his 'deviance' before he dons the crown. This contrasts with Olaf, who is more open about his sexuality as expressed in the carrot as phallus, including scenes of his carrot sagging due to melting, signaling a loss of a metaphorical erection (a fear known as medomalacuphobia).³⁰ In any case, both snowmen escape the threat of melting, allowing them to retain a modicum of masculinity, and model different types of gender non-conformity.

22. Vehicles as a Means to Display Conventional Masculinity

Although both snowmen reflect shifting gender roles, Kristoff does not stray far from traditional masculinity. After Kristoff's macho, boot-stomping entrance into Oaken's Trading Post, he is later unceremoniously tossed out by Oaken, landing in a sexually vulnerable position (face down in the snow with this rear end in the air) (38:08–10). To reclaim his masculinity, he identifies strongly with his vehicle (a sled that is destroyed but then restored at the film's conclusion). Vehicles can convey "masculine strength, virility and prowess [through males'] technical ability to control a performance motor vehicle at high speed and [men's] courage and daring through risk-taking" (Walker et al. 2000, p. 162) (symbolism that is less subtly conveyed in so-called "truck nuts" (see Lamoureux 2015)).

Early in the film, there is a sled scene involving Kristoff, his reindeer Sven, and Anna. Kristoff must contend with dangerous nighttime driving, due to challenges from the forces of nature that include hard-to-manuever icy roads and then a dramatic, high-speed flight from marauding wolves (tough sledding of sorts). Wolves are a worthy adversary, as they symbolize masculinity (see Dundes 1989b), as reflected in the gendered connotations of a lone wolf or a wolf whistle, which conveys sexual intent by blowing air through a small opening; similarly, female wolves must be designated as she-wolves.³¹

³⁰ There is a fertility benefit service called *Carrot*, which is likely based on reports that carrots enhance sperm motility. Yet news coverage of carrots' link to fertility ignores the highlighted study's single mention of carrots as just one of multiple foods rich in beta-carotene (Zareba et al. 2013), which is evidence of the psychological component of carrots' association with virility.

³¹ Similar to wolves, dogs are "presumed" male and cats are "presumed" to be female (Leach 2000, p. 334). 'Salty dogs' can land in the doghouse, while women may be catty or be deemed sex kittens subject to catcalls from men with their tongues hanging out. The expression, "Cat got your tongue?" endows cats with the "canine" power to castrate, given that tongues are symbolically phallic (cf. Disney's *Little Mermaid* (Dundes and Dundes 2000)). A homely woman is a 'dog', while an

Kristoff's machismo is also evidenced in his care for his vehicle, which reveals his masculinity.³² When Anna puts her feet up on the "dashboard" (a word used in the official Disney book version of *Frozen* (Rudnick 2015)), Kristoff is offended: "Whoa, who! Whoa, whoa, whoa! Get your feet down." He then pushes Anna's feet down, adding, "This is fresh lacquer. Seriously, were you raised in a barn?" Kristoff then spits on the dash to clean it, resulting in some of his spit flying back into Anna's face (40:18–24).³³ Kristoff clearly holds the reins of his reindeer and reminds Anna that only he gives orders to Sven in Sven's capacity as a metaphorical motor of sorts to his vehicle. Many men insist on being the (French-derived word) *chauffeur* or driver, a word with the syllable '*chau*', meaning hot³⁴ (part of their desire to be hot stuff or sexually attractive).

23. Elsa as Zeus' Daughter?

Anna's character develops in part within the context of her relationships with men and relatively mundane interactions. Yet it is hard to imagine Elsa in similar scenarios, even though the two women are sisters. We speculate that Elsa represents a daughter of Zeus, metaphorically, as intimated in the first line of the film, in the song 'The Frozen Heart (Ice Worker's Song)'. When the macho ice harvesters sing about Elsa (as suggested by Streiff and Dundes 2017a), their lyrics describe her as: "Born of cold and winter air and mountain rain combining". As discussed in this essay, someone "born" from winter "air" coupled with hydrating fluid from a mountain (where Zeus lives) suggests a supernatural birth (and the promiscuous Zeus was indeed the father of another Disney character, Hercules). Elsa's parents do not understand her power (and there is no family history of her "condition"); they must consult with a non-human being, a troll, about this "condition". Elsa's father is determined to quash her power, forcing her into a pariah existence because he sees her power as stigmatized rather than as a divine gift (that defies mortal origins). Her parents die due to a storm that appears to combine the powers of Zeus (with lightning striking the parents' ship) with the powers of Zeus' brother Poseidon, the god of the sea, as the ship is disabled by the storm and then swallowed by the sea (10:01–15).

