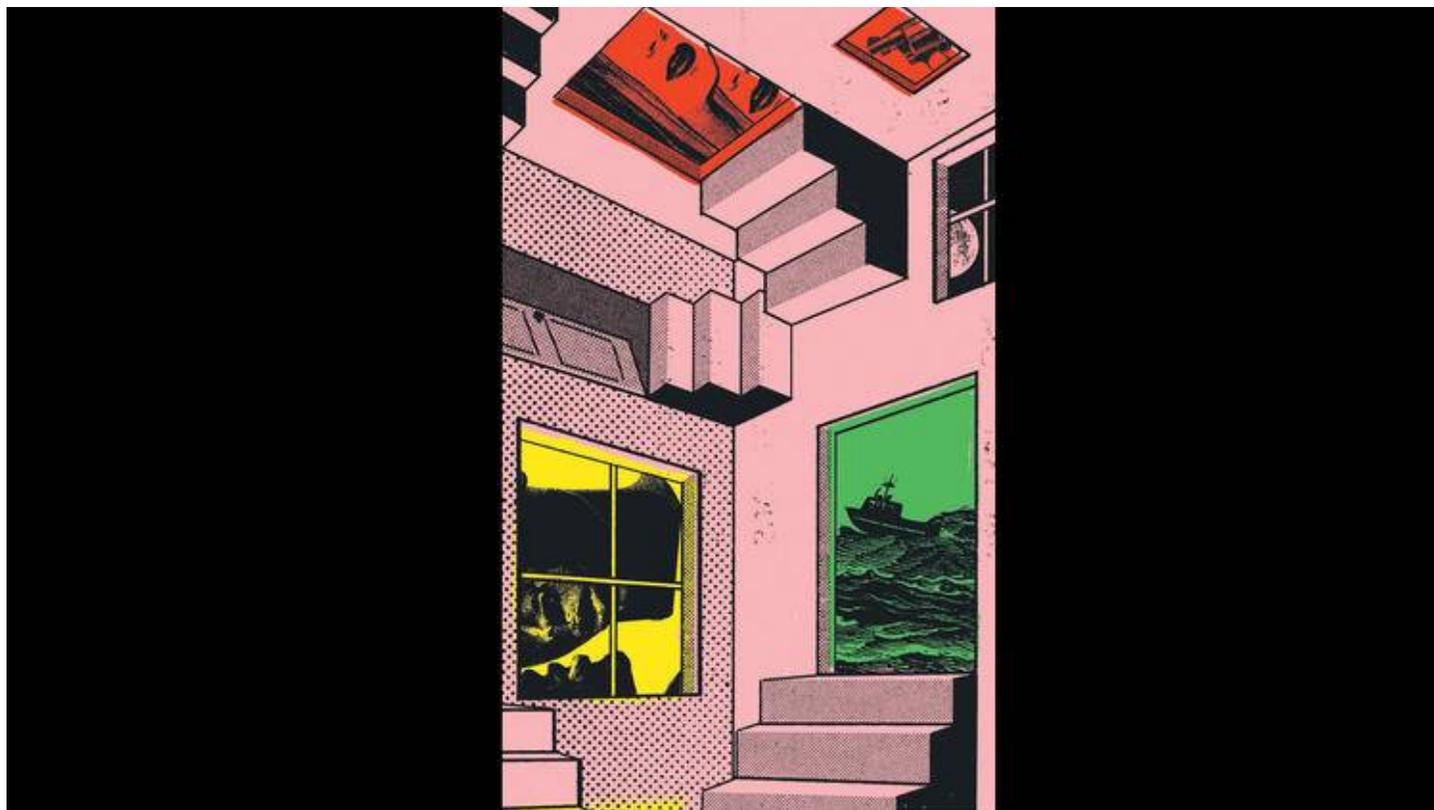


Varying a film's structure keeps it one step ahead of sophisticated audiences



Varying structure. (Justin Renteria / For the Times)

By **Randee Dawn**

FEBRUARY 2, 2017, 4:00 AM

While penning an early draft of "[Manchester by the Sea](#)," writer-director Kenneth Lonergan got bored.

"I'd probably gotten maybe two-thirds of the way through and I was bored to death and I knew something was wrong," the Oscar nominee recalls. "When things are working well, the structure of a film and the content follow the same lines, and you know you're in pretty good shape. But I was so bored I knew I had to do something different."

A rethink of how to tell his story — about a man who refuses guardianship of his teenage nephew after his beloved brother dies — led to the version the film academy awarded with six Oscar nominations, including an original screenplay nod. It's a story that's part family tragedy, part mystery. And the reason it holds a coil of suspense about the man is that the rewrite held back the reveal of an even greater tragedy in his life until more than midway through.

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