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### The Satire Behind Deconstructing Harry

The film *Deconstructing Harry*, written & directed by Woody Allen, tells the story of Harry Block, a famous New York City author. *Deconstructing Harry* is viewed and was written as a satire to bring light to the issues of self-victimization and shifting the blame in society. Exposing these issues, Allen uses mockery, exaggeration and the attack of character type, creating a satire that skewers the notion of the victim.

Exaggeration is used in satire, often used to express the magnitude of a topic. Harry constantly exaggerates the world around him, skewing the perspective of the audience, presenting his lifestyle as lavish, and too good to be true. This is made evident by the fact that his only income is from his books being sold, and as such, the notion of living luxuriously isn't feasible. The audience is fooled, in a sense, into believing that Harry's ideal world is the real world in which he resides. However, Harry does live in such a world, so-to-speak, but he exists mentally within it, not actually. Throughout the movie, it is made apparent that Harry's mental state is deteriorating. When Ken appears; he forces Harry to confront some painful truths about his life, like how he only hooked up with Jane because he knew it wouldn't work out, so he'd never have to, as Ken put it, "give up sport-fucking and chronic dissatisfaction and grow up." This subconscious reasoning is a huge part of why Harry's relationships always fall apart.

The attack of character is used in satire, to depict issues with a certain type of character

without slandering a specific individual. In all of Harry's relationships that we see in the film, he warns the women he's involved with that he is not trustworthy and he isn't good for them. Yet, when the relationships eventually fall apart, they blame all the issues on Harry and resent him, despite the fact that he warned them. The ignorance of those women plays into their role as the Fool, as they victimize themselves and make Harry out to be some kind of monster, even though Harry explicitly gives them plenty of reasons not to date him. This is a common event through the narration. The Adulterer is obviously represented by Harry. Allen attacks the Adulterer by showing how self-centered they are, the little regard they have for others, and, consequently, how their misdeeds may later bring them harm. Using these two character types, Allen highlights the absurdity of both in the first scene. Lucy follows the stereotype of the Fool and falls for Harry and his tricks.

Mockery is used in satire to parody someone or something. Harry is depicted as being scummy, immature, insecure, and annoying. Woody Allen wrote Harry like this, as a way of projecting how Allen's harshest critics view and demonize the writer. In doing so, Allen presents the film's viewer with the perspective of an extremist. The idea of Allen projecting his own personality onto his character, Harry, is extremely meta. The reason it is so meta is that Allen's character, Harry, is an author who also projects *himself* onto *his* characters. Both Allen and Harry have had their personal lives affected by their works and vice versa. With these similarities, the presence of Harry in the film is Allen's way of mocking himself and his critics.

Using the three satiric conventions of exaggeration, mockery, and the attack of character type, Woody Allen reveals the issue of self-victimization and shifting the blame. Self-victimization is an issue in society, as it causes problems with people not taking responsibility.

As long as everyone claims to be a victim, the situation will only worsen; pointing fingers will just involve others getting hurt. Allen's satire is saying, the only way to end the cycle is for someone to be the bigger person, take responsibility, and stop being the victim.

Works Cited

Allen, Woody. *Deconstructing Harry*. Fine Line Features, 1997.