

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a clown's face. The clown has white face paint and a large, dark blue, pointed tuft of hair on top. A single, thick tear of blue paint is running down the side of the clown's face, starting from the eye area. The clown's mouth is slightly open, showing a red tongue. The background is a solid, dark green color.

THE RENEWED CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME

An analysis of the ways in which
JOKER creates moral ambiguity
in a traditionally 'villainous'
character.

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Summary

In this bachelor thesis, I research the ways in which JOKER creates moral ambiguity in a traditionally ‘villainous’ character. Though the superhero’s roots can be traced back to mythologic characters, folkloric stories and pre-superhero literary genres, the superhero archetype was created with the first appearance of Superman in a 1938 comic book and the default storyline of a superhero story had now become that of a hero protecting its society from evil villains. With multiple blockbusters released every year, the superhero universe continues its popularity and success as a film genre within popular culture. 2019’s JOKER travels back to a time before Batman exists and removes any sign of the existence of superheroes from Gotham. Instead, JOKER shows a superheroless, decaying Gotham in which Arthur Fleck, a self-proclaimed “mentally ill loner” is mistreated by life and the city to such an extent that he finally lashes out and commits his first crimes by murdering three men who beat him relentlessly. Though JOKER tells the origin story of DC Comic’s famous Joker character, it credits the character with morally ambiguity instead of making him a clear-cut villain. Because the film left its audience, including myself, and critics puzzled about whether or not Arthur is the villain or the hero of this JOKER’s story, I researched the ways in which JOKER creates moral ambiguity in a character that has traditionally been labeled as a ‘villain’ by playing with the superhero and the villain’s archetypal character traits within its narrative and cinematography.

By first discussing the scholarly field occupied with the superhero and villain archetypes, I conclude which traits the archetypes consist of, how moral ambiguity can be recognized in these archetypes, which character traits are shared by these two extremes, creating a morally ambiguous middle ground, and how labeling a character as either of these two extremes can be problematic. I then analyze JOKER through the method of a close reading, which is divided into two analyses. In the first part of my analysis, I analyze JOKER’s opening scene using the device of ‘overspecificity,’ a concept used to describe the way in which a film’s opening scene presents information in order to establish an overview or a tone that will be continued throughout the duration of the film, by taking into account the sound narrator and the image narrator according to aspects of the *mise-en-scène*. The second part of my analysis, I analyze how JOKER creates moral ambiguity within its main character Arthur Fleck, by analyzing the textual narrative and cinematographic elements (*mise-en-scène*). I conclude my research by discussing the ways in which JOKER plays with both the superhero and villain archetypes within its narrative and cinematography and how this results in a morally ambiguous Joker.

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1. Introduction, Research Question and Sub-Questions

“JOKER is not the first comic-book movie to sympathize with the bad guy, but it is the first to do it so one-sidedly. Superhero movies traditionally reassure us that good ultimately triumphs over evil, but JOKER heads in the opposite direction.”

- Steve Rose, *The Guardian*, September 28th, 2019.¹

JOKER, DC Comic’s latest film, was released to the public on October 4th, 2019, and left many of its viewers and critics puzzled about whether they had just watched the story of a villain, a hero or neither.² JOKER tells the origin story of the Joker, nicknamed the Clown Prince of Crime, a character that traditionally has been labeled as a ‘villain’ within the superhero universe since first being created in 1940.³ Using a seldom seen format in superhero comic books and films, JOKER shows no superhuman fighting scenes or civilians being put in danger by a villain only to be rescued by a superhero. The audience’s questioning of the title character’s morality is contradictory to the way DC Comics describes the character as “a complete psychopath with no moral compass whatsoever,” which has led me to research the moral ambiguity of JOKER’s latest rendition of the well-known Joker: Arthur Fleck.⁴

When watching JOKER upon its release in the movie theater, I did not get the impression that the Joker was the villainous character that threatened the city of Gotham. Instead, I experienced the film as if separate from the DC universe, by showing a troubled city mistreating a troubled individual who finally found power to fight back. The background story which JOKER offers shows the city of Gotham decaying under tons of garbage due to a garbage strike. Arthur Fleck, nicknamed ‘Happy’ by his mother, believes his purpose in life to be spreading joy and laughter in this cold, dark world. Though he works as a clown, he aspires to be a stand-up comedian. A continuous loop of defeat, humiliation and outcast leads Arthur to become Gotham’s killer clown, inspiring part of Gotham’s citizens to rebel against the system. JOKER left me thinking about the ways in which Arthur can be perceived as either a hero or a villain, as he commits serious crimes but is celebrated for doing so. For this reason, I began to familiarize myself with the scholarly field concerned with the superhero and villain archetypes and realized that a morally ambiguous character is rather difficult to identify as either ‘good’ or ‘evil,’ which is why I believe that research on moral ambiguity of traditionally labeled characters is needed. According to media researcher Daniel Stein, superhero and villain

¹ Steve Rose, “‘He is a psychopath’: has the 2019 Joker gone too far?,” *The Guardian*, September 28, 2019.

² 1. *Joker*, DVD, directed by Todd Phillips USA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2019).

2. Film critics: David Ehrlich, “‘Joker’ Review: For Better or Worse, Superhero Movies Will Never Be the Same,” *Indiewire*, August 31, 2019. <https://www.indiewire.com/2019/08/joker-review-joaquin-phoenix-1202170236/>.

Tasha Robinson, “Love it or hate it, the Joker movie presents a tempting fantasy,” *The Verge*, October 4, 2019. <https://www.theverge.com/2019/10/4/20899422/joker-movie-review-todd-phillips-joaquin-phoenix-incel-violence-dc-comics-batman>

³ “JOKER,” DC Comics, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.dccomics.com/characters/joker>.

⁴ DC Comics, “JOKER.”

origin stories hold expanding storylines together and are repeated in even rebooted versions of the narrative.⁵ Since JOKER shows a character that has traditionally been labeled as a villain in a different light by showing his life story, the issue of moral ambiguity that JOKER brings forward is still new in the superhero universe and in the field of research. My research is therefore concerned with the way in which JOKER creates moral ambiguity in a character that has traditionally been labeled as a ‘villain’.

