

The Wolf in Grandmother's Clothes: Monarchies in Disney's *Frozen*

29 April 2020

Abstract

Evidenced by their extremely popular Princess franchise, it is not a stretch of the critical imagination to discuss Disney as promoting monarchies in their films. Yet, the critical attention for the Disney blockbuster *Frozen* (2013) has largely ignored this aspect of the film, focusing instead on gender, femininity, power, sexuality, family, love, violence, mental illness/health, race, ethnicity, musicality, or quality of animation. This paper thus seeks to address this disparity and will analyze the treatment of monarchy in *Frozen*. By comparing the “Monarch’s Journey” taken by Simba in the film *The Lion King* (1994) to the one taken by Elsa in *Frozen*, this paper will show how the two films follow extremely similar trajectories. The main point of narrative divergence between the two films, the deposition of the usurper, will be read closely in order to investigate whether the common assumption of *Frozen* promoting sisterhood holds weight against the reading of *Frozen* promoting monarchies. A final reading of the “servant class” in both films will highlight the consequences and implications these films have for understandings of class as promoted by Disney.

Introduction

Disney Matters

First, one must acknowledge that Disney necessitates critique. The popularity of Disney films has doubtlessly been aided by their image as “wholesome” entertainment for children, free from much of the pernicious morals and attitudes that infect other media for children.¹ However, the breadth of critical analysis dedicated to Disney films, both supportive and condemning, highlights that this “wholesome” association with Disney may be more appearance than substance. Disney films have been critiqued heavily for their enforcement of problematic stereotypes regarding gender, race, ethnicity, mental health, and sexuality, while being lauded for their animation, filmic technique, and music.

The dissonance between lush visuals and problematic themes have prompted some to specifically use Disney movies, such as *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), to teach critical reading and analysis.² In addition to their potential for valuable criticism, many have tried to study the affects Disney movies have on their viewers. A 2016 study conducted by Coyne et. al. titled “Pretty as a Princess: Longitudinal Effects of Engagement With Disney Princesses on Gender Stereotypes, Body Esteem, and Prosocial Behavior in Children” studied the affect of engaging with Disney Princesses, concluding that “consistent with

previous research, theory, and meta-analyses...increased exposure to gender stereotyped media is related to more stereotypical behavior” and that “engagement with the Disney Princess culture can influence gender stereotypes and may contribute to a ‘girly girl’ culture in which gendered behavior is common and highly valued”.³ This study demonstrates the performative impact of engaging with Disney films and products, specifically in regards to gender norms and sexuality.

Understanding the very concrete impact Disney films have upon viewers is not isolated to the Coyne study but rather informs a wide variety of criticisms that seek to outline the potential harm of blithely consuming Disney content.⁴ As such, this paper would like to acknowledge the previous research that has demonstrated the power of Disney film to genuinely shape attitudes and perceptions of their viewers.

***Frozen* as Progressive**

A common discourse surrounding *Frozen* is that the blockbuster is innovative, complex, and “The Most Progressive Disney Film Ever Made.”⁵ Some argue that Elsa’s less-than-explicit sexuality places her as Disney’s first gay princess.⁶ Some laud the depiction of Elsa’s mental health, claiming that Disney has given a careful consideration to the psychology of their Queen.⁷ In her article “From Evil Queen to Disabled Teen: *Frozen* Introduces Disney’s First Disabled Princess,” Resene has given an equal amount of critical generosity to the depiction of Elsa, arguing that:

The disability rhetoric in *Frozen* differs from that in most animated features in that it dwells on both Elsa’s physical and mental difference, taking the time to show how her condition impacts her lived experience, rather than using her ice powers solely to forward the plot.⁸

Despite acknowledging that “Elsa has little in common with the real people with actual impairments that she represents beyond the abusive treatment she receives,” Resene still argues that “Disney’s *Frozen* has the potential to open up a dialog about the way we perceive disability.”⁹ This analysis is built upon the idea that this film endeavored to be nuanced and careful. Others clearly agreed, predicting that this “lush” Disney film would be the first to finally win an Academy Award for Best Animated Picture.¹⁰ *Frozen*, of course, was indeed the first Disney film to win the Award.¹¹ It is clear then that this film is one worthy of intense critical attention, enough to construct arguments about Elsa’s mental health, sexuality, and (dis)ability.

Yet, nearly every scholarly article and passionate blog encountered thus far have taken the central aspect of the film at face value: the sisterhood. One study that researched the appeal of Princess’ to young girls concluded that “Ultimately, *Frozen* highlights more the love between sisters than traditional dyadic romance tropes,” a sentiment that is widely shared by most critics.¹² Catherine Lester, in her chapter “Frozen Hearts and Fixer Uppers: Villainy, Gender, and Female Companionship in Disney’s *Frozen*,” argues that Elsa is “a significant step toward more progressive and inclusive depictions of women.”¹³ She writes that Elsa is an “emotionally complex” character who is saved by the “healing power of the sibling bond that she shares with her younger sister.”¹⁴ According to Lester, this “close sisterly bond” is established as soon as one encounters Elsa and Anna as children.¹⁵ In her article, “(Post)feminist paradoxes: the sensibilities of gender representation in Disney’s *Frozen*,” Rudloff sharply critiques Elsa as a feminist character and argues that “on the surface *Frozen* promotes a narrative of feminist ideals

of equality, empowerment and female agency, but conflates them with postfeminist ideals of appearance, selfdiscipline and strongly gender stereotyped depictions".¹⁶ Yet sisterly love is still appreciated, with Rudloff noting how "Anna's unconditional and unselfish love for her sister eventually saves Arendelle".¹⁷ Clearly, the bond of sisterhood is one of the most celebrated achievements of this film.

