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INDIVIDUALISM IN THE 1997 ANIMATED FILM *ANASTASIA*: A LIBERAL FEMINISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
This research aims to analyze how Anastasia portrays themes of liberal feminism and individualism. It investigates how the protagonist's journey embodies feminist ideals of self-discovery, resilience, and the defiance of gender expectations. Grounded in liberal feminist theory, which emphasizes personal autonomy and equality before the law (McMillan, 2009); this study employs qualitative descriptive methods to explore how Anastasia's narrative reflects these principles. Themes such as identity formation, gender norms, and personal agency are analyzed through the protagonist's experiences. The analysis reveals that Anastasia challenges traditional gender roles by portraying feminine traits—compassion, resilience, and emotional intelligence—as strengths rather than weaknesses. The protagonist's journey from orphaned amnesiac to rediscovered princess illustrates themes of empowerment and self-determination within a feminist framework. The film's depiction of Anastasia's relationships and challenges underscores the broader feminist discourse on identity and societal expectations. By confronting external pressures and embracing her true self, Anastasia embodies the resilience and agency central to feminist ideals. Through its narrative complexity and thematic depth, Anastasia contributes meaningfully to feminist discourse. It celebrates personal growth; challenges gender stereotypes, and advocates for women's empowerment. The study concludes with reflections on the enduring relevance of feminist themes in animated media and their impact on audiences.

Keywords: gender roles; individual rights; liberal feminisim

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INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a broad movement that advocates for women's equal rights, focusing on achieving equality through existing structures and addressing societal injustices. It emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, with the belief that women, like men, deserve equal access to various opportunities (McAfee, 2021). It is fundamentally a concept that addresses women's diverse issues and

challenges. Many people agree that women experience discrimination based on gender, leading to unmet needs in social, economic, and political spheres.

For example, feminism often highlights issues such as the oppression of women due to perceived weakness, societal expectations of women's elegance and manners, and the emotional vulnerabilities women face in relationships. However, feminism encompasses more than these issues. It navigates various aspects of self-representation and social relations within the context of femininity (Delmar, 2018). This includes how women struggle for societal acceptance, economic independence, and their significant roles in society. These themes align with the principles of liberal feminism.

Liberalism is a philosophy grounded in individual rights, liberty, consent of the governed, social equality, the right to private property, and equality before the law (McMillan, 2009). Giddens (2001) defines liberal feminism as a belief in gender inequality, which stems from restricted access to civil rights, centered on patriarchal ideologies. These ideas parallel Anastasia's journey in the film.

The 1997 film *Anastasia* tells the story of the lost Russian princess, Anastasia Romanov, known as Grand Duchess Anastasia. After waking up in an orphanage with amnesia and being renamed Anya, she leaves at the age of 18 to find her real family and true identity. During her journey, she discovers her noble lineage and reunites with her family, ultimately achieving her goals and living happily ever after (Patrice, 2020).

The film provides a compelling case study for exploring liberal feminist ideals. The protagonist, Anya (Anastasia), embodies these ideals through her journey of self-discovery and her pursuit of her rightful place as Grand Duchess Anastasia. Despite her amnesia and disadvantaged background, Anya demonstrates remarkable determination. The film explores themes of individualism, defying gender expectations, and achieving goals through the perseverance characteristic of liberal feminism.

Schwartzman's (2006) theory emphasizes the self-structure, examining women's real-life experiences in pursuit of certain goals. This approach often seeks harmony with, and even surpasses, the prominent individualism in

liberalism (Bimer, 2006). Weber (1967) notes that individualism includes a more limited heterogeneity of views, focusing briefly on the historical phenomenon of individuality.

In the history of philosophy, understanding individualism has been a longstanding scholarly interest, with evidence of this idea predating modern times (Soares, 2018). According to Luhmann (1986), one reason for increasing individualism is the general symbolic framework that necessitates certain behaviors in role situations, producing quality human individuals.

Anastasia had a different life from young women her age. She was resourceful, independent, and dreamed of a life outside the orphanage in search of her true identity. Even though she eventually discovered her noble descent, her journey to achieve her rightful place and personal goals exemplifies liberal feminism through her individualism. This is evidenced by Anastasia not being saved by a prince to achieve her goals; she is fully responsible for her own fate, embodying individualism even as a princess.

The concept of individualism has been extensively explored within feminist theory. Scholars like Schwartzman (2006) and Weber (1967) offer frameworks for understanding how women can define their own identities and challenge established roles. Anya's journey in *Anastasia* (1997) exemplifies these concepts, showcasing the potential for individualism and achievement within a liberal feminist framework. However, as Bimer (2006) suggests, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this approach and consider how broader societal structures can impact women's opportunities for success.