This general question of Arthur’s morality and the gap in the scholarly field regarding research on moral ambiguity of traditionally labeled characters leads me to ask the following research question:

How does JOKER create moral ambiguity in a character that has traditionally been labeled as a ‘villain’ by playing with archetypal character traits of both the superhero and the villain within its narrative and cinematography?

In order to answer this main research question, I constructed three sub-questions. My first sub-question, *What are the archetypal character traits of the hero and the villain in the superhero universe?*, focuses on creating a general view of what the existing superhero and villain archetypes of the superhero universe entail. This question allows me to understand which characteristics contribute to characters being considered ‘good’ or ‘evil,’ to finally be able to recognize these traits in the character of Arthur.

My second sub-question, *In which ways are the superhero and the villain archetypes similar and how do they make characters morally ambiguous?*, focuses on creating an overview of the ways in which the superhero and villain archetypes are alike. This question allows me to discern what the common ground between characters that are considered ‘good’ and characters that are considered ‘evil’ consists of and to clarify how both superheroes and villains can be perceived as morally ambiguous, to be able to recognize moral ambiguity in the character of Arthur.

My third and final sub-question, *How does Arthur Fleck’s moral ambiguity translate into JOKER’s narrative and cinematography?*, focuses on detecting ways in which JOKER portrays Arthur as a morally ambiguous character. This question allows me to recognize how exactly JOKER creates moral ambiguity within its narrative and cinematography, to finally conclude how the Joker can be perceived as morally ambiguous.

⁵ Daniel Stein, “Spoofin’ Spidey—Rebooting the Bat: Immersive Story Worlds and the Narrative Complexities of Video Spoofs in the Era of the Superhero Bluckbuster,” in *Film Remakes, Adaptations and Fan Productions: Remake/Remodel*, ed. Kathleen Loock and Constantine Verevis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 238.

2. Ambiguity in the Superhero Universe

In section 2.1., I discuss the origin and archetypal character traits of the superhero, in order to establish which character traits form the ‘good’ superhero archetype. In section 2.2., I discuss the ways in which the archetype of the superhero can be perceived as morally ambiguous, in order to establish which character traits make the superhero less ‘good’. These first two sections lead me to find similarities between the superhero and villain archetypes in terms of morality. In section 2.3., I therefore continue to discuss the villain archetype and moral ambiguity on the basis of the concept of the anti-hero as a common ground between the two archetypes. In section 2.4., I create a reference frame for the anti-hero by discussing a previous cinematic rendition of the Joker and films from outside of the superhero genre. Subsequently, in section 2.5., I conclude chapter 2 and answer my first two sub-questions.

2.1. Origins and Characteristics of the Superhero

With the first appearance of Superman in a 1938 comic book, the superhero archetype was created and the superhero universe rose to popularity.⁶ The default storyline of a superhero story had become that of a hero protecting its society from one or more villains. The superhero’s roots, however, can be traced back to mythologic characters, folkloric stories and pre-superhero literary genres. Media scholar Thomas H. Fick argues that the modern American superhero is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but is in fact a successor of much older ‘heroes,’ including examples of Nathan Slaughter from *NICK OF THE WOODS* and Natty Bumppo from *THE PRAIRIE*.⁷ These characters’ struggle with only being able to be a hero in isolation form the foundation for the modern day superhero, as having a second, secret hero-identity is nowadays still one of the most common comic-book and film superhero traits.

Many of the best known and most popular modern American superheroes face the issue of having a secret identity, often covering this up by changing their look with suits and masks. Throughout the discussion of the superhero and villain archetypes, I will use several representative examples of modern American superheroes with secret identities as points of reference. Clark Kent, a glasses and suits-wearing reporter for the fictional newspaper *Daily Planet*, is secretly Superman.⁸ Peter Parker, a teenager living with his aunt, is secretly Spider-Man.⁹ Dr. Robert Bruce Banner, a socially distant physicist, is secretly the Hulk.¹⁰ Lastly, Bruce Wayne, the wealthy owner of Wayne Enterprises, is secretly Batman.¹¹ Moreover, this doubleness goes beyond having a second identity as a superhero, as predecessors also faced an internal battle between good and evil. The clearest expression of this internal battle can be found in the way both the modern superheroes and their predecessors use violence to fight the evil, who, in turn, use violence to endanger their society. This

⁶ “SUPERMAN,” DC Comics, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.dccomics.com/characters/superman>.

⁷ Thomas H. Fick, “A Killer and a Saint: The Double Hero in America,” *Studies in Popular Culture* 8, no. 1 (1985): 71-78.

⁸ DC Comics, “SUPERMAN.”

⁹ “SPIDER-MAN,” Marvel, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.marvel.com/characters/spider-man-peter-parker/on-screen>.

¹⁰ “HULK,” Marvel, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.marvel.com/characters/hulk-bruce-banner>.

¹¹ “BATMAN,” DC Comics, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.dccomics.com/characters/batman>.

shared trait of using violence shows that even though superheroes are commonly seen as the ‘good guys’ who want to rid their society of evil, they often use the same methods as the evil ones. In section 2.3., I discuss similarities between the two archetypes more in depth. Fick’s research shows that the superhero archetype stresses the opposition between good and evil, because the superhero has the choice between either ignoring his powers or using them.¹² Fick argues that the popularity of comic-book superheroes is dependent on the superheroes’ doubleness, as they are guardians of society who do not lose their innocence as a human when engaging in violent or even criminal actions.¹³ This doubleness allows one identity of the superhero to live with social constraints, while the other identity is free to act in a “world purified of human commitments,” according to Fick.¹⁴

In addition, the superhero often possesses superhuman powers. Media scholar Jeph Loeb claims that “as a rule, superheroes have powers far beyond those of ordinary mortals,” and “they pursue justice, defending the defenseless, helping those who cannot help themselves, and overcoming evil with the force of good.”¹⁵ The four representative examples of superheroes that I discussed form an interesting insight. Superman finds his roots in the extraterrestrial and is pardoned from breaking the law because he is not seen as human and uses his supernatural powers to protect society with the idea of “Truth, Justice and the American Way.”¹⁶ Spider-Man finds his antecedents in the human race, but starts to develop supernatural powers after being bitten by a spider.¹⁷ The Hulk finds his superhumanness when Dr. Robert Bruce Banner is exposed to gamma rays and from that point onward transforms into the Hulk when subjected to stress or conflict.¹⁸ Batman, however, is the human-born Bruce Wayne who does not develop any supernatural powers, but grows up training himself on physical and intellectual level to fight crime, forming a break in the superpower-pattern.¹⁹

Having discussed what the superhero archetype entails, it seems that superheroes do have shared archetypal traits, but also differ from each other in terms of power possession. Therefore, I will now proceed to determine the ways in which the superhero’s morality can be perceived as questionable.