Yet Elsa is no Zeus replacement: in a defining moment in the film, Elsa inadvertently 'strikes' her sister with ice, prompting Anna's senescence. In other words, because Elsa, the castrating, termagant sister, cannot properly wield power, her nubile sister sees her hair begin to turn white, which is reminiscent of the hoary tresses of a crone (from carcass, meaning too thin—and old—to procreate (Crone 2018)). Anna's distress is a harbinger of her near-death by freezing at her sister's hand. Elsa's salvation comes in the form of stereotypically feminine tears that reverse her magic malfunction. Her weeping and empathy restore her humanity—or more specifically, her femininity—that replaces her masculine, castrating persona, propelling the story to an anachronistic happy ending.

24. Conclusions

We hope that by bringing attention to the complexities of meaning embedded in *Frozen* and its breathtaking success that we can elucidate contemporary societal struggles at a time when long-standing male dominance and traditional concepts of masculinity are changing. For example, according to Carrot, LGBTQ employees have, in many cases, been shut out of family planning coverage due to different fertility needs (O'Connor 2017), which is a manifestation of the challenges

effeminate male is disparaged as a 'pussy'. Male dogs are sires (denoting procreation), but female dogs are bitches, revealing a gender hierarchy ascribed to the animal 'kingdom', including how 'raining cats and dogs' hints at gendered competition over weather-driven power.

³² Kristoff's anxiety about his sled's shininess from its fresh lacquer (wax) is consistent with male preoccupation about shininess (symbolic of a lubricated phallus ready to penetrate), akin to when knights in 'shining' armor ride their steeds (Old English *stead*: stallion, stud). Sex wax for surfboards (sticks) and male-dominated car waxing rituals also appertain.

³³ Spit is equivalent to sperm, as in spitten image (see Dundes 1991), the male counterpart to Elsa's parthenogenesis.

³⁴ Male *chauvinism* may have the same etymology, as in men who are hot and predisposed to exert their dominance in battle and well as sexually. While the word is reportedly derived from Nicolas Chauvin, who was allegedly a soldier in Napoleon's army, this story is considered apocryphal, as there is no evidence that Chauvin existed (see De Puymège 1997).

at the crossroads of sexuality and reproduction.³⁵ Contemporary controversies include IVF (in vitro fertilization) treatment, which in at least one case resulted in a biological father paying child support for a son born without his permission post-divorce (Pearson 2018). With Elsa's snowmen progeny, Disney has sidestepped a procreation dilemma that they faced in their rendition of the mythical story of Hercules. In the original Hercules story, Zeus procreated with Alcmene, whose mortal husband fathered Hercules' other twin in an act of heteropaternal superfecundation. Yet in Disney's version of *Hercules* (1997), Hera and Zeus were presented as Hercules' parents, eliminating not only Zeus's infidelity, but also issues surrounding alternative methods of procreation. This means of reproduction also resulted in the Gemini astrological twins, when Zeus fathered Pollux but not his mortal twin Castor, yet another example of heteropaternal superfecundation.

Despite these options showcased in mythology long ago and increasingly available today through technological advances, Elsa's procreation is limited to snowmen that are not heteronormative. This suggests societal struggles with accepting a non-conventional means of reproduction, which is associated with gay couples. The snowmen's gender fluidity could show concerns about the possible outcomes of women procreating without male input, as *Frozen*'s 2013 release coincided with debates and changing opinions on gay marriage and transgender rights that were indubitably among the most visible and contentious social issues at the time.

Shortly after *Frozen*'s production, a *Time* cover story aptly encapsulated the socio-historical context for *Frozen* in its discussion of greater openness in discussing people who are transgender, and new policies reflecting efforts to enact "changes in schools, hospitals, workplaces, prisons and the military" (Steinmetz 2014, para. 2) (see Drum 2016 for how the movement to install gender-neutral bathrooms began in 2012–2013).³⁶ This relates to Elsa because she usurped Zeus' role at a time when trans men (born female) were seen as encroaching on men's bathrooms simultaneous with resistance to more unisex bathrooms that would detract from men's exclusive spheres, in the absence of any sound reason for the continued binary separation (Molotch and Noren 2010), even though in the first public bathrooms (latrines) in Rome, men and women sat side by side (Michaels 2016).

Elsa's virgin birth is a reversal of inveterate male creation aspirations that are so culturally inculcated that they are overlooked as normal. Elsa's appropriation of storms associated with virgin birth concludes 'happily' in her wielding power in a more gender-stereotypical manner: making ice sculptures, a skating rink, and snow confetti as she mingles with the commoners. Our concern is that Elsa's storm wielding and procreative powers were presented as a societal challenge that needed redress. At the end, when Elsa becomes nurturing and less castrating, her snowflake as a symbol that could ward off suitors becomes less central to her identity. As such, once rehabilitated, she conjures a giant signature snowflake in the sky (1:28:38), and then proceeds to obliterate it (1:28:40). This suggests that she is now available and open to suitors' advances, which qualifies as a happy ending for those partial to reinforcing gender stereotypes. Her tendency to slam doors, with connotations regarding restricted sexual access (Streiff and Dundes 2017a), changes in the finale when she embraces open gates, telling Anna, "We are never closing [the gates] again" (1:31:56–57). Notably, she uses the pronoun we, but probably is not referring to Anna, who lacks power and never shut the gates in the first place. Instead, Elsa implies that she is relinquishing her status as a one-woman phenomenon and is perhaps open to the influence of a partner.

