

Therapy and Framing in *Annie Hall*: Two Stories, Both Alike in Dignity
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In Woody Allen's 1977 film *Annie Hall*, a scene shows both of the main characters sitting with their therapists in different locations. At approximately 1:09:31 in the film, a long shot displays Annie (Diane Keaton) speaking to her therapist on the left side of the screen while Alvy (Woody Allen) speaks with his therapist on the right. The conversation rotates between the two characters, as they both try to identify why their relationship with each other is seeming to fall apart. The therapy scene helps display to the reader how drastic the differences are between Alvy and Annie's analyses of their relationship. By showing the struggles in understanding between the two main characters that are trying to empathize with each other, the therapy scene helps establish the film's genre as a romantic comedy.

An important element of the scene is the division of the characters, both in setting and in state of mind. An even split is created down the middle of the screen, separating Annie and Alvy's positions. This way, the characters are given equal opportunity to have their voices concerned to the audience. This split-screen also allows parallels to be drawn between Alvy's story and Annie's story. They speak about their sex life and other qualms they have with their partner, and the audience is able to see the inconsistencies between the characters' perceptions of the relationship. As a romantic comedy, this scene acts as one of the struggle points in the relationship, and the division of the characters onscreen displays the internal division between the two. Seeing as Alvy is the narrator of the film, he is positioned to the right of the screen, perhaps to indicate that he believes he is "right" in his analysis of Annie and himself. The positioning on the right can also be analyzed as pointing towards the future, whereas Annie is on the left of the screen.

Lighting in the scene also indicates Annie and Alvy's places in life, as Annie is beginning to make breakthroughs in her life, whereas Alvy is stuck. Annie is in a lightened room, sitting upright, as Alvy is laying on a sofa in a darkened room. The two are shown to be out of sync with each other, both in their understanding of each other and in their place in life. While the couple are trying to figure out each other, they are both trying to figure out themselves too. An important distinction lies in the time that they have been striving to figure themselves out, however. Annie has just begun to visit her therapist, while Alvy has been visiting a therapist for almost fourteen years. As both of the characters are analyzing the same issue, the audience begins to understand that Annie has made a large breakthrough in her therapy in a short amount of time, whereas Alvy is stuck in the same place.

The therapy scene is crucial to understanding the unraveling of the relationship between Annie and Alvy. It provides direct contrasts in the characters' perspectives of each other, and shows the audience the true misunderstandings that Annie and Alvy have with one another. The relationship is crumbling, and Annie and Alvy are both becoming aware of their different

positions in life. The romance between them is dying, and they are beginning to recognize the dysfunction.

Works Cited

Annie Hall. Directed by Woody Allen. 1977.