2.2. Moral Ambiguity in the Character of the Superhero

Though the superhero is generally concerned with saving society, assuming that he is ‘good’ in terms of morality for doing so can be problematic. Loeb argues that the concept of the superhero might be

¹² Fick, “A Killer,” 73.

¹³ Fick, “A Killer,” 72.

¹⁴ Fick, “A Killer,” 71.

¹⁵ Jeph Loeb and Tom Morris, “Heroes and Superheroes,” in *Superheroes and Philosophy: Truth, Justice, and the Socratic Way*, ed. Tom Morris and Matt Morris (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 2001), 11.

¹⁶ DC Comics, “SUPERMAN.”

¹⁷ Marvel, “SPIDER-MAN.”

¹⁸ Marvel, “HULK.”

¹⁹ DC Comics, “BATMAN.”

problematic because possessing superpowers reduces risks when fighting evil or helping civilians.²⁰ According to Loeb, a heroic character is one who has a lot to lose, which can only be true if they lack superheroes' distinctive superpowers and are therefore more vulnerable.²¹ This way, one of the most common superhero traits, possessing superpowers, would in fact reduce a character's heroism.

Questioning superheroes' lack of superpowers, vulnerability and morality is a controversial topic within the scholarly field. On the one hand, Fick claims that superheroes are able to act in a "world purified of human commitments," because superheroes' secret identities allow for them to be separated from the social world and its values of law and order.²² On the other hand, media scholar Liam Burke calls out the way in which Superman's actions are not morally questioned because he possesses superpowers, but the equally heroic Batman's actions are often seen as morally questionable because he does not possess superpowers.²³ In fact, both society and the law system do not always agree with Batman's actions.²⁴ Burke questions why Superman and Batman's similar vigilantisms are any different, as both superheroes act outside of the law, and raises awareness for the difference that is being made between the characters existing on the 'good' side of the superhero universe's good-evil spectrum.²⁵

In most superhero films, the superhero is accepted and often even celebrated by the society he is trying to save. Regarding the morally questionable behavior of the superhero, Fick claims that violence is not seen as a quest for solutions, but rather as an act of freedom.²⁶ Superheroes with secret identities, such as the representative examples I discussed in the previous section — Superman, Spider-Man, The Hulk and Batman — are often only accepted by society when in their superhero role. As discussed in the previous section, superheroes are free to act in whichever way they please once in their superhero role, as only then their actions take place within a bigger space of actions that are not morally or ethically questioned, according to Fick.²⁷ When these characters act within their superhero identity, the reason for their behavior is rescuing society from evil and when superheroes turn personal self-motivation into motivation of justice, society and law will accept their vigilance, Fick claims.²⁸

The most important cause Burke attributes to the acceptance of superheroes' violent and illegal activities is their superhumanness.²⁹ However, as the four examples that I discussed in the previous section — Superman, Spider-Man, The Hulk and Batman — show, not all superheroes possess superhuman powers. What makes superheroes stand above the law is their power to fight crime in ways humans are unable to, resulting in their actions being justified by society. What makes human superheroes vigilantes is their vulnerability for human weakness that indicates that their actions could be motivated by human emotion,

²⁰ Loeb and Morris, "Heroes and Superheroes," 12.

²¹ Loeb and Morris, "Heroes and Superheroes," 12.

²² Fick, "A Killer," 71.

²³ Liam Burke, "Vigilante Justice," in *Superhero Movies* (Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, 2012), 68.

²⁴ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 68.

²⁵ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 68.

²⁶ Fick, "A Killer," 74.

²⁷ Fick, "A Killer," 74.

²⁸ Fick, "A Killer," 74.

²⁹ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 69.

such as grudge, jealousy or revenge, resulting in their actions being those of merely a human acting outside of the law. My example of Batman shows that the human-born Bruce Wayne trains himself to fight crime using technological gadgets following his parents being murdered when he is still a child, making him essentially merely a human vigilante avenging the murder of his parents. To illustrate how Batman is essentially always morally questionable because of his humanness, Burke mentions how 1989's BATMAN's Batman kills not only his enemies but also their henchmen.³⁰ The morality of Batman's actions is, in this and most other situations, questioned because it is not clear whether Batman acted out of protection of society or out of human vulnerability.

This personal experience that makes Batman morally questionable, however, is what ties most superheroes together and adds to their ambiguous depiction. Superheroes have regularly experienced a personal loss or other traumatizing event before becoming a superhero, Burke claims.³¹ Whether superhuman or human, a personal experience turning a character into a superhero raises questions about human vulnerability-related motives and thus about moral ambiguity. Superman lost his biological parents when being left on planet earth, Spider-Man's parents were murdered, the Hulk was abused by his father and Batman's parents were murdered. These examples all indicate that the motives for these superheroes' actions and even the root of their secret identity is based on human emotions.

Regarding characters' route to becoming a superhero, media scholar Yvonne Tasker claims that superhero films regularly show that, besides the characters' antecedents, their struggle to adjust to new situations in relation to their newly gained power is important.³² Burke seems to share Tasker's view, as he claims that though Superman is the root of the superhero archetype, Batman should be credited for the refinement of it.³³ Where Superman's motives are focused on the idea of "Truth, Justice and the American Way," Bruce Wayne's parents' death is at the base of all of his following actions as Batman and his quest to protect his society.³⁴

Having discussed the ways in which the superhero's morality can be perceived as questionable, it is now clear that considering the superhero as 'good' by default can be problematic. I will now continue to discuss the morally ambiguous common ground between 'good' and 'evil' in the superhero universe and the concept of the 'anti-hero'.

2.3. The Villain and the Anti-Hero

Overall, human superheroes are more often seen as morally questionable characters than superhuman ones. Though this moral ambiguity question exists within the superhero spectrum, superheroes are usually

³⁰ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 69.