However, by comparing the "Monarch's Journey" taken by Simba in the film *The Lion King* (1994) to the journey taken by Elsa in *Frozen*, this paper will show how the two films follow extremely similar trajectories. The main point of narrative divergence between the two films, the deposition of the usurper, will be read closely in order to demonstrate the common assumption of *Frozen* promoting sisterhood doesn't hold weight against the reading of *Frozen* as promoting monarchies.

The Monarch's Journey: *The Lion King*

What follows is a broad-strokes analysis of the Journey taken by the Monarch. These strokes focus on aspects directly related to the throne and the monarchy, and as such neglect plot devices that do not directly support the monarchistic narrative. This is not to neglect valuable information, but rather to highlight aspects of the narrative critical to understanding the monarchies depicted. What follows is first a consideration of the source material, followed by tracing Simba's journey to the throne.

Source Material

There have been many sources cited as influencing the *The Lion King*. This paper will focus on *Hamlet* as being the primary influence. While there is likely a truth to the story being influenced by biblical tales, such influences were not as strongly corroborated as *Hamlet*, and therefore remain outside this analysis. Although it is a rather obvious observation, it is still worthy to note that *Hamlet* is about a monarchy. Clearly and unequivocally, the play focuses on Hamlet the Prince trying to decide how to act in the face of his Uncle's theft of the throne through murder. The plot is clearly concerned with determining the correct Monarch to rule. In the original play, of course, that monarch is meant to be Hamlet. Since Hamlet dies, however, the crown falls to Fortinbras. Such is the way of crowns and kings - violence and chance are as equal determinants as honor and right. Thus two understandings of the source material should inform this reading: 1) the play is obviously about restoring a monarchy and 2) the final King is not the protagonist. The second understanding is changed in the Disney adaption, since Simba indeed claims the throne, but the incredible importance of restoring the monarchy is still the driving narrative force in the film. This is clear – the film is called *The Lion King* for a reason.

Destined Heir

Simba, unlike Hamlet, is destined to rule. Not only is he the logical heir to the patriarchal throne, but he is also understood as fulfilling a grander destiny. The shot of Simba, marked on the forehead by Rafiki, raised above the Savanna as a beam of light touches him is iconic for a reason - such a shot clearly depicts Simba as a fateful or destined character, anointed both by Rafiki's hand and by the beam of light from Above.

As a cub, Simba sings a rather lively song about how he “can’t wait” to be King, complete with full fanfare and animal regalia that quite literally places him on top of a large pedestal. Nala, once she found Simba, insists that he is “our only hope” to restore the pride lands.¹⁸ Simba is then confronted by an apothotic image of his father telling him to remember “who you are.”¹⁹ Taken together, it is clear that Simba is *destined* to be King.



Figure 1: Simba ordained by Light

Effeminate Usurper/Villain



Figure 2: An effeminate Scar

Scar is the usurper who wishes to rob Simba of his divine right to rule and take the throne for himself. He is depicted as effeminate, following the common trope of “Sissy Villain.”²⁰ Scar is drawn thinner, lankier, and animated to move more gracefully than his brother Mufasa. He is often seen cleaning his nails, and in his first scene is shown as lifting his pinky while he plays with his food. During the “Be Prepared” sequence Scar is notably dancing on his tiptoes while flipping his hair dramatically. Casting villains as effeminate, gender-bending, or queer is an unfortunately common trope that Disney does

not shy away from here.²¹ The documentary “Do I Sound Gay” demonstrates the popular history, for Disney and beyond, that codes villains as queer.²² Scar clearly does not break from this role.

Heir Abandons Throne

There are a few critical components needed to understand this aspect of Simba’s journey. First, Simba leaves out of intense feelings of guilt over his father’s death. The inciting moment that led to him abdicating is his fear of his own actions. Second, it is important to note that when Simba leaves there is utter desolation. The pride land is transformed into a gray and devoid-of-life landscape. During Simba’s absence, the state of affairs falls apart. Thematically, it is clear that when the Heir is not on the throne the entire land is condemned to be a wasteland.

