

Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Klika, D. T. (2016) The inescapable narrative structure of the TV sitcom. In: Screenwriting Research Network: Annual Conference 2016, 8-10 Sept 2016, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom. . [Conference or Workshop Item]

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/20120/>

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

The inescapable narrative structure of the TV Sitcom.

Beyond its television 'half-hour' time-limit, the sitcom is commonly distinguished from drama or soap-opera by having what is described as a closed or "circular" narrative structure. Narrative theory explores the relationship between character actions, traits and story, and how together they enable the narrative structure (Chatman 1978). If the narrative is the sum of the character's actions this paper will examine the plot points where the character's actions advance the narrative and determine the effect of their choices at those points. The objective is to explore *how* the key character generates the unique shape.

Lisa Trahair, in her text *The Comedy of Philosophy: Sense and Nonsense in Early Cinematic Slapstick* (2007) in utilising psychoanalytic theory demonstrates that comicality is enabled through the tension arising between the pleasure principle and primary processes that drive the character and in opposition to the reality principle that comes to bear on the character through the narrative. Extending on my presentation at the 2015 SRN conference that examined the nature of the characters in the sitcom, I now observe that, in response to the diegetic reality brought to bear through the narrative, key characters make choices that maintain their idealisation; in so doing they contribute to the definitive closed narrative structure of the sitcom and reinforce their entrapment.

This paper will examine the comic operation of the sitcom at the level of the narrative in order to extend our understanding of how the plot reinforces the key character's psychical tension; further how their choices at certain points ensure the re-situation and 'perpetual entrapment' and the 'closed narrative'.

Deborah Klika MA (research)

Lecturer, TV and Film, Middlesex University, London.

d.klika@mdx.ac.uk