³¹ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 69.

³² Yvonne Tasker, "Superhero Action Cinema: X-Men (2000) and The Avengers (2012)," in *The Hollywood Action and Adventure Film* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 180.

³³ Burke, "Vigilante Justice," 79.

³⁴ DC Comics, "SUPERMAN."

concerned with the same purposes of helping society, as Loeb argues.³⁵ As seen in the most popular superhero versus villain battles, the superhero protects society by fighting the villain, who is generally a character that endangers (part of) society.

Fick argues that the villain archetype entails that the so-called villains are nearly always mental and physical “freaks” who threaten society from the outside.³⁶ He adds to this by arguing that there is an absolute dividing line between the superhero and the villain, as he indicates that there is a significant difference between villains and superheroes’ actions and their motives.³⁷ When following this view, it would seem logical to distinguish superheroes from villains by solely following the storyline of hero versus villain battles. This would mean that if a superhero universe’s society is put in danger from the outside, the one who endangers society is automatically credited as the villain and the one who saves society is the superhero. However, Burke mentions that superheroes and villains act in the same violent way and points out that this similarity shows that the schism between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ might not be absolute.³⁸ Following Burke’s argument, a new issue arises: if the superhero is not always good, does this mean the villain is not always evil? With this issue in mind, I will now proceed to question the villain’s evilness in relation to moral ambiguity.

Media scholars and researchers Michael Spivey and Steven Knowlton argue that, though indeed many so-called ‘villains’ are outcasts suffering from disorders, there do not seem to be any set criteria for them to be categorized as ‘evil’.³⁹ Though folk psychology often speaks in terms of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ when it comes to morality, and the opposition between good and evil is popular in the comic-book genre because it creates a contrast between the idealized personifications of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ there are morally ambiguous characters who blur the dividing line between the two extremes. This creates a gray area between the ‘good’ superhero and the ‘evil’ villain, where the so-called ‘anti-hero’ lives, according to Spivey and Knowlton.⁴⁰ The reason they use the concept of the ‘anti-hero’ is that the superhero and villains archetypes are based on idealized extremes of good and evil.⁴¹ Spivey and Knowlton claim that most often the results of an anti-hero’s deeds are a mixture of the two, which is what makes this anti-hero popular.⁴² In addition, they argue that the anti-hero is a character that sometimes does evil things for a good reason, therefore being too good to be a villain, yet too evil to be a hero.⁴³

Spivey and Knowlton’s use of the concept of the anti-hero does not only indicate that the line between the superhero and the villain is blurred, but also that the characters of the superhero and the villain are no longer confined to their archetypes. Though Spivey and Knowlton address the anti-hero as an identity

³⁵ Loeb and Morris, “Heroes and Superheroes,” 11.

³⁶ Fick, “A Killer,” 73-74.

³⁷ Fick, “A Killer,” 73-74.

³⁸ Burke, “Vigilante Justice,” 69.

³⁹ Michael Spivey and Steven Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism in the Continuum of Good and Evil,” in *The Psychology of Superheroes: An Unauthorized Exploration*, ed. Robin S. Rosenberg, and Jennifer Canzoneri (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2008), 58.

⁴⁰ Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 52.

⁴¹ Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 52.

⁴² Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 59-60.

⁴³ Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 52.

that exists next to the superhero and the villain archetypes, they stress that there are multiple subcategories that do not have a definite set of conditions which must be met in order to gain the corresponding title.⁴⁴ For instance, some anti-heroes kill their enemies while others merely take them down temporarily, showing a difference in the violence of their actions.⁴⁵

Having discussed the morally ambiguous common ground between the ‘good’ superhero and the ‘evil’ villain and the concept of the ‘anti-hero,’ it is now clear that the dividing line between the superhero and the villain is blurred. I will therefore continue to discuss this anti-hero on the basis of a previous cinematic rendition of the Joker and films from outside of the superhero genre.

2.4. The Anti-Hero in THE DARK KNIGHT and Beyond the Superhero Universe

The concept of the anti-hero can be connected to THE DARK KNIGHT’s Joker, the latest cinematic predecessor of JOKER’s Joker. Harry Eiss, media scholar and expert on the character of the Joker, takes a closer look at the relationship between Batman and the Joker, the so-called villain, in THE DARK KNIGHT. “You won’t kill me out of some misplaced sense of self-righteousness . . . and I won’t kill you because you’re too much fun. We’re going to be doing this forever,” says the Joker when in physical battle with Batman.⁴⁶ Eiss claims that this statement directly links their battle to the idea that these two opposites depend on each other, as the ‘good’ Batman needs the ‘evil’ Joker to exist in his role, and vice versa.⁴⁷ In accordance with Burke’s view, Eiss argues that both ‘good’ and ‘evil’ use similar methods to fight each other, indicating that assuming a superhero is ‘good’ and a villain is ‘evil’ by default can be problematic.⁴⁸

Regarding the complex relationship between Batman and the Joker, THE DARK KNIGHT forms a popular topic of research. The Joker is considered an “anarchic force” by media scholar Lincoln Geraghty.⁴⁹ Though the Joker rises in Gotham to undermine the city’s existing law and disassemble its society, he also murders Batman’s former love Rachel Dawes, simply to taunt Batman and Dawes’ fiancé Harvey Dent, resulting in the latter finding himself in a moral conflict and possibly becoming a villain himself.⁵⁰ Geraghty even claims that Harvey Dent then becomes the personification of the city of Gotham’s moral struggle.⁵¹ In addition to Geraghty’s view, media researcher Ashley Cocksworth claims that THE DARK KNIGHT’s rendition of the Joker is a morally interesting character because he himself questions Gotham’s moral order. Cocksworth argues that the Joker defies “stereotypical villainy,” as his evilness does not have a clear

⁴⁴ Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 54.

⁴⁵ Spivey and Knowlton, “Anti-Heroism,” 54-55.

⁴⁶ *The Dark Knight*, Netflix, directed by Christopher Nolan (USA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2008).

⁴⁷ Harry Eiss, *The Joker*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 38.

⁴⁸ 1. Burke, “Vigilante Justice,” 69.