Heir Transforms/Relaxes in Popular Song

Once the throne is abandoned, Simba then learns the power of letting go of his worries through Hakuna Matata. Simba learns that Hakuna Matata “means no worries // For the rest of your days // It’s our problem free // Philosophy.”²³ Simba is told by his friends to “put [his] behind in the past” – to put the past behind him.²⁴ During this sequence Simba undergoes a transformation from a cub to a Lion, growing older as he walks across the infamous montage-log. As such, while abdicating his throne, Simba learns a lesson about living a worry-free life. He sings a song about relaxing and forgetting the past as he matures. This was clearly a well-received message, since “Hakuna Matata” was not

only trademarked by Disney but also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song.²⁵

Heir Nonetheless Returns, Bringing Paradise

Despite the extremely popular message of Hakuna Matata, Simba nonetheless has to learn that he cannot afford “no worries” and must reclaim his throne and fulfill his duty. He petulantly throws the phrase at Nala when she tries to remind him of his “responsibility.”²⁶ In the end, it is a combination of Nala’s insistence and Simba’s own moment of realization with his heavenly father that he realizes Hakuna Matata is not his path. Simba therefore learns he must regain control of the pride lands and of himself, and returns to battle Scar. Simba defeats Scar in combat, fighting him and eventually sending him to be eaten by the hyenas. Once he ascends to the throne again, rain falls and the entire land is immediately transformed back into paradise.



Figure 3: Simba transforms

The Monarch’s Journey: *Frozen*

What follows is the same reading applied to *The Lion King*, now applied to *Frozen*. Whereas in the previous section the analysis focused only on outlining the events that occurred in *The Lion King*, now there will be references between the films to highlight key differences as they occur.

Source Material

To be frank: *The Snow Queen* is not about monarchies in any way. The story follows a couple of “poor children” who, while not siblings, love each other dearly.²⁷ The tale diverges from *Frozen* in uncountable ways, and there will be no attempt to try and show all that was changed in the Disney adaptation. Rather, one simply understands that in no way, shape, or form was *The Snow Queen* about protecting monarchies, about the politics of monarchies, or about monarchistic rule at all.

Destined Heir

The inciting moment that begins the main plot of the movie is Elsa’s coronation. Specifically, the moment where she has to hold the orb and scepter that function as her anointment. While Disney takes care to remove the Christian images from the Orb and Scepter (there is a flower, not a cross, on the globus cruciger) the resonance of the two iconic images still renders Elsa as a sanctioned Queen. Similar to the mark of Rafiki, this is a symbolic act that verifies her claim to the throne. In regards

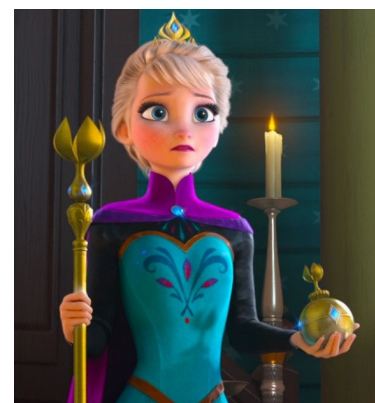


Figure 4: Elsa as Queen

to a “destiny” to rule, one could argue that Elsa’s unique magical power is destiny enough. When Grand Pabbie first meets Elsa and Anna, he bows slightly to “your majesty.”²⁸ He then uses his own magic to tell Elsa, in a prophetic fashion, that her powers will grow. Such an act gives a portentous weight to Elsa’s future, adding a layer of “destiny” or “prophecy” to her future. The trolls’ respect for the monarchy (despite their seemingly superior knowledge and power in that scene) reflects the high position the monarchy holds. Elsa, like Simba, is given the symbolic weight of being a destined and anointed ruler.

Effeminate Usurper/Villain



Figure 5: Agile Peacock

It is rather difficult to define the role of the Duke of Weselton outside of “effeminate usurper.” Unlike the other men in the film, who are larger and bulkier than the two sisters, the Duke is a short and thin man who dances “like an agile peacock” with his false hair flapping everywhere.²⁹ Especially when seen next to his hulking and hairy guards, the Duke is clearly depicted as less masculine and more flamboyant. Like Scar, the Duke follows the “Sissy Villain” trope and, like Scar, he is depicted in the film as the main threat to throne. The “twist” of Hans being a villain does not emancipate the Duke – rather, the Duke is punished and escorted out of the Kingdom, complaining the whole way about his minor injuries. His dances, mannerisms, and physical depiction all follow the “Sissy Villain” trope. The entire function of the

Duke is to act as the Effeminate Usurper.

Heir Abandons Throne

Once Elsa lashes out with her powers and is mistakenly dubbed a “monster,” she then flees her kingdom, abandoning her throne.³⁰ First, in comparison to *The Lion King*, while Elsa does not feel responsible for her parents’ death, it is undeniable that she feels guilt and worries about hurting more people. The inciting moment that led to Elsa abdicating is her fear of her own actions, just as it was for Simba. Secondly, once Elsa leaves the Kingdom is turned into a desolate wasteland. Frost and snow slowly start to cover Arendelle, getting progressively worse as Elsa remains in her ice palace. When she is not reigning, her kingdom becomes an unrecognizable wasteland, just as it was for Simba.