Previous researches have extensively discussed individualism and its impact on women's lives, yet there is a lack of specific studies that apply these theoretical frameworks to animated films as cultural texts. This research fills that gap by analyzing the animated film *Anastasia* (1997) through the lens of liberal feminism and individualism. Additionally, while Schwartzman (2006) and Weber (1967) provide general insights into women's individualism, they do not specifically address how these ideas are represented in media targeted at younger audiences. This study contributes to feminist literature by examining how

Anastasia (1997) portrays a woman's journey of self-discovery and independence, thus offering a new perspective on the intersection of media, feminism, and individualism.

METHOD

The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. This approach is suitable for literary phenomena, as literature is a world of words full of meaning that needs to be realized to facilitate understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The qualitative descriptive method is employed to describe or explain a phenomenon or event in detail and in depth (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This method aims to understand the feminism experienced by Anastasia in the film *Anastasia* (1997). To apply the qualitative descriptive method in this research, data is collected through case studies. Yin (2014) notes that case studies are particularly useful for investigating complex phenomena within their contexts. The data obtained from the film is then analyzed in depth to produce a comprehensive picture of the feminist themes and individualism experienced by the protagonist. Data collection involves watching the film "Anastasia" (1997) multiple times to identify and record instances where feminist themes and individualism are portrayed. Additionally, relevant scenes and dialogues are transcribed for detailed analysis. This approach allows for a thorough examination of the narrative, character development, and thematic elements related to feminism and individualism.

The data analysis process follows the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis, which include:

1. **Familiarization with the data**: Immersing in the film by repeated viewings and detailed note-taking.
2. **Generating initial codes**: Identifying and coding significant scenes and dialogues that reflect feminist themes and individualism.
3. **Searching for themes**: Grouping codes into broader themes that represent the main concepts of the study.

4. **Reviewing themes**: Refining the themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data.
5. **Defining and naming themes**: Clearly defining each theme and how it relates to the research questions.
6. **Producing the report**: Writing up the findings with illustrative examples from the film.

This qualitative descriptive method allows for an in-depth understanding of how the film *Anastasia* (1997) portrays feminist themes and individualism, providing insights into the broader implications of these portrayals in the context of liberal feminism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the analysis focuses on various aspects of individualism and liberal feminism as depicted in the 1997 animated film *Anastasia*. By examining the protagonist's journey, the film highlights how themes of self-discovery, personal growth, and defying gender expectations contribute to the broader discourse of feminism. The analysis is structured into several sub-sections, each addressing a specific theme within the narrative: "A Beloved Daughter with Good Manners," "Intelligence and Faith Determine Future," "Feminine Traits as Strengths," "Rediscovering the True Identity," and "Rules, Love, and Strengths."

Each of these themes would be analyzed in depth to illustrate how *Anastasia* portrays individualism and liberal feminism. By examining the protagonist's experiences and growth, the film provides a nuanced perspective on the challenges and triumphs associated with pursuing personal freedom and equality. The following analysis will offer insights into how the film's narrative aligns with and contributes to feminist discourse, particularly within the framework of liberal feminism.

1. A Beloved Daughter with some Good Manners

Anastasia's portrayal as a beloved daughter with good manners sets the foundation for understanding her character's growth throughout the film. Her

upbringing and the values instilled in her during her early years play a crucial role in shaping her sense of identity and individualism. This section would explore how these early influences contribute to her later decisions and actions.

At the very beginning of the film, the story is set in the Russian Empire in 1916, during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II Romanov. He and his wife, Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna, have five children: Olga Nikolaevna Romanov, Tatiana Nikolaevna Romanov, Maria Nikolaevna Romanov, Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanov, and their youngest, a son named Alexei Nikolaevich Romanov. Among all the children, Anastasia is especially cherished by her parents for her beauty and good manners. This affection is shared by her grandmother, Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna.

At a royal ball, Anastasia approaches her grandmama, who gives her a couple of gifts: a music box that plays the song "Once Upon a December," and a necklace inscribed with "Together in Paris."

> music box plays on,
> Anastasia: (whispering) It plays our lullaby!
> Marie: You can play it at night before you go to sleep. And pretend that it's me singing.
> they both started to sing,
> ♪ On the wind, cross the sea, hear this song and remember. Soon you'll be home with me. Once upon a December. ♪
> Marie: (hands Anastasia the key necklace) Read what it says.
> Anastasia: (close on music box and read the written) "Together in Paris". Really? Oh, grandmama.
> they both smiles and embrace. *(Bluth, 1997)*.