2. Eiss, *The Joker*, 38.

⁴⁹ Lincoln Geraghty, “Superhero and Comic Book Films,” in *Directory of World Cinema: American Hollywood 2*, ed. Lincoln Geraghty (Chicago: Intellect Books, The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 192.

⁵⁰ Geraghty, “Superhero,” 192.

⁵¹ Geraghty, “Superhero,” 192.

explanation or root.⁵² For clarification, Cocksworth uses the example of *THE DARK KNIGHT*'s Joker's social experiment of offering two ships, one 'good' ship containing Gotham civilians and one 'bad' ship containing Gotham's criminals, a detonator and the choice of blowing up the other ship.⁵³ The Joker shows no motive other than conducting this experiment solely for the purpose of testing the people of Gotham's morality. Geraghty and Cocksworth's analyses of *THE DARK KNIGHT* show how this film has laid the foundation for moral ambiguity within the character of the Joker. Though *THE DARK KNIGHT*'s Joker is initially set out to be Gotham's villain and Batman's opposer, as in the Batman comic books, he becomes morally ambiguous when his criminal behavior is not motivated solely by evilness, but rather by moral ambiguity.

Though *THE DARK KNIGHT* shows moral ambiguity in a traditionally villainous character, it remains a superhero film. Media scholar Yvonne Tasker argues that the combination of the Hollywood superhero film's cinematic impression and representation of superheroes and the evolving technologies provide the Hollywood superhero film with the possibility to depict the essence of the comic-book.⁵⁴ However, media scholar Jeffrey A. Brown argues that "the superhero genre expands, matures and moves into new creative cycles" and superhero films are part of an active genre.⁵⁵ Regarding the superhero genre being dynamic, director and producer Todd Phillips, who wrote *JOKER*'s script with Scott Silver in 2017, was admittedly inspired by Martin Scorsese's *TAXI DRIVER* and *THE KING OF COMEDY*.⁵⁶ Though *TAXI DRIVER*'s Travis Bickle and *THE KING OF COMEDY*'s Rupert Pupkin are no 'super'heroes, both function as a reference for *JOKER*'s rendition of the Joker.⁵⁷

In short, the 1976 psychological thriller *TAXI DRIVER* tells the story of the depressed Travis Bickle, who works as a taxi driver in a decaying New York City that has gone bankrupt after the Vietnam War, becomes the city's hero as his killing of criminals brought the city's criminality to light.⁵⁸ The 1982 satirical black comedy *THE KING OF COMEDY* shows aspiring stand-up comedian Rupert Pupkin kidnapping famous comedian and talk show host Jerry Langford with an opening spot for Rupert on Langford's show as ransom, resulting in Rupert serving a two-year prison sentence only to then release a 'long awaited' autobiography and have a television special with a live audience.⁵⁹ *JOKER* and *TAXI DRIVER*'s narratives show similarities, for instance in *JOKER*'s decaying Gotham and *TAXI DRIVER*'s decaying New York, Arthur keeping a joke diary and Travis keeping an aphorism diary, and Arthur searching for mayoral candidate Thomas Wayne and

⁵² Ashley Cocksworth, "The Dark Knight and the Evilness of Evil," *The Expository Times* 120, no. 11 (2009): 541.

⁵³ 1. Cocksworth, "The Dark Knight," 541.

2. *The Dark Knight*, Nolan, 2008.

⁵⁴ Tasker, "Superhero Action Cinema," 181.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey A. Brown, *The Modern Superhero in Film and Television: Popular Genre and American Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 156.

⁵⁶ Ash Crossan, "'Joker' Director Todd Phillips Says He'll SOMEDAY Answer Theories | Full Interview," filmed October 2019 at CBS Studio Center, Los Angeles, CA, video, 4:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX94qLX9Pv0>.

⁵⁷ Dom Nero, "Todd Phillips's Joker Captures all the Artifice of Scorsese's Movies Without Any of The Soul," *Esquire*, October 8, 2019, <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a29388605/joker-martin-scorsese-taxi-driver-king-of-comedy-comparisons/>.

⁵⁸ *Taxi Driver*, DVD, directed by Martin Scorsese (USA: Columbia Pictures, 1976).

⁵⁹ *The King of Comedy*, DVD, directed by Martin Scorsese (USA: 20th Century Fox, 1983).

fantasizing about shooting someone (Fig. 1) and Travis attempting to assassinate presidential candidate Charles Palantine (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Arthur posing with his gun when shirtless and alone in his living room. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 2. Travis posing with his gun when shirtless and alone in his living room. Frame from TAXI DRIVER. *Taxi Driver*, Martin Scorsese, 1976.

JOKER and THE KING OF COMEDY's narratives also show similarities, for instance in Arthur and Rupert both aspiring to have a career as a stand-up comedian (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) and Arthur idolizing and assassinating Murray while Rupert idolizes and kidnaps Langford.



Fig. 3. Arthur performing stand-up comedy on stage at Pogo's Comedy Club. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 4. Rupert performing stand-up comedy on the Jerry Langford Show. Frame from THE KING OF COMEDY, Martin Scorsese, 1983.

However, the most striking similarity between the three films' narratives is that they show a morally conflicted character committing crimes and being celebrated for it. Though neither TAXI DRIVER nor THE KING OF COMEDY take place within the superhero universe, they do meet Fick's previously mentioned criterium of the villain being a mental 'freak' who threatens society from the outside.⁶⁰ However, their 'doing bad things for a good reason' type of behavior also falls into Spivey and Knowlton's description of the superhero universe's anti-hero.⁶¹ Phillips's inspirations for a morally ambiguous protagonist stem from outside of the superhero genre, which is in line with Brown's argument about superhero films being part of an active genre.⁶²

⁶⁰ Fick, "A Killer," 73-74.

⁶¹ Spivey and Knowlton, "Anti-Heroism," 52.

⁶² Brown, *The Modern Superhero*, 156.

2.5. Conclusion Chapter 2

Having discussed the scholarly field concerned with the superhero and villain archetypes, I will now answer my first sub-question, *What are the archetypal character traits of the hero and the villain in the superhero universe?* As discussed, the archetypal character traits of the superhero entail often possessing superhuman powers, protecting society from one or more villains, having a second identity as a secret hero, facing an internal battle between good and evil, having experienced a personal loss or other traumatizing event before becoming a superhero and experiencing a struggle to adjust to new situations in relation to their newly gained power. The archetypal character traits of the villain entail being an outcast suffering from disorders, or being a mental and physical freak, who threatens society from the outside and conducting evilness with a clear explanation or root. There are, however, areas where the character traits of the superhero and the villain overlap.