Heir Relaxes in Popular Song

Once Elsa is outside her own Kingdom, she then sings a song of liberation and freedom: “Let It Go”. She sings that “I’m never going back, the past is in the past” and that “No right, no wrong, no rules for me // I’m free.”³¹ Like Simba, Elsa sings a song that is about finding solace in forgetting the past and learning not to worry. While Simba’s maturation during “Hakuna Matata” is obvious, Elsa nonetheless undergoes a transformation during her song. Rudloff writes:

As she sings in celebration of not having to "conceal" herself anymore and exclaims, "Let it go, let it go! Can't hold it back anymore," her embrace of her own powers is visually represented by a dramatic makeover of dress, makeup and hair. Elsa literally lets down her long, loose voluptuous hair, a "suggestive sign of allowed disorder, conventionally a sign of female sexuality" (Pollock 1988, 133)³², and she physically transforms herself into what can best be described as an exotic dancer or pin-up model. Wearing heavy purple makeup, stiletto heels and a low-cut, skin-tight, sequined dress with a high, leg-exposing slit, she walks sensually, hips swaying, posing and alluringly gazing directly at the audience, and-to the tune of her own liberation song- finally finds her own 'natural' self.³³



Figure 6: A Mature Queen

Elsa sings a song about relaxing and forgetting the past as she sexually matures. For Simba, his sexual maturity song was perhaps an entirely separate affair (Can You Feel the Love Tonight), but his transformative experience nonetheless maps onto Elsa's. To top it off, "Let It Go" was also unbelievably popular, winning the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

Heir Nonetheless Returns, Bringing Paradise

Yet - this song of "liberation" and "freedom" was, like Hakuna Matata, soon forgotten. Elsa had to return to rule; as Streiff writes in "Frozen in Time: How Disney Gender-Stereotypes Its Most Powerful Princess:"

Elsa's seemingly triumphant liberation celebrated in Let It Go is only a passing moment; she does not remain in her ice castle and returns to eventually unlock the secret of controlling her power—compassion. Presumably, Elsa can now attend to ruling the kingdom..³⁴

Despite having a powerful song of liberation Elsa nonetheless returns. Here, the journey of the Monarch in *The Lion King* and *Frozen* diverge: Simba, spurred by Nala and Mufasa, returns to depose Scar. Elsa is taken captive by Hans, and it is Anna's act of true love that stops Hans and saves Elsa. Afterwards, however, Elsa does bring instantaneous paradise, sweeping away the ice in one grand snowflake-shaped explosion in the sky.

The Divergent Climax

Comparison

It is in the climax, the moment where the Usurper is defeated and the Rightful Heir reinstated that the two films diverge the most. Simba takes down Scar himself, and places himself on the throne. Anna stops Hans, and it is her act of "true love" that thaws her heart and shows Elsa how to control her powers. This scene is one that many view as

emblematic of their sisterly love – afterall, Lester writes that it is the “healing power of the sibling bond that she shares with her younger sister” that saves Elsa.³⁵ A breakdown of the scene is as follows: Anna has freezing heart. When she sees Hans the Usurper (and Fake True-Lover) about to murder Elsa she steps in front of his blade. She freezes solid, Elsa is stunned and cries. Anna unthaws. Then:

E: You sacrificed yourself for me?

A: I love you

Olaf: An act of true love will thaw a frozen heart.

E: Love...will thaw. Love... of course.

A: Elsa?

E: Love! ³⁶

Reading closely, it is “love” that simultaneously thaws Anna and helps Elsa control her powers. This “love” came from Anna. These two elements are important and so will be restated clearly: 1) the Love that melted Anna and the Love that saved Elsa are the same love and 2) Anna was the agent who acted this Love. It is this “love” that is typically viewed as sisterly love, however there are three total valences to this love: Sacrificial Love, Sisterly Love and Monarchical Love. The first is obvious, since Anna sacrifices her body to protect Elsa. The second is obvious, since Anna and Elsa are sisters. The third is equally obvious, since Anna is stopping a Usurper. These three aspects all inform the “love” of Anna to some degree. This paper will now investigate the textual strength of each of these valences, and test which hold up the strongest to an intense critical attention.



Figure 7: The Love Moment

Sacrificial Love; Elsa as Human

This is perhaps the easiest and most apparent register to analyze this climax, but it nonetheless requires some specification. Yes, it is clear that Anna sacrifices herself in this moment for Elsa. But do not forget: Anna had the power to unthaw her own heart the whole time, and hence the power to get through to Elsa. Thus, every sacrifice made in the film prior *was not* a sufficient love. When Anna braved the elements to reach Elsa, risking her life with wolves and cliffs, this was an insufficient sacrifice, since it did not show Elsa the Love she needed. Nor was Anna shuffling through a blizzard, incessantly trying to find Elsa, enough of a sacrifice. If it were, she would have thawed her heart every shuffled step. No – the only sacrifice recognized as Love was when Anna performed a zero-sum sacrifice, a body-for-body sacrifice. Anna dies, Elsa lives. Anna trying to reach Elsa in the castle is a sacrifice where both can potentially survive. The only difference between Anna’s other sacrifices and this were that here Anna had to die so Elsa could live. Thus, this Love is a *total* sacrificial Love.