The passage above reflects the theme of familial love and connection, particularly between Anastasia and her grandmother Marie. The music box and the lullaby serve as symbols of their bond and shared memories. Anastasia and her grandmother Marie share a tender moment with the music box, which plays their lullaby. This demonstrates the strong emotional connection between them, highlighting Anastasia as a beloved daughter figure to Marie. The lullaby, "Once upon a December," evokes nostalgia and memories of their past together. It signifies a shared history and a bond that transcends time and distance. The music box itself acts as a physical representation of their relationship. It contains the key

necklace with the inscription "Together in Paris," symbolizing their dreams and aspirations to be together despite physical separation. The act of singing together and the embrace underscore the emotional depth of their relationship. It shows how much they cherish each other's company and how they find comfort in their shared moments, reinforcing Anastasia's role as a beloved daughter figure to Marie. Overall, the passage beautifully portrays the theme of familial love and connection, with Anastasia embodying the qualities of "A Beloved Daughter with some Good Manners" through her loving interaction with her grandmother.

At the same time, an evil wizard named Grigori Rasputin arrives with a malevolent intent to curse everyone in the palace, condemning them to death. In the ensuing chaos, Anastasia and her grandmamma, the Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna, desperately flee the palace in an attempt to escape Rasputin's deadly curse. Their flight through the palace grounds underscores the peril they face as they strive to evade the sorcerer's wrath and the impending doom he has cast upon their family and the entire household.

Romanov family running down a hallway,
Daughters: Help! Help!
Tsar Nicholas: Hurry children!
Anastasia stops in her tracks, as her family continues down the hallway,
Anastasia: My music box!
Marie looked back approaching Anastasia,
Marie: Anastasia! Come dear, faster!
a little kitchen servant helped them escaping,
Kitchen Boy: Come this way, out the servant quarters.
Marie: Thanks, little kid. Hurry Anastasia! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

While attempting to escape, Anastasia becomes separated from her grandmama amidst the chaos of the city crowd. As her grandmama boards a departing train, Anastasia falls, losing consciousness. She later awakens in an orphanage with no memory of her past, now known by the new name, Anya, given to her by the orphanage's owner.

2. Intelligence and Faith Determines Future

The film emphasizes the importance of intelligence and faith in determining one's future. Anastasia's journey is marked by her intellectual

curiosity and unwavering belief in herself, which guide her through various challenges. This sub-section would analyze how these traits align with the principles of liberal feminism, highlighting the significance of self-reliance and personal agency in achieving one's goals.

In 1926, ten years later, 18-year-old Anya decides to leave the orphanage to find her real family and discover her true identity. In a snowy forest, she examines her necklace inscribed with "Together in Paris," which prompts her to consider going to Paris. However, she is unsure about the journey due to the distance. As she contemplates her next move, she notices a sign pointing to Saint Petersburg. Conflicted about whether to head to Paris or Saint Petersburg, Anya looks up and prays to God for guidance.

> Anya: “Be grateful, Anya”. I am grateful! Grateful to get away!
> she comes to a fork in the road. She stops. One signboard to Saint Petersburg,
> Anya: I’ll be Anya the orphan forever if I don’t go right… Maybe I could find…
> she touches her necklace
> Anya: Who ever gave me this necklace must have loved me… This is crazy! Me go to Paris?
> She raised her head skyward and closes her eyes in prayer,
> Anya: God, please, send me a clue, a hint, anything. *(Bluth, 1997)*.

The passage above reflects the theme of "Intelligence and Faith Determines Future" through Anya's internal dialogue and her moment of prayer. Anya faces a crucial decision at a crossroads, symbolizing the choices that shape her future. She considers the practicality of going to Saint Petersburg for a potential identity and a stable life versus the possibility of pursuing her dream to find answers about her past in Paris. Anya reflects on the necklace she possesses, which she interprets as a token of love from someone who cared about her. This prompts her to reconsider her options and question her identity as an orphan. The necklace symbolizes her intelligence in recognizing its significance and her faith in believing that it connects her to her past. Anya’s prayer illustrates her faith and belief in divine guidance. She looks to God for a sign or hint, showing her reliance on faith to determine her future path. This moment underscores the theme that faith can play a role in shaping one's destiny, intertwining with intelligence as

she weighs her choices and seeks clarity. Anya's contemplation and prayer demonstrate her emotional and intellectual maturity. Her willingness to seek guidance and consider her options reflects intelligence in decision-making. Her faith adds another dimension, suggesting that her future is influenced by both her choices and divine intervention. In summary, the passage portrays Anya grappling with important decisions that will define her future, influenced by both her intelligence in assessing her situation and her faith in seeking divine guidance. These elements together reflect the theme that "Intelligence and Faith Determine Future" in the narrative context of her journey in "Anastasia."

Immediately after her prayer, a puppy appeared and began tugging at her scarf, leading her toward the path to Saint Petersburg. Recognizing this as a sign from God, Anya named the puppy Pooka and decided to follow it. With her intelligence and faith, she and Pooka set off together toward Saint Petersburg.