This brings me to my second research question, *In which ways are the superhero and the villain archetypes similar and how do they make characters morally ambiguous?* In short, both can be either human or unhuman, use violence to fight their opponent, have often experienced a personal loss or other traumatizing event, struggle to adjust to their new situations and depend on their opponent: good needs to fight evil and evil needs to fight good. These similarities between the two archetypes make characters ambiguous because traits that are traditionally attributed to either a superhero or a villain can actually be traits of both and therefore do not define a character as ‘good’ or ‘evil’.

3. Methodology: Research Approach

The methodology for my research entails a close reading of JOKER, which consists of two parts. In order to create a clear overview of how JOKER represents Arthur's moral ambiguity through its narrative and cinematography, I have devised two film segmentations.

The first part of my analysis consists of a close reading of JOKER's opening scene, using the concept of 'overspecificity' as a device to determine the tone that has been set for the film. Media scholar Peter Verstraten argues that descriptions often occur through overspecificity within the opening scene in order to create an overview of the situation.⁶³ Annette Insdorf adds to this that a film's opening shows the audience its thematic and stylistic components that are to be developed throughout the film.⁶⁴ This way, the opening sets the film's tone, institutes the film's space, introduces motifs through imagery and establishes the film's point of view, its narrator.⁶⁵ Because my research is focused on how JOKER creates moral ambiguity in the character of Arthur, this first part of my analysis elucidates the tone that will be carried throughout the duration of the film.

For this first part of my analysis I have devised a shot-by-shot overview of JOKER's opening scene in which I note textual narrative, camera point of view and editing and the following elements of the mise-en-scène: set decoration, events and movement in the shot, costumes and makeup and background sounds (Appendix A). I have chosen to pay attention to these specific elements because they may influence the creation of an overview of the situation. First of all, the textual narrative in the opening scene consists of a radio segment which may provide information that describes the situation. Secondly, the camera's point of view and editing may show the focus of the film. Third, elements of the mise-en-scène may show how the first scene of JOKER creates the tone that will be carried throughout the film. This way, set decoration may show where the story is set, events and movement in the shot may show what it is that is happening within the first scene of the film, costumes and makeup may give information about who it is that the film focuses on, and background sounds may indicate where the story takes place. This segmentation follows the following format:

Time Code	Textual Narrative: radio news segment	Point of view camera and editing	Mise-en-scène: set decoration	Mise-en-scène: characters, events and movement in the shot	Mise-en-scène: costumes and makeup	Background sounds

The second part of my analysis consists of analyzing the ways in which JOKER's narrative and cinematographic elements of the mise-en-scène create moral ambiguity in the character of Arthur. For this

⁶³ Peter Verstraten, *Film Narratology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 52.

⁶⁴ Annette Insdorf, "Narrative Within the Frame: Mise-en-Scene and the Long Take (Touch of Evil, The Player, Aguirre: The Wrath of God, The Piano, Bright Star, In Darkness)," in *Cinematic Overtures : How to Read Opening Scenes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 1.

⁶⁵ Insdorf, "Narrative," 1.

first part of my analysis I have devised a segmentation of the full duration of JOKER, in which I note the segments' event, character in question, textual narrative and the following elements of the mise-en-scène: location and set decoration, sound and costumes (Appendix B). I have chosen to pay attention to these specific elements because they may show the ways in which JOKER constructs moral ambiguity on a cinematographic level. To clarify, film theorists and historians David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson describe setting, costumes and makeup as part of the general areas of choice and control of the filmmaker.⁶⁶ First of all, the plot shows Arthur becoming the Joker, enabling me to recognize when and where the story may show moral ambiguous moments. Secondly, notation of characters may show who is present during moments of moral ambiguity. Third, the textual narrative throughout the duration of the film may show the ways in which Arthur addresses motives or explanations for his morally ambiguous behavior. Lastly, location and set decoration may show where events take place and therefore in which settings Arthur's moral ambiguity occurs, sounds may provide additional information about where and with what tone morally ambiguous moments take place and costumes and makeup may provide information about the ways in which Arthur presents himself during morally ambiguous moments. This segmentation follows the following format:

Time Code	Plot: event	Character	Textual Narrative (Synopsis)	Mise-en-scène: location (set decoration)	Mise-en-scène: sounds	Mise-en-scène: costumes and makeup

⁶⁶ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill Education, 2016), 115.

4. Close Reading of JOKER

In section 4.1. I analyze JOKER's opening scene using the device of overspecificity, in order to detect the overview of the situation the film creates in the beginning of the film and how it does so. This first part of my analysis aids me in detecting the tone JOKER creates, to later recognize how this tone is carried through the duration of the film and how it influences the creation of moral ambiguity. In section 4.2. I proceed to analyze narrative and cinematographic elements of JOKER, in order to recognize how they are used to create moral ambiguity in the character of Arthur throughout the duration of the film. Subsequently, in section 4.3., I conclude the two parts of my analysis and answer my final sub-question.

4.1. Overspecificity in JOKER's Opening Scene

In my shot-by-shot analysis (Appendix A), I have created an overview of the overspecificity of JOKER's opening scene. JOKER's opening works with two narrators, firstly the sound narrator and secondly the image narrator, which exist separately but overlap each other. My shot-by-shot analysis shows that the sound narrator consists of the radio segment and background sounds and the image narrator consists of the mise-en-scène, camera's point of view and editing.

The most important role of the sound narrator is informing the audience about the film's setting's current state. Through the radio news segment, the audience learns that what is about to be shown happens on the morning of Thursday October 15th (of the year 1981, which can later be recognized by film posters of for instance ZORRO, THE GAY BLADE throughout the rest of the film film). News anchor Stan L. Brooks, Health Commissioner Edward O'Rourke and several interviewees literally tell the audience that the city is undergoing a garbage strike, resulting in streets full of garbage, rats and a bad smell, businesses being affected and "a city-wide state of emergency for the first time in decades."⁶⁷ Once the news anchor changes the topic, the radio news segment is drowned out by non-diegetic piano music, stressing that the garbage-information is all the information the audience needs to know.