Sisterly Love; Elsa as Sister

Many critics have written that family is a central element to Disney films, even going so far as to say that these films, with discussion, could be used in family therapies.³⁷ But how exactly is family, or sisterhood, depicted in this film? Another register this Love is read through is as Sisterly love. Here, Anna protected her sister. But as with sacrifice, such a reading means that every moment of sisterly affection in the movie previously does not count as the necessary Love. Thus, “Do You Want To Build a Snowman” is a horrifically dark song about the inability to ever truly reach someone. Again: Anna had the capacity for the Love that would help Elsa the entire time. Anna singing to a door, trying to get Elsa to speak to her? Not Love. Anna spending *years* trying again and again to reach out to her sister? Not Love. If one truly wishes to engage with the film on a level of analysis that yields results like Elsa’s sexuality or (dis)ability, then one necessarily must confront what a bleak image of sisterhood is offered by the movie. One must acknowledge that the love shown in “Snowman” is a second-tier love, a love that can’t actually get through to Elsa. The bond of sisterhood depicted in the film is thus one in which constant attempts and affection do not cut it, even over the course of multiple years. Even when Anna makes it to Elsa’s Ice Castle, pleading with her and telling her “I will be right here” during an emotional reprieve of “First Time in Forever,” Elsa does not listen, lashes out, mortally wounds Anna, and literally kicks her out.³⁸ Anna’s display of sisterly love wasn’t enough – if it was, Elsa would have been saved. As such, every moment of sisterly affection in the film does not qualify as the “Love” needed to save Elsa.



Figure 8: Not Love

The climax does not seem like the most “sisterly” moment in the movie. What is it about *that* moment and *that* action that constitutes Love? The only difference between that moment between two sisters and any other moment mentioned thus far is the fact that 1) this a total body sacrifice, and 2) Anna’s actions directly uphold the monarchy.

Monarchical Love; Elsa as Queen

Now that sisterly love has been investigated, a return to monarchical love is warranted. Is the climax the moment when Anna acts the most directly to uphold the Monarchy? Yes – it is the exact moment in the Monarch’s Journey that the Monarch returns. Hans, as the Usurper, is stopped by Anna, thereby saving not just Elsa’s life, but saving Arendelle. The parallel between Simba and Elsa’s journey emphasizes the degree to which the film is predicated upon a strong foundation of upholding monarchy. The climactic moment, more than being a moment of specifically sisterly affection, is rather a moment of attempted regicide. Hans may have been a complex character, but his motives were simple in that moment: Kill Elsa, assume power. This critical moment, though slightly divergent from *The Lion King*, nonetheless follows the same pattern of upholding and protecting

the Monarchy. The parallel structure of the monarch Simba to the monarch Elsa is a stronger resonance to bring to the climax than notions of sisterly love.

If one truly wishes to read that moment as being sisterly love, one must therefore admit that every other moment in the movie that depicted the two together didn't matter, wasn't actually love, and meant nothing. It is stronger, simpler, and more logical to read that moment as one where the Usurper is deposed and the Monarch can bring Paradise back. Thus the "Love" that was unique to that moment, the "Love" which saved Elsa and Anna, was a sacrificial love to protect the monarchy. In her article Streiff argues that "Elsa has power but not love," noting in her conclusion that:

While some might consider a princess focusing on power to be refreshing, it is significant that the audience does not see a powerful woman model a balance between exercising authority and a relationship. Instead, female power is all encompassing and a substitute for romance.³⁹

While Streif will maintain that the "twist" in *Frozen* is the love between Anna and Elsa as sisters, her focus on power substituting romance supports the reading of this Love as being for royalty or for class – not for sister.

Such a reading, where Disney appears to be progressive but in actuality is regressive, is one taken up by many critics. Rudloff writes of "a contradictory articulation of progressive and regressive elements."⁴⁰ This dissonance noted by Rudloff is helpful in this analysis: Disney, for Rudloff, though attempting to be progressive in their depiction of femininity, is nonetheless contradicting such progress by conflating it with veiled regressive elements. Disney, in this argument, though attempting to be progressive and make a film about sisterhood, nonetheless contradicts such progress by conflating sisterly love with thinly veiled but clearly present monarchical love.

The Invisible Servant

Many readers are perhaps annoyed at this point in the paper. As was stated in the very beginning, it is not a strenuous task to argue that a Princess film thematically supports a monarchy. While this paper does endeavor to show how the theme of monarchies is an insidious one, more potent than any theme of sisterhood, there has yet to be an analysis that truly underscores the negative potential of such monarchical themes. As such, having established the powerful role of the upper class (royalty), this paper will conclude with an insight into the lower class (servants).

Animals in *The Lion King*

When asked the question "Who are the servants in *The Lion King*, there are two viable answers: 1) there are none, the circle of Life is not a pyramid and 2) the animals not given speaking roles. In regard to the first answer, it is indeed possible there are simply no visible servants in the film. Zazu is potentially viewed as a servant, but his role is as an adviser. The hyenas are subservient to Scar, but are clearly not depicted as upholding the true monarchy. One could indeed argue there are no servants in the Pride Lands – all are equal in the Circle of Life. Conversely, one could argue that non-speaking animals are the servants.



