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"Look at moiye, look at moiye": Exploring TV sitcom and narrative comedy characters through theories of narcissism

Many TV Sitcom and narrative comedy characters are often categorised as 'types' such as 'the lovable loser', 'the idiot savant' or 'the operator', descendants of their archetypal ancestors, the fool, trickster, rogue and comic hero. Such descriptors explain to some degree a character's comicality not their perpetual compulsion to repeat behaviour that entraps them in a situation - marked characteristics of this form of comedy. This paper, utilising theories of narcissism, will observe the character of Kim from the Australian sitcom *Kath and Kim* with reference to *Fawlty Towers* and *I Love Lucy*.

Freudian, Lacanian and Kohutian theories of narcissism are brought together as a framework through which to observe the behaviour and relational dynamic of characters that inhabit the sitcom. I begin with the premise that the comic character is what Henri Bergson defines as an unconscious victim. Using psychoanalytic theory, I argue that there are characters in the sitcom whose entrapment derives from an unconscious struggle for identity which they never achieve; unaware of what prevents them from achieving their goal, in their failure they suffer comic degradation. I argue that for some characters their entrapment is borne of a disempowerment that exists in their relationships and is reinforced by the particularity of the 'situation'. To that end, I propose that there exists in the sitcom three main personality "types": the narcissistic character (who has power and knows it), the "echoistic" character (who has no power and does not know it) and the key character who has elements of the psychology of both narcissus and echo, the myth from which Freud analysed the narcissistic personality type.

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