The most important role of the image narrator is informing the audience about what the film is going to show. Combined, all elements of the mise-en-scène indicate that the room, located in an industrial-looking city, is a clown's dressing room. One man, later known to be Arthur, is placed centrally in the frame in the room, so that the audience focuses on him. The camera's point of view and the editing emphasizes this focus by zooming in on him from the very first shot and later showing only him through closeups. These closeups alternate between showing 'mirror-Arthur' (Fig. 5.) and 'real-Arthur' (Fig. 6.), to finally stress how real-Arthur suddenly has a tear beneath his right eye, which mirror-Arthur did not, implying that he is dealing with an underlying, personal and moral conflict.

⁶⁷ *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 00:00:16 — 00:00:38.



Fig. 5. Mirror-Arthur forces a smile on his face. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 6. Real-Arthur forces a smile on his face. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.

Besides showing a personal conflict, Arthur does nothing to imply that JOKER belongs to the superhero genre. The information JOKER's opening scene presents through the sound narrator, image narrator and mise-en-scène in no way implies that the story takes place within the superhero universe. In fact, neither the character name Joker nor the city name Gotham, two concepts linked to Batman and the superhero universe, are mentioned or addressed.

In JOKER's opening scene, the sound narrator presents information about the setting — a city (Gotham) that is decaying under a growing pile of garbage — while the image narrator creates a focus for the rest of the film — a conflicted individual (Arthur Fleck) who works as a clown. Since JOKER does not situate itself in relation to the superhero universe within its opening scene, the only connection Arthur has to the traditional 'villain' label of the Joker is the film title, provided that the audience is familiar with the character of the Joker.

4.2. Moral Ambiguity in Arthur Fleck: The Celebration of a Killer Clown

There are several character-defining moments in Arthur's life shown in the plot that I will address in terms of their representation of Arthur's moral ambiguity. Firstly, Arthur was abused by one of his mother's boyfriends at a young age, which, amongst other things, lead to severe head trauma and results in Arthur growing up to suffer from a medical condition that causes sudden and uncontrollable laughter.⁶⁸ This medical condition itself, which reappears continuously throughout the film, makes Arthur a chronically ambiguous character, as his laughter is not connected to joy or happiness. Once Arthur begins to commit murders, his moral ambiguity shows in his unclear motives. Though the murders of the first two Wall Street guys can be considered selfdefense, the third murder can be considered unnecessary, as the beating had stopped, making Arthur's motive for this murder unclear and therefore morally ambiguous (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9 and Fig. 10).

⁶⁸ *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 01:06:45 — 01:12:35.



Fig. 7. The three Wall Street guys beat up Arthur on the subway. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 8. Arthur pulls out his gun when being beaten up on the subway. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 9. Arthur shoots and kills the first two Wall Street guys. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 10. Arthur chases, shoots and kills the third Wall Street guy on the subway platform. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.

The murders of his lying mother Penny, his backstabbing co-worker Randall and disparaging talk show host Murray seem motivated by personal emotion or vulnerability, as these three victims did not provoke self-defense from Arthur's side. However, though Arthur initially does not give the impression that he commits murders to save Gotham's society and even admits that he did not intend to start riots throughout the city, he does express his hatred for Gotham's social system.⁶⁹ This implies that Arthur does in fact have an underlying desire for his actions to reshape Gotham's system.⁷⁰

Throughout the plot, the theme of JOKER's locations and set decoration seems focused on showing Gotham as the troubled city it is, as first introduced in the radio segment heard in the opening scene. Moreover, many streets and the public transport are crowded with people. Most spaces, such as hallways and rooms, shown in JOKER are dark, by means of both lighting and color scheme. There are only a few spaces that are bright and colorful, which all seem to be comedy-related. Arthur's clown job's dressing room and his boss's office are decorated with several clownish and colorful accents, Pogo's, the comedy club Arthur visits and performs at, is lit up by spotlights and decorated with red accents, and the backstage area and stage of the Murray Franklin show are painted and decorated with color. As JOKER shows Gotham as dark, dirty and troubled, it seems that the city needs help. Though Thomas Wayne claims to be the only one who can 'save'

⁶⁹ 1. "Come on, Murray. Do I look like the kind of clown that could start a movement?" In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:33:03 — 1:41:34.

2. "Everybody just yells and screams at each other. Nobody's civil anymore. Nobody thinks what it's like to be the other guy. [...] Why is everybody so upset about these guys? If it was me dying on the sidewalk you'd walk right over me! I pass you everyday and you don't notice me!" In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:33:03 — 1:41:34.

⁷⁰ *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:33:03 — 1:41:34.

the city, Arthur literally spreads color in the dark city by being the Joker, which ties in with another aspect of JOKER's mise-en-scène, namely costumes and makeup.

Throughout the duration of the film, Arthur alternates between three main looks, namely his everyday clothes (Fig. 11), his job's clown costume (Fig. 12) and what I will call his 'Joker-look' (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16).



Fig. 11. Arthur, wearing his everyday look, walks into the lobby of his apartment building. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 12. Arthur, wearing his job's clown costume, performing in the children's hospital. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 13. Arthur, wearing part of his job's clown costume, dances in a public restroom after killing the Wall Street guys. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 14. Arthur sits on the floor and talks to Gary after stabbing and killing Randall in his apartment. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 15. Arthur dances while he watches an angry crowd attack the police detectives who were chasing him. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 16. Arthur stands on top of the hood of the police car while the crowd of rioting citizens of Gotham applauds and cheers. Frame from JOKER, Todd Phillips, 2019.

When Arthur commits his first three murders, those of the Wall Street guys, he is still partly wearing his job's clown costume, since he is going home after being fired (Fig. 13). When Arthur commits his fourth murder, that of his mother Penny, he is wearing his everyday clothes: a dark red button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants (as in Fig. 11). When Arthur kills Randall, committing his fifth murder, he is partly wearing his Joker-look — he has green hair from just having dyed it and is wearing dark pants and white face paint — as he commits this murder while he is dressing himself for his interview on the Murray Franklin show that evening (Fig. 14). When committing his sixth and final murder by fatally shooting Murray Franklin on live television, Arthur is wearing his full Joker-look, which consists of a green button-up shirt, a yellow vest, a dark red suit, dyed green hair and clown makeup (as in Fig. 15).