Figure 9: The Circle of Life

It is clear that there are different classes of intelligence - the Lions speak and philosophize, like humans, whereas the wildebeest stampede blindly, like animals. When Simba sings about being King, he is supported by a towering array of animals, none of which speak or act differently than a typical animal. One could thus make the argument that the servant class are the animals that are seen but never heard.

The difference between the two answers is negligible; either the servants are nonexistent, or the servants are sub-human (sub-Lion) creatures that have no agency.

Servants in *Frozen*

Unfortunately, there is no such ambiguity in *Frozen*. There are, in multiple scenes, a variety of servants shown cleaning, dusting, carrying plates, and generally performing the duties necessary to maintain a castle. When Anna returns with the help of Kristoff, she is taken in by a few of these seemingly kind people. While there can be no argument that these servants are nonexistent, they are indeed depicted as sub-human with no agency.



Figure 10: The Only Company

When Anna sings during the Snowman song, she is depicted in empty halls, empty rooms, and utterly alone. She even goes so far to say that in her loneliness she has started talking to the paintings on the wall.⁴¹ Clearly the people drawn in oils are more real than the apparent hundreds of servants constantly bustling around the castle, maintaining the monarchy. (The people in oils are, of course, of noble birth)

When Anna sings First Time in Forever, she says “For years I’ve roamed these empty halls,” followed by “There’ll be actual real live people.”⁴² The servants in the castle, despite clearly existing, are referred to as nonexistent. They are not, to put it in the film’s own terms, actual real live people. Even though she spent years sequestered in the castle, Anna never made friends with the servants, never encountered servant children, and never gave any indication that those servants were real people.

It is now worth reminding that *Frozen* was adapted from a story about two “poor children.” Yet the film not only made these children royalty, but created a monarchy where the servants that uphold such a monarchy are quite literally not real live people. Disney does, of course, have a history of making servants out to be entirely different classes of people – the servants in *Beauty and the Beast* “only live to serve.”⁴³ As such, it is clear that Disney thematically enforcing ideas about Destined Monarchs is not a victim-less decision. The real people who serve these monarchs are disregarded and treated as nothing. The film supports monarchies, and utterly neglects

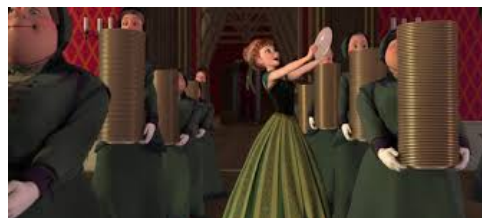


Figure 11: Floating Plates

a humane treatment of the servants who enable such monarchies to exist.

Conclusion

As was said in the beginning of this diatribe, Disney matters. Children perform what they see, and Disney's influence on children's perceptions and imaginations can only be understated. *The Lion King*(1994), upon premiere, was the highest grossing animated film of all time.⁴⁴ *Frozen*, when released, was the highest grossing animated film of all time.⁴⁵ Currently, the highest grossing animated film of all time is *The Lion King*(2019).⁴⁶ These films are both immensely popular and their thematic treatment of monarchies are extremely parallel. Both films uphold a Destined Monarch needed to reclaim the throne, and both films treat the servant class as a non-existent and sub-human part of society. It is worrying to think that many children who love to imagine themselves as royalty, as Princesses, will never give a single thought to those working under them – these films certainly don't support any such considerations. A reading of a monarch translates well into any reading of Upper and Lower class, of the top percent and the bottom majority. In that light, while *Frozen* is unrealistic in the depiction of sisterhood, at least it may stay true to the reality that those in power simply do not care about or think about those below them. One need only read the criticisms and reviews to understand that no one, not Anna nor Elsa nor scholars nor bloggers, thinks about the servants. The Love in the film is, after all, a Love of monarchy.

As Little Red Riding Hood would say: My, what a progressive film this is.

List of Figures

1	Simba Cub; <i>The Lion King</i> (1994)	4
2	Be Prepared; <i>The Lion King</i> (1994)	4
3	Hakuna Matata; <i>The Lion King</i> (1994)	5
4	Coronation; <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	5
5	Duke of Weselton; <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	6
6	Let It Go; <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	7
7	Sacrifice; <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	8
8	Do You Want to Build a Snowman (door); <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	9
9	I Just Can't Wait to be King; <i>The Lion King</i> (1994)	11
10	Do You Want to Build a Snowman (painting); <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	11
11	For the First Time in Forever; <i>Frozen</i> (2013)	11