In addition, Elsa's lack of interest in men (see Streiff and Dundes 2017a) coupled with her father-absent births might reflect latent concerns about women balancing career, marriage, and children.

³⁵ The article title, "Carrot Fertility Raises \$3.6 M to Help Take IVF, Egg Freezing Benefits Mainstream" (emphasis added) reveals growing fertility options (Buhr 2017). In fact, women's ability to defy their biological clock is increasingly relevant because egg freezing has become "all the rage" (Weller 2017). Perhaps oocyte cryopreservation—egg-freezing technology—and its growing availability to women helped spawn the anxieties underlying Elsa's parthenogenesis using frozen matter.

³⁶ The Boy Scouts mirror social shifts such as their 2017 decision to begin accepting members based on the gender listed on their application, which allowed transgender boys to join (Chokshijan 2017). Furthermore, beginning in 2018, the Boy Scouts decided to permit younger girls to join Cub Scouts and older girls to earn the rank of Eagle Scout (Hosking 2017).

There is still the notion that marriage and children go hand-in-hand. In fact, the term “Disney Princesses” has a proprietary, creationist nuance, as Walt Disney is the father of the company. It is through this lens that we can view her atypical motherhood, which is a twist on Mother Nature. The spirited discussion in the media about Elsa’s sexuality (for example, [Gander 2018](#)) shows that viewers see the movie as a vehicle to discuss and advance causes related to sexuality.

The film also reflects women’s rising power and their growing ability to perform in formerly all-male professions. These changes were highly visible in female inroads in both major political parties, notably in 2008, when Hilary Clinton competed against Barack Obama in the Democratic primary and Sarah Palin was the Republican Vice Presidential candidate, John McCain’s running mate. While both women were disparaged, Clinton earned the chilling moniker “wicked witch of the left” ([Miller 2018](#)).

Elsa, however, discards her stigma as a sorcerer at the end of *Frozen*, because she is no longer wreaking havoc, but rather promoting a sense of community. She first saves her sister with love expressed as a tearful hug, literally a ‘heartwarming’ moment that stands in contradistinction to her acts of freezing. Yet her powers are to remain subdued and apparently should not emphasize that she is more powerful than the common villagers. This is the desired outcome, since the storms that Elsa conjures are a powerful force that is the dominion of men, with symbolic implications for fertility. Thus, Elsa’s usurpation and misuse of the weather as well as her parthenogenesis present a crisis that must end in either her reform or her destruction. Fortunately, for the sake of *Frozen 2*, it is the former.

These tropes are longstanding in Disney movies, and are commonly recapitulated, including in *Frozen*, whose modern heroine still follows certain rules that do not subvert male dominance: that is, her independence from men means that she should not threaten a man’s status as the metaphorical person in the driver’s seat of a relationship. Without a male driver, her parthenogenesis results in gender non-conforming sons that deviate from conventional masculinity. Yet Elsa’s fatherless progeny are non-humans, making the lack of paternity moot. Furthermore, as non-heteronormative males, Elsa’s sons are less likely to wield power in society or threaten the gender hierarchy.

The famed sociologist Georg Simmel “posed a unique cultural dilemma for women, the problem of creativity” ([Vromen 1987](#), p. 576) as distinct from procreativity, in Simmel’s theoretical considerations. Simmel did not see nor could he “resolve the tension between equality and difference (a tension perhaps not resolvable)” ([Vromen 1987](#), p. 576) due to “his inability to transcend a biological model of womanhood” ([Vromen 1987](#), p. 577). The movement to “transcend” this model appears to be a latent theme of *Frozen*. Simmel also proposed that, “The artist is capable of doing what the logician is not: to extend a concept without it losing content” ([Swedberg and Reich 2010](#), p. 33). In the end, the artists that produced *Frozen* present a cautionary tale about how a female imperils the status quo. The inexorable changes of the future, such as expanding fertility options and the re-conceptualization of the gender binary, make *Frozen* relevant to cultural shifts that engender ambivalence about a growing number of women who steal the thunder of men.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed equally to this essay.

Acknowledgments: We are grateful for the illustrations by Hsun-yuan Hsu <https://www.hsunyuanart.com/>. We also wish to thank Sander Buitelaar and Michael B. Streiff for their helpful suggestions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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