When Arthur's three main looks are seen as connected to his behavior, they can be seen as representative of the three stages of his becoming the Joker (Fig. 11 as stage one, Fig. 12 as stage two, Fig. 13 and Fig. 14 as a transition and Fig. 15 and Fig. 16 as stage three). In stage one, Arthur's everyday look represents the way he thinks and feels due to his mental illness and due to the way Gotham and life treats him, recognizable in his dark and inconspicuous clothing and slouched posture.⁷¹ In stage two, Arthur's job's clown costume represents what he is expected to be, as he puts on a fake smile that is only part of his job description as a clown.⁷² Arthur goes through intermediate phases that show the progress of him having a secret identity as the Joker, as he has acted within his Joker-role but has not completed his Joker-look yet. (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14). In stage three, Arthur's Joker-look represents who he wants to be, as he is no longer hiding, wears bright colors, walks and dances with a level confidence that is not part of any job description and finally admits to his crimes while wearing this look on the Murray Franklin show.⁷³ Following my findings, these representations show that Arthur killed the Wall Street guys when struggling with what he is expected to be, that he killed Penny when struggling with his personal thoughts and feelings, that he killed Randall when partly struggling with his personal thoughts and feelings and partly being who he wants to be, and that he finally killed Murray when fully being who he wants to be.

⁷¹ 1. The social worker tells Arthur "They do not care about people like you." In *Joker*, Phillips 0:38:18 — 0:40:30.

2. Arthur tells the audience at the Murray Franklin show "If it was me dying on the sidewalk you'd walk right over me! I pass you everyday and you don't notice me!" In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:33:03 — 1:41:34.

⁷² 1. Penny says Arthur has "always been such a happy little boy." In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:06:45 — 1:12:35.

2. Arthur writes in his joke diary: "the worst part about having a mental illness is people exact you to behave as if you don't." In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 0:24:58 — 0:25:53.

3. Arthur and wrote "put on a happy face" on the mirror in his dressing room at the Murray Franklin Show. In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:30:58 — 1:33:03.

⁷³ 1. Arthur enters the stage of the Murray Franklin show. In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019. 1:33:03 — 1:41:34.

2. Arthur stands up in front of crowd in burning Gotham. In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019 1:45:32 — 1:47:54.



Fig. 17. Arthur looks at the city of Gotham through the bus window, before he became the Joker and citizens began rioting. Frame from *JOKER*, Todd Phillips, 2019.



Fig. 18. Arthur, in his Joker-look, looks at the rioting city of Gotham through the window of a police car after being arrested. Frame from *JOKER*, Todd Phillips, 2019.

Based on my analysis of Arthur's costumes and makeup, it is possible for me to connect these three looks on a visual level. Arthur's Joker-look (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16) resembles his job's clown costume (Fig. 12), as both include a yellow vest, a dark red suit, green hair and clown makeup. The most important difference between these two is that the Joker-look does not look like a costume, but rather like a blend between Arthur's job's clown costume (Fig. 12) and his everyday clothes (Fig. 11). Where Arthur's job's clown costume includes dark red patchwork pants, a checkered jacket, a green wig, neat clown makeup and a red clown's nose (Fig. 11), his Joker-look includes a dark red suit, his natural hair dyed green, messy clown makeup and a painted red nose (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). This way, Arthur's job's clown costume can be seen as a stepping stone that helped everyday-Arthur (Fig. 17) become the Joker (Fig. 18).

Now that I have established the ways in which set decoration shows the state of Gotham and costumes show the personal state of Arthur, I will go into depth about the way in which *JOKER* uses sound to add to these two purposes. In my segmentation, I distinguish two types of sounds, namely diegetic sounds and non-diegetic sounds. Most diegetic sounds add to the way *JOKER*'s set decoration shows Gotham's. Examples of this are traffic sounds, sirens, screaming and breaking sounds. The only exception of this is the non-diegetic radio segment in the opening scene, as this introduces Gotham's state to the viewer. Most non-diegetic sounds, however, add to the personal state of Arthur. This way, non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises whenever Arthur finds himself in a state of despair, defeat or injustice, while non-diegetic, upbeat music plays whenever Arthur finds himself in a state of enjoyment, courage or power.⁷⁴ This non-diegetic music adds to the tone initially set by the film, as I discussed in section 4.1.

4.3. Conclusion and Discussion Chapter 4

Now that I have conducted my close reading of *JOKER*, I will answer my third sub-question, *How does Arthur Fleck's moral ambiguity translate into JOKER's narrative and cinematography?* Through its narrative, *JOKER* creates the image of Arthur being morally ambiguous within his 'smaller' actions — the murders he

⁷⁴ 1. Example of non-diegetic, dark music: non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur makes a joke using his gun. In *Joker* 1:18:49 — 1:21:01.

2. Example of non-diegetic, happy music: non-diegetic, cheerful music plays while Arthur prepares himself to be a guest on the Murray Franklin Show In *Joker*, Phillips, 2019 1:21:01 — 1:26:33.

commits — but lets his true moral ambiguity shine through when he shows his desire to change Gotham's system. In terms of cinematography, JOKER uses locations and set decoration to stress the severity of the state of dark Gotham and makes Arthur stand out by making comedic aspects colorful. With costumes and makeup, JOKER shows Arthur's possible motives and the stages of Arthur becoming the Joker. Lastly, JOKER mostly uses diegetic sounds to stress the state of Gotham and non-diegetic sounds to stress Arthur's mental personal state. I will now continue to connect the answers to my three sub-questions, in order to conclude the ways in which JOKER creates Arthur's moral ambiguity by playing with the superhero and villain archetype in its narrative and cinematography.

Firstly, JOKER attributes character traits of both the villain archetype — being an outcast suffering from mental disorders and conducting 'evil' with a partly clear explanation or root — and the superhero archetype — protecting Gotham's society by fighting the system, having a secret second 'hero'-identity, facing an internal battle between good and evil, having experienced a traumatizing event and struggling to adjust to newly gained power— to Arthur. JOKER also attributes traits shared by the superhero and the villain archetype — using violence to fight an opponent, having experienced a personal loss or