Notes

1. Miguel Picker, dir., *The Mickey Mouse Monopoly - YouTube*, in collab. with Chyng Sun (Media Education Foundation, March 2002).
2. Louise Lavery, "DARK MAGIC: The Mixed Messages of Beauty and the Beast," *Screen Education*, no. 91 (September 2018): 22–, ISSN: 1449-857X.
3. Sarah M. Coyne et al., "Pretty as a Princess: Longitudinal Effects of Engagement With Disney Princesses on Gender Stereotypes, Body Esteem, and Prosocial Behavior in Children," *Child Development* 87, no. 6 (2016): p1921, ISSN: 1467-8624.
4. Picker, *The Mickey Mouse Monopoly - YouTube*.
5. Gina Luttrell, "7 Moments That Made 'Frozen' the Most Progressive Disney Movie Ever," accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.mic.com/articles/79455/7-moments-that-made-frozen-the-most-progressive-disney-movie-ever>.
6. Emily VanDerWerff, "Why Elsa from Frozen Is a Queer Icon — and Why Disney Won't Embrace That Idea," November 22, 2019, accessed April 26, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/11/22/20975178/frozen-2-elsa-girlfriend-lesbian-queer-review>.
7. Autumn Aurelia, "9 Reasons Elsa's Storyline in 'Frozen' Is the Perfect Metaphor for Mental Illness," accessed April 25, 2020, <https://themighty.com/2016/12/elsa-frozen-just-like-people-with-mental-illness/>.
8. Michelle Resene, "From Evil Queen to Disabled Teen: Frozen Introduces Disney's First Disabled Princess," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2 2017), ISSN: 2159-8371.
9. Ibid.
10. Carolyn Giardina, "Making of Frozen: Disney Is Gunning for Its First-Ever Best Animated Feature Oscar with This Lush Adaptation of a Classic Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tale—Which Boasts Kristen Bell and Idina Menzel Voicing the Lead Princesses and Songs from a Book of Mormon Tony Winner," *Hollywood Reporter*, December 6, 2013, no. 43, 70–, ISSN: 0018-3660.
11. "The 86th Academy Awards — 2014," accessed April 26, 2020, <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2014/F>.
12. Clark Callahan et al., "Virtue, Royalty, Dreams and Power: Exploring the Appeal of Disney Princesses to Preadolescent Girls in the United States," Routledge, *Journal of Children and Media* 0, no. 0 (January 21, 2020): p4, ISSN: 1748-2798.

13. Catherine Lester, "Frozen Hearts and Fixer Uppers:: Villainy, Gender, and Female Companionship in Disney's Frozen," in *Discussing Disney*, ed. Amy M. Davis (Indiana University Press, 2019), p209.
14. Ibid., p194.
15. Ibid., p201.
16. Maja Rudloff, "(Post)Feminist Paradoxes: The Sensibilities of Gender Representation in Disney's Frozen - ProQuest," *Outskirts* 35 (2016): p1.
17. Ibid., p6.
18. *The Lion King* (1994); 01:01:14
19. *The Lion King* (1994); 01:06
20. "Sissy Villain," accessed April 26, 2020, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SissyVillain>.
21. "Fabulously Fiendish: Disney Villains and Queer-Coding — Margins Magazine," accessed April 27, 2020, <http://www.marginsmagazine.com/2015/12/18/fabulously-fiendish-disney-villains-and-queer-coding/>.
22. Hugh Ryan, "Why So Many Disney Villains Sound 'Gay'," July 14, 2015, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5g9e4d/the-number-of-gay-animated-villains-will-surprise-you-456.
23. lyrics: <https://genius.com/Walt-disney-records-hakuna-matata-lyrics>
24. *The Lion King* (1994);
25. "HAKUNA MATATA Trademark of DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC. - Registration Number 2700605 - Serial Number 74558335 :: Justia Trademarks," accessed April 27, 2020, <http://trademarks.justia.com/745/58/hakuna-74558335.html>.
26. *The Lion King* (1994); 01:01:55
27. Hans Christian Andersen, "The Snow Queen," 1845, accessed April 27, 2020, http://hca.gilead.org.il/snow_que.html#2.
28. *Frozen* (2013); 00:06:40
29. *Frozen* (2013); 00:21:30
30. *Frozen* (2013); 00:28:20
31. lyrics: <https://genius.com/Idina-menzel-let-it-go-lyrics>
32. Pollock, Griselda. 1988. *Vision and Difference. Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*. London and New York: Routledge.
33. Rudloff, "(Post)Feminist Paradoxes," p8.
34. Madeline Streiff and Lauren Dundes, "Frozen in Time: How Disney Gender-Stereotypes Its Most Powerful Princess," *Social Sciences; Basel* (Basel, Switzerland, Basel) 6, no. 2 (2017): p8.
35. Lester, "Frozen Hearts and Fixer Uppers," p194.
36. *Frozen* (2013); 01:27:30
37. Litsa RenÉE Tanner et al., "Images of Couples and Families in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films," eprint: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180390223987>, *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 31, no. 5 (October 1, 2003): 355–373, ISSN: 0192-6187.
38. *Frozen* (2013); 00:56:10

39. Streiff and Dundes, "Frozen in Time," p8.
40. Rudloff, "(Post)Feminist Paradoxes," p10.
41. lyrics: <https://genius.com/Walt-disney-records-do-you-want-to-build-a-snowman-lyrics>
42. lyrics: <https://genius.com/Walt-disney-records-for-the-first-time-in-forever-lyrics>
43. lyrics: <https://genius.com/Ewan-mcgregor-be-our-guest-lyrics>
44. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lion_King
45. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frozen_\(2013_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frozen_(2013_film))
46. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lion_King_\(2019_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lion_King_(2019_film))

