

Bi-sociation

in

Annie Hall

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From the most general level of form and content to the most minute level of the same, Annie Hall is a richly textured tapestry, woven from a myriad of contradictory, paradoxical threads, creating a very essence that is in itself "bi-sociative."

At the most elemental and outward level, a bi-sociative relationship exists between a film and the audience viewing that film; the film creates an illusory, film reality while the audience views (and exists) in a "real" reality. Indeed, the very act of viewing a motion picture is in itself "the perceiving of a situation or idea...in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference." *good.*

In Annie Hall, this bi-sociative relationship between film and viewer is accentuated from a psychological basis--the notion of bi-sociative contradiction and opposition is presented as having its origin in the human mind and manifesting itself in human behavior; i.e., psychology.

*yes.* At the outset of Annie Hall Alvy Singer speaks directly to the audience as if it were his analyst. This consciousness of the audience tells us that it is alright to laugh, making us feel as if we are "in on the joke." In fact, Alvy starts with a joke which, in itself, embodies the bi-sociative, contradictory nature of human behavior which the film very successfully attempts to depict: "One old lady says, 'the food is really terrible,' and the other old lady says, 'yes, and such small portions.'"

During our "session" with Alvy, he tells us about numerous personal relationships he has had, the most important one being the one with Annie. We get scenes from Alvy's early childhood all the way up to his break-up with Annie. Throughout, dialogue,

composition and editing underline and give strength to the presentation of the contradictory, paradoxical nature of human behavior and interaction. ✓ The highly stylized form mirrors the bi-sociative framework of the content.

Much of the comedy of the film comes from ~~wise-cracks~~ and jokes which constantly reiterate the bi-sociative, contradictory nature of human beings. "I would never want to belong to a club that would have me as a member" is a good example of this--a perfect embodiment of bi-sociative paradox in dialogue. *yes.*

*good.*

Editing is quite often used to support and magnify the bi-sociative elements of dialogue. When Alvy and Annie first meet, there is a scene at Annie's flat in which Annie and Alvy speak to one-another outside on the balcony. For a while we get a two-shot of them, but the second conflict and opposition is set in motion by Annie's statement, "you're what grammy Hall would call a real Jew," the scene becomes divided into a series of one-shots of Annie and Alvy (starting with, of course, Annie as she makes this startlingly funny statement). Alvy, after reacting, immediately changes the subject of discussion to photography, and during the ensuing series of one-shots, as Alvy lectures Annie on photographic aestheticism, subtitles give us the true, "interior" thoughts of each character. Subtext subtitles such as "I'm not smart enough for him" and "she senses I'm shallow," tell us that no matter how different Alvy and Annie may seem in their ability to analyze aesthetic elements of photographic art, in terms of their inner, private insecurity, ~~they are equals.~~ *right, kindred spirits.* One-shots set up public contrast, subtitled subtext sets up private similarity; the two juxtaposed together create opposition and comedy.

*good.*

*good!*

The editing also supports the bi-sociative relationship of patient (Alvy) and psychiatrist (audience) in that the scenes are not edited together in the chronological order of their occurrence in Alvy's life; rather, the scenes are edited together in a way which visually resembles the "free-association" of psychoanalytical therapy. Through this transcendence of chronological time we can see the bi-sociative relationships of past versus present and the mind versus the physical world. Numerous lines in the film support the latter, important bi-sociative relationship. Alvy tells his wife that "what is fascinating" about the basketball game "is that it is physical." The scene which was cut, featuring the philosophers playing the athletes, would have been the perfect comidic image of the mind/body opposition. This bi-sociative mind/body opposition gives way to reason versus emotion when Alvy asks his wife (in the same scene), "why do you always reduce my animal urges to psychoanalytical categories?"

In some scenes, composition is used to set up a visual division between oppositions such as mind and body, reason and emotion. In one particular scene, Annie and Alvy stand in one room watching Annie and an actor (from her past) in another room. As Alvy analytically criticizes the actor's emotional "sentimentality," we see that the threshold between the two rooms forms a large vertical divider in the center of the screen, separating screen left (Annie and the actor) from screen right (Annie and Alvy). Thus, in the composition of this one shot, we get mind opposing body (thought opposing feeling), reason opposing emotion, and past opposing present. When Annie and Alvy are in bed, Annie gives Alvy her body (as, in one scene, her mind gets up and walks away), but Alvy tells Annie that he "wants the whole thing,"

*yes, & there is another bisociation, within the scene that they witness, involving the comidic clash between physical contact motivated by affection or sentiment versus that contact motivated by perversion!*

*"touch my heart..." with your feet."*

meaning mind and body. Sometimes, the screen is literally split into two separate shots to give us two "self consistent" but "incompatible frames of reference." We see this with Annie and Alvy's families, and, at one point, it is said that Annie and Alvy's families are "like oil and water." Oil and water is the perfect image for bi-sociation. <sup>except that apropos of comedie bisociation, the fact that they co-exist but remain separate from one-another. One might say, in terms of their liquid similarity, that oil and water represent two different attitudes. The idea of atti</sup> <sup>don't mix occasions no tension to be</sup>

✓ The idea of attitude is expressed very concisely in the split-screen "analysis" scene. On screen-left we see Annie sitting and speaking with her off-screen, female analyst, and on screen-right we see Alvy laying down and speaking with his off-screen, male analyst. When Alvy's analyst asks him, "how often do you have sex?" Alvy replies, "hardly ever, maybe three times a week." When Annie's analyst asks her the same question, she replies, "constantly, three times a week." The bi-sociative quintessence of this scene is in the "reversals of logic" of Annie and Alvy in their attitudes toward sex. When Alvy, in another scene, cooks lobster with a date, the girl's attitude toward Alvy's lobster-phobia is completely different from that of Annie; in the analog scene, Annie thought that Alvy was hilarious, the other woman wants to know if Alvy "is joking or something." This is very funny. ✓ Reversal of logic (and reversal of attitude) can also take place within one person. In one scene in which Annie and Alvy discuss Annie's apartment, Alvy asks her, "whats wrong with plumbing and bugs?" Then, moments later, after Annie mentions how much she pays for the apartment, Alvy says, astonished, "that place is four hundred a month?..its got bad plumbing and bugs!" <sup>This second lobster scene shows, done all, that Alvy & Annie shared a sense of humor.</sup>

A positive-negative is instantly transformed into a negative-positive; oppositions are reversed. In another scene, we know that Alvy really doesn't want to do a television awards program, and he is unable to eat some chicken due to his "psychosomatic" sickness. But the moment he hears that he doesn't have to do the show, he begins to eat the chicken as he laments the fact that

now he "doesn't even get to do the show." Again, the reversal of oppositions (creating opposition in the reversal itself) yields comedy. *finding some bad in everything good seems to constitute for him an idiosyncratic mode of acceptance or adjustment:*

So, through form and content which echoes a myriad of *disparagement* oppositions, contradictions and paradoxes, *the comedic* *quintessence* of Annie Hall is truly "bi-sociative."

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Regarding both papers: *good job* — to tackle this concept in two areas, thoroughly, requires more skill & is more valuable than to drag it perfunctorily across a range of topics — still, it can be handled well in terms of that range of topics, & that approach perhaps argues better for the universal applicability of the concept to comedy. Sometimes you almost drop "bisociative" on the page like a buzz word. But really, you manage to make a very creative & insightful account for it in terms of these films, & no one else negotiated its occurrence in film form so well.