> Anya: Oh, … Oh, great. A dog wants me to go to Saint Petersburg. Here it is! The clue! Thanks a lot God! Alright Pooka, to Saint Petersburg! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

The passage above reflects the theme of "Intelligence and Faith Determines Future" through Anya's response to a seemingly trivial but potentially significant sign. Anya initially responds with sarcasm or disbelief ("Oh, great. A dog wants me to go to Saint Petersburg"), indicating her skepticism towards the dog's actions. However, she quickly shifts her perspective when she interprets the dog's behavior as a clue or sign from God. This demonstrates her intelligence in recognizing potential signs or cues that could influence her decisions. Anya attributes the dog's actions to divine intervention, thanking God for the clue. This moment highlights her faith and belief in a higher power guiding her path. By acknowledging the dog's actions as a sign, Anya aligns her decision-making process with her faith, illustrating the theme that faith plays a role in determining one's future. Anya's response ("Alright Pooka, to Saint Petersburg!") shows her decisive nature once she interprets the dog's behavior as a directive. This decision reflects her intelligence in making choices based on available information (the dog's behavior) and her faith-driven interpretation of that information. Anya's

initial sarcasm also reflects her personality and resilience in the face of uncertainty. Despite her initial doubts, she remains open to interpreting events in a way that aligns with her beliefs and goals, showcasing both her wit and her capacity for adaptability in decision-making. In summary, the passage illustrates how Anya combines intelligence in recognizing subtle cues with faith in divine guidance to determine her future actions. Her response to the dog's behavior exemplifies the theme that "Intelligence and Faith Determine Future" in the context of her journey towards Saint Petersburg in "Anastasia."

Upon arriving at Saint Petersburg's train station, Anya intended to continue her journey to Paris. However, when she attempted to purchase a ticket at the ticket office, she was informed that she could not do so without a visa. Locals advised her to seek out Dimitri at the old palace to obtain the necessary visa.

> Anya and Pooka step up to a window,
> Anya: One ticket to Paris, please.
> Ticket Man: (gruffly) Exit visa?
> Anya: Exit visa?
> Ticket Man: No exit visa, no ticket.
> the ticket man hangs a “Lunch Break” sign on his booth and slams his shutters in Anya’s face.
> Anya: Oh, wow, that was kinda rude.
> an old woman approached Anya,
> Old Woman: Psst. See Dimitri … He can help.
> Anya: Where can I find him?
> Young Man: At the old Palace, but you didn’t hear it from me.
> the old woman nodded in agreement with the man,
> Anya: Oh, thanks you both. (she went to the old palace). *(Bluth, 1997)*.

Simultaneously, Dimitri and his friend Vladimir held auditions in their quest to find the lost princess, Grand Duchess Anastasia. Inside the dimly lit old palace, a melody from her music box triggered memories for Anya, though she struggled to recall the lyrics and title. Focused on piecing together her fragmented memories, Anya eventually succeeded, singing "Once Upon a December" while imagining herself dancing with nobles depicted in the palace paintings.

Upon hearing the singing from within the palace, Dimitri and Vlad approached the source. Anya, flustered, explained that she sought a man named Dimitri. To her surprise, Dimitri revealed himself as the one she was looking for. Standing near a painting of young Princess Anastasia, Anya's striking resemblance—pale skin, ocean blue eyes, and strawberry-blonde hair—amazed both Dimitri and Vlad. Dimitri questioned Anya about her intentions, learning that she desired to travel to Paris to uncover her true family and identity. Moved by her reasons and uncanny physical resemblance to the lost princess, Dimitri speculated that Anya might indeed be the real Grand Duchess Anastasia. He shared his mission to find the lost princess and highlighted Anya's striking similarities to Anastasia.

> Anya: So, you think I'm the lost princess? Have you lost your mind?
> Dimitri: You were separated from your family for a long time, and you wanna go to Paris where the only family member of the princess is there, you could be the real Grand Duchess Anastasia! *(Bluth, 1997).*

Armed with this revelation, Anya cleverly seized the opportunity and persuaded Dimitri to accompany her to Paris. Hoping she might truly be the lost princess, the three of them prepared to embark on their journey to Paris.

3. Feminine Traits as Strengths

Contrary to traditional gender roles that often portray feminine traits as weaknesses, *Anastasia* presents them as strengths. Anastasia's compassion, resilience, and emotional intelligence are depicted as key factors in her success. This part of the analysis will examine how the film subverts conventional gender norms and promotes a more inclusive understanding of strength and capability.

As their train passed through Lithuania, Vlad's realization that their visas had expired forced them into a precarious situation, necessitating evasion of the vigilant train attendant to avoid potential trouble. Finding refuge in the baggage car immediately behind the engine, they believed themselves temporarily safe. However, their respite was short-lived. Rasputin, using his malevolent powers, became aware of Anastasia's survival and unleashed his dark magic. With a

sinister flourish, he magically detached the baggage car from the rest of the train, isolating Dimitri, Anya, and Vlad in a perilous predicament. This separation was not merely a physical threat but also a psychological one, as it isolated them from the safety of the passenger cars and symbolized their vulnerability.

As the passenger cars remained stationary, Rasputin's enchanted baggage and engine cars hurtled uncontrollably towards a bridge. This bridge, meticulously sabotaged by Rasputin's magic, loomed ahead ominously. Its destruction awaited the approach of the detached cars, threatening to send them hurtling into the abyss of a deep canyon below. The imagery of the destroyed bridge serves as a powerful metaphor for the challenges and obstacles orchestrated by Rasputin, both literal and figurative, that the protagonists must overcome.

Recognizing the impending danger, Dimitri, Anya, and Vlad acted swiftly. With bravery born of necessity, they leaped from the careening baggage car, risking everything to save themselves from the imminent catastrophe. This act of desperation underscores their determination and solidarity in facing Rasputin's malevolence and the dangers it has unleashed upon them.

> Anya: We need to jump!
> Dimitri: What?! Have you lost your mind?
> Anya: If we don't than we'll die! Better jump right now or fall into that canyon and die?
> Dimitri: Fine. But even if we jump, are you brave enough to do that?
> Anya: You think I'm such a weak and coward girl?!
> she punches Dimitri's nose and jump no fear first with Pooka,
> Dimitri: What?! Hey! Wait!
> Dimitri grabs Vlad's hand, they both jump. *(Bluth, 1997).*

Journeying through Poland, they opted to travel by bus through Germany, where they boarded a ship bound for Paris. However, the tranquility of midnight aboard the ship was shattered by Rasputin's sinister plot against Anya. Using his dark magic, Rasputin infiltrated Anya's dreams, coaxing her out of her cabin with the intention of casting her into the depths of the ocean. Sensing danger, Pooka, the loyal companion, detected Anya's departure and urgently barked to alert Dimitri and Vlad, who quickly awakened.

In her dream, guided by Rasputin's manipulative magic, Anya encountered a surreal reunion with her long-lost family. Her younger brother led her to a riverbank where her father, mother, and sisters awaited, identifying themselves as the Romanovs and inviting Anya to join them in the water—a haunting echo of her past and a temptation to relinquish her struggle for identity.

Emerging from her dreamlike trance, Anya, under Rasputin's spell, teetered perilously on the ship's edge, poised to plunge into the ocean's abyss. With swift determination, Dimitri intercepted her just in time, pulling her back from the brink and freeing her from Rasputin's malevolent influence. Anya's desperate cry of "Romanov!" in her moment of fear further solidified Dimitri's growing conviction that she might indeed be the lost princess Anastasia, a notion reinforced by the eerie circumstances surrounding her.

The following morning, seeking to soothe Anya's shaken nerves, Dimitri tenderly suggested she wear the elegant dress he had purchased for her earlier. In an effort to distract her from the night's turmoil, he gently guided her through dance steps, offering both solace and a brief respite from their tumultuous journey.

> Anya: (gasp) Romanov!! Romanov!!
> Dimitri: Hey calm down!
> Anya: I met the Romanovs! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

Anya's scream pierced the night, her voice trembling as she cried out the word "Romanov" in fear. The intensity of her reaction struck Dimitri deeply, reinforcing his growing conviction that Anya might indeed be the long-lost princess Anastasia. Her emotional outburst, rooted in the depths of her subconscious and triggered by Rasputin's dark machinations, seemed to Dimitri a poignant confirmation of her true identity.

The following morning, aware of Anya's shaken state, Dimitri sought to comfort her. He gently suggested that she wear the elegant dress he had purchased for her earlier, a gesture intended to soothe her nerves and provide a semblance of normalcy amid their tumultuous journey. Sensing her need for distraction, Dimitri then proposed teaching her how to dance. As they moved together, Dimitri's

guiding hand and reassuring presence offered both physical and emotional support, easing Anya's troubled mind and fostering a moment of calm amidst the storm of uncertainty and danger that surrounded them.

Dimitri: Here. I bought you dress, Anya.
Anya amazed on the beautiful dress,
Dimitri: C'mon, just put it on.
Anya went inside to change her clothes. Came out in the new dress,
Dimitri blushed,
Dimitri: You're beautiful! Not just beautiful, you're brave, strong, and tough! I mean, a young woman in this kind of journey?!
Anya: (smiles) I thought you were thinking otherwise.
Vladimir: Marvelous! Now, you need to teach her how to dance, Dimitri.
Anya: Dance? But, I'm not very good at it.
Dimitri: That's why I'm here to teach you. Listen, how if the fact that you're the actual princess? A royal family must have dancing skills! (Vlad played a Waltz music on).
Dimitri and Anya dance together in the sunrise. *(Bluth, 1997).*

4. Rediscovering the True Identity

Anastasia's quest to rediscover her true identity is central to the film's narrative. Her journey of self-discovery not only involves reclaiming her royal heritage but also understanding her intrinsic worth. This section will discuss how the process of uncovering her identity serves as a metaphor for the feminist struggle for recognition and equality.