References

- Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Snow Queen." 1845. Accessed April 27, 2020. http://hca.gilead.org.il/snow_que.html#2.
- Aurelia, Autumn. "9 Reasons Elsa's Storyline in 'Frozen' Is the Perfect Metaphor for Mental Illness." Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://themighty.com/2016/12/elsa-frozen-just-like-people-with-mental-illness/>.
- Callahan, Clark, Tom Robinson II, Scott Haden Church, McKenzie Madsen, and Lucia Pollock. "Virtue, Royalty, Dreams and Power: Exploring the Appeal of Disney Princesses to Preadolescent Girls in the United States." Routledge, *Journal of Children and Media* 0, no. 0 (January 21, 2020): 1–16. ISSN: 1748-2798, accessed April 25, 2020. doi:10.1080/17482798.2020.1711787. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2020.1711787>.
- Coyne, Sarah M., Jennifer Ruh Linder, Eric E. Rasmussen, David A. Nelson, and Victoria Birkbeck. "Pretty as a Princess: Longitudinal Effects of Engagement With Disney Princesses on Gender Stereotypes, Body Esteem, and Prosocial Behavior in Children." eprint: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/cdev.12569>, *Child Development* 87, no. 6 (2016): 1909–1925. ISSN: 1467-8624, accessed April 25, 2020. doi:10.1111/cdev.12569. <http://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12569>.
- "Fabulously Fiendish: Disney Villains and Queer-Coding — Margins Magazine." Accessed April 27, 2020. <http://www.marginsmagazine.com/2015/12/18/fabulously-fiendish-disney-villains-and-queer-coding/>.
- Giardina, Carolyn. "Making of Frozen: Disney Is Gunning for Its First-Ever Best Animated Feature Oscar with This Lush Adaptation of a Classic Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tale—Which Boasts Kristen Bell and Idina Menzel Voicing the Lead Princesses and Songs from a Book of Mormon Tony Winner." *Hollywood Reporter*, December 6, 2013, no. 43, 70–. ISSN: 0018-3660, accessed April 25, 2020. http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A354086102/ITOF?u=mlln_m_bostcoll&sid=zotero&xid=9dda0780.
- "HAKUNA MATATA Trademark of DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC. - Registration Number 2700605 - Serial Number 74558335 :: Justia Trademarks." Accessed April 27, 2020. <http://trademarks.justia.com/745/58/hakuna-74558335.html>.
- Lavery, Louise. "DARK MAGIC: The Mixed Messages of Beauty and the Beast." *Screen Education*, no. 91 (September 2018): 22–. ISSN: 1449-857X, accessed April 25, 2020. http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A576220097/PROF?u=mlln_m_bostcoll&sid=zotero&xid=e533013e.
- Lester, Catherine. "Frozen Hearts and Fixer Uppers:: Villainy, Gender, and Female Companionship in Disney's Frozen." In *Discussing Disney*, edited by Amy M. Davis, 193–216. Indiana University Press, 2019. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvqc6k2q.14>.
- Luttrell, Gina. "7 Moments That Made 'Frozen' the Most Progressive Disney Movie Ever." Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://www.mic.com/articles/79455/7-moments-that-made-frozen-the-most-progressive-disney-movie-ever>.

- “The 86th Academy Awards — 2014.” Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/2014/F>.
- Picker, Miguel, dir. *The Mickey Mouse Monopoly - YouTube*. In collaboration with Chyng Sun. Media Education Foundation, March 2002. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btw78Hdrrq2c>.
- Resene, Michelle. “From Evil Queen to Disabled Teen: Frozen Introduces Disney’s First Disabled Princess.” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2 2017). ISSN: 2159-8371, accessed April 25, 2020. doi:10.18061/dsq.v37i2.5310. <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5310>.
- Rudloff, Maja. “(Post)Feminist Paradoxes: The Sensibilities of Gender Representation in Disney’s Frozen - ProQuest.” *Outskirts* 35 (2016): 1–20. Accessed April 25, 2020. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1881309345?accountid=9673&rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo.
- Ryan, Hugh. “Why So Many Disney Villains Sound ‘Gay’.” July 14, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2020. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5g9e4d/the-number-of-gay-animated-villains-will-surprise-you-456.
- Streiff, Madeline, and Lauren Dundes. “Frozen in Time: How Disney Gender-Stereotypes Its Most Powerful Princess.” *Social Sciences; Basel* (Basel, Switzerland, Basel) 6, no. 2 (2017): 38. Accessed April 25, 2020. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.proxy.bc.edu/10.3390/socsci6020038>. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1939763030/abstract/CB28DD7BEAD476EPQ/1>.
- Tanner, Litsa RenÉE, Shelley A. Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, and Lori K. Lund. “Images of Couples and Families in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films.” Reprint: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180390223987>, *The American Journal of Family Therapy* 31, no. 5 (October 1, 2003): 355–373. ISSN: 0192-6187, accessed April 26, 2020. doi:10.1080/01926180390223987. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180390223987>.
- “Sissy Villain.” Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SissyVillain>.
- VanDerWerff, Emily. “Why Elsa from Frozen Is a Queer Icon — and Why Disney Won’t Embrace That Idea.” November 22, 2019. Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/11/22/20975178/frozen-2-elsa-girlfriend-lesbian-queer-review>.