Upon arriving in Paris, Dimitri, Anya, and Vlad faced an unexpected obstacle: they couldn't meet the Dowager Empress Marie, Anastasia's grandmother, without first obtaining permission from Sophie. Sophie, Vlad's girlfriend and a devoted cousin of the Dowager Empress, took on the role of interrogator. She posed a series of probing questions to Anya about Anastasia, testing her knowledge and authenticity. With each question, Anya demonstrated her deep understanding and connection to Anastasia's life, impressing Sophie with her accurate responses.

However, Sophie's final question posed a significant challenge: how did the Grand Duchess escape from the palace? Anya, drawing on her fragmented memories, recounted what she could recall of Anastasia's daring escape. Her explanation,

though incomplete, hinted at a tumultuous past filled with intrigue and danger. This pivotal moment underscored Anya's struggle to piece together her identity and the complex history surrounding Anastasia's disappearance.

Amidst the tension of the interrogation, Anya's ability to navigate Sophie's scrutiny with confidence and insight left a lasting impression. It marked a crucial step in their quest to reach the Dowager Empress and uncover the truth that could ultimately validate Anya's claim to being Anastasia.

> Anya: There was a kitchen boy helped us. But I felt in the crowd and separated from grandmama. *(Bluth, 1997)*.

Dimitri was stunned, his belief solidifying that Anya was indeed the true Grand Duchess Anastasia, a conviction rooted in his own past as a kitchen boy who had once aided the princess and the empress. This revelation fueled his determination to reunite Anya with her grandmother, the Dowager Empress Marie. Sophie, loyal cousin to the Dowager Empress, arranged a meeting for Anya, hopeful yet apprehensive. However, upon meeting Anya, the Dowager Empress, weary from encountering countless impostors claiming to be Anastasia, initially refused to entertain the possibility once more. Disheartened by the rejection, Dimitri devised a daring plan: he orchestrated the empress's temporary abduction, a desperate bid to compel her to meet Anya face-to-face. The empress, furious at Dimitri's audacious act, threatened to have him imprisoned. Yet Dimitri pleaded earnestly, his fervent belief in Anya's authenticity compelling him to promise that this time, Anya was truly Anastasia. Touched by Dimitri's impassioned plea, the empress reluctantly relented, agreeing to enter Anya's presence. As the Dowager Empress took her first steps into the room, Anya's memories flooded back with startling clarity. They engaged in conversation, and Anya effortlessly recalled intricate details about Anastasia's life and the relationships among the royal families. Suddenly, Anya's voice filled the room with "Once Upon a December," a song cherished by the empress and sung to her granddaughter. During the poignant moment, the empress noticed the "Together in Paris" necklace adorning Anya's neck—a gift she herself had bestowed upon Anastasia. Overwhelmed by the convergence of these deeply personal details and

the emotional resonance of Anya's presence, the empress embraced her granddaughter with tears of joy and relief.

This pivotal reunion not only affirmed Anya's identity as Anastasia but also symbolized a profound reconciliation between a grandmother's longing and a granddaughter's journey to reclaim her true heritage.

> They sing together: ♪ Here this song and remember. Soon you'll be home with me. Once upon a December. ♪
> tears stream down Marie's face,
> Marie: Oh Anastasia! My Anastasia!
> Anastasia and Marie threw their arms around each other in an emotional embrace,
> Dimitri on street looking up at the window, he blows a kiss and turns to walk away. *(Bluth, 1997)*.

5. Rules, Love, and Strengths

The interplay between rules, love, and strengths is a recurring theme in *Anastasia*. The film navigates the tension between adhering to societal expectations and pursuing personal desires. Anastasia's relationships and the choices she makes reflect a balance between conforming to norms and asserting her individuality.

This section explores how these dynamics shape Anastasia's character and align with liberal feminist ideals. Recognized as Anastasia, she embraced her role as Grand Duchess, adjusting to royal protocols amidst awe and challenges. Amid her new responsibilities, the Dowager Empress revealed surprising news: Dimitri had departed without claiming the reward for discovering her true identity. This selfless act deeply moved Anastasia, highlighting Dimitri's character and their bond rooted in trust and respect, beyond circumstance. This revelation continued to influence Anastasia as she navigated her new life, shaping her understanding of loyalty, sacrifice, and the true essence of her supporters within the Romanov family.

> Anastasia: He didn't take the money?
> Marie: Yes, dear.
> Anastasia: But, why?
> Marie: Because it's nothing for him now. All he wants is actually more than that.
> Anastasia: More than that?

Marie: He has feelings for you, Anastasia.
Anastasia: (gasp and blush).
Marie: Go find him. *(Bluth, 1997)*.

The above passage reflects that, while not explicitly stated, the notion of rules can be inferred from Dimitri's decision not to claim the substantial reward. There are expectations and norms (possibly societal or within the context of the story's world) about claiming rewards or benefits, which Dimitri defies. Marie explains that Dimitri didn't take the money because he has feelings for Anastasia. This highlights the theme of love, where Dimitri's actions are motivated by his emotions rather than material gain. Dimitri's strength of character is evident in his choice. Despite the temptation of wealth and recognition, he prioritizes Anastasia's well-being and his feelings for her over personal gain. This demonstrates moral strength and integrity in his decision-making. Overall, the dialogue and Marie's explanation underscore these themes, portraying how Dimitri's actions reflect his love for Anastasia and his strength of character in prioritizing emotions over material rewards.

Anastasia quietly slipped away from the palace grounds, traversing the dimly lit paths of the empty royal gardens in search of Dimitri. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the estate, Dimitri, preparing to depart on his ship, felt an unsettling premonition about Anastasia. Despite his preparations, a persistent intuition compelled him to return to the palace grounds. This pivotal moment emphasized their profound connection and mutual concern for each other's well-being. For Anastasia, leaving the palace symbolized her determination to find and reconnect with Dimitri, while Dimitri's return highlighted his steadfast loyalty and protective instincts toward her. As they drew nearer to their reunion, the converging paths of Anastasia and Dimitri's journeys mirrored their enduring bond amid the uncertainties and challenges they faced.

A whispered voice came to Anastasia’s ears,

Rasputin: Anastasia.
Anastasia looked around.
A silhouette in the moonlight. Hunched over. Atrophied. He steps closer. Rasputin bows cynically, cruelly.

Anastasia: That face!
Rasputin: Last seen at a party like this one. But now, you've grown up.
Anastasia: Rasputin!
Rasputin: (imitating, mocking) "Rasputin!" Destroyed by your despicable family! But what goes around comes around! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

Rasputin erupted into maniacal laughter, wielding his dark magic with sinister glee. Anastasia stood paralyzed with fear, her mind racing with dread over what would unfold next. From the swirling smoke, sinister minions materialized, taking form and swarming towards Anastasia like a plague of locusts, their approach accompanied by the eerie flapping of innumerable wings. The minions descended upon her with cruel intent, mocking her, prodding her vulnerability, tearing at her elegant dress, and snatching away her crown. Amidst the chaos, Anastasia found herself spinning in frantic circles, overwhelmed by the malevolent onslaught and the surreal horror of the situation.

Anastasia: Stop! No! Get away! No! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

Rasputin's laughter echoed with malicious glee, reveling in Anastasia's fear as it fueled his twisted pleasure. The minions, extensions of his dark will, advanced menacingly towards Anastasia, driving her forcibly towards the edge of the bridge. Her back pressed against the railing, perilously close to tipping over, Anastasia fought back desperately. With flailing arms and fierce determination, she struck out at the minions, landing blows that caused them to squawk in retreat like cowards. In a sudden turn, the minions, mere apparitions of smoke and malice, dissolved back into wisps, vanishing as abruptly as they had appeared. Anastasia, now alone and trembling, stared in disbelief at the empty space where her tormentors had been just moments before.

Anastasia: I'm not afraid of you!
Rasputin: Say your prayers, Anastasia! No one can save you.
Dimitri came with the perfect timing,
Dimitri: Wanna bet?! *(Bluth, 1997)*.

The passage above reflects themes of rules, love, and strengths through the interaction between Dimitri and Rasputin. Dimitri's intervention can be seen as a challenge to Rasputin's authority and the rules of engagement Rasputin tries to impose. Rasputin asserts his power and threatens Anastasia, but Dimitri disrupts this dynamic, implying a defiance of Rasputin's rule over Anastasia's fate. Dimitri's arrival and his declaration "Wanna bet?!" suggest a protective instinct driven by his feelings for Anastasia. His actions indicate a willingness to confront danger and challenge threats to Anastasia's safety, motivated by love and concern for her well-being. Dimitri's timely intervention demonstrates his physical and emotional strength. He arrives at a critical moment to confront Rasputin, showing courage and determination to protect Anastasia despite the danger posed by Rasputin. In summary, Dimitri's actions in this scene illustrate themes of love through his protective instinct towards Anastasia, and strengths through his courage to confront Rasputin, thus challenging the threatening rules Rasputin attempts to impose.

Rasputin spun around to see Dimitri charging towards him, determined. Dimitri's fist landed squarely on Rasputin's face, staggering the sorcerer. In retaliation, Rasputin unleashed dark energy, shattering the bridge beneath them. Anastasia fell amidst the debris, her cries drowned by chaos. Without hesitation, Dimitri vaulted after her, heart racing with urgency. Above, Rasputin watched with satisfaction. Anastasia struggled, reaching for Dimitri's hand. Their eyes met in profound connection amidst the chaos, each resolved to defy Rasputin and survive the peril threatening to separate them forever.

> Anastasia: Dimitri! If we live through this remind me to thank you!
> Dimitri: You can thank me later!
> Rasputin: How enchanting, “together again”, for the last time!
> Rasputin shoots towards Dimitri, made him blast into the air and fall into a giant Pegasus statue. With his magic, Rasputin made the statue alive to chase after Dimitri. Anastasia climbed up the bridge. Rasputin looked back.
> Rasputin: Dasvidanya (a Russian for “goodbye”), your Highness!
> He throws her down, sending her back over the edge. She struggles to hang on with both hands,
> Rasputin: Finally! The last Romanov death!

> Anastasia steps to the smoke, lunges at Rasputin, butting him head-on! They fall to the ground and struggle to grasp the magic wand, which rolls across the bridge. Rasputin grabs it and shoots a stream of Minions at Anastasia. She tumbles backwards. Suddenly Pooka leaps up and grabs the wand in his mouth. The Minions around Anastasia dissipate into smoke! Pooka falls it right at Anastasia's foot. She stomps on it to break it.
> Anastasia: This is for Dimitri (first stomp). This is for my family (second stomp). And this is for you! (third stomp). Dosvidanya!
> Anastasia breaks it into pieces. Rasputin disappeared into ashes, and die.
> Full of tired, they approached each other.
> Dimitri: Like I said! You're strong!
> Anastasia: Oh, Dimitri.
> They hugged each other, kissing, and lived happily ever after.
> *(Bluth, 1997).*

Throughout the scene, Rasputin operates by his own dark rules, using magic and manipulation to achieve his malicious ends. His disregard for any moral or societal rules is evident in his actions, such as animating a statue and using dark magic against Anastasia and Dimitri. Anastasia and Dimitri's love for each other is a driving force throughout the confrontation with Rasputin. Despite the chaos and danger, Anastasia's concern for Dimitri's safety ("If we live through this, remind me to thank you!") and Dimitri's protective instincts ("You can thank me later!") highlight their deep emotional connection. Anastasia demonstrates remarkable physical and emotional strength throughout the battle. Despite being thrown off the bridge by Rasputin, she refuses to give up and climbs back up to confront him. Her resilience is further shown when she physically confronts Rasputin and eventually destroys his magic wand, symbolizing her inner strength and determination to overcome adversity.

Overall, this scene from *Anastasia* showcases how the characters navigate a situation where rules are bent by the antagonist, love between Anastasia and Dimitri drives their actions, and Anastasia's inner strength ultimately triumphs over evil. The themes intertwine to underscore the characters' development and the resolution of their journey towards a happy ending.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 1997 film Anastasia masterfully integrates themes of individualism and liberal feminism into its narrative, providing a compelling exploration of personal growth, defiance of gender norms, and the pursuit of identity. Through the protagonist Anastasia's journey, the film challenges traditional expectations and celebrates feminine strengths. Raised in privilege and affection, Anastasia initially embodies grace and kindness, traits that later shape her resilience in the face of adversity. Her separation from family due to Rasputin's curse initiates a quest for identity marked by challenges but driven by her determination to reclaim her true self. Anastasia's decision to leave the orphanage and seek her family in Paris reflects her intellectual curiosity and unwavering belief in her identity, aligning closely with liberal feminism's emphasis on personal agency and aspiration pursuit. Contrary to traditional gender roles, the film presents feminine traits—compassion, resilience, and emotional intelligence—as sources of strength. Anastasia's emotional journey—from rediscovering her family to confronting her past—highlights her growth and empowerment as she embraces her heritage and asserts her place in the world. Rediscovering her true identity parallels the feminist struggle for recognition and equality. The film's portrayal of Anastasia's relationship with Dimitri exemplifies mutual respect and loyalty, transcending societal expectations and highlighting their emotional connection. In their battle against Rasputin, Anastasia's resilience and determination shine as she confronts dark forces and asserts her agency. This climactic struggle underscores Anastasia's journey from uncertainty to self-assurance, emphasizing her strength in defying external pressures and embracing her true self.

Overall, Anastasia not only entertains with its captivating storyline and memorable characters but also engages deeply with feminist themes of individualism and empowerment. It challenges traditional gender roles, celebrates feminine strengths, and underscores the importance of self-discovery and personal agency in achieving equality. Anastasia remains a poignant example of how

animated films can contribute meaningfully to feminist discourse, resonating with audiences through its timeless message of resilience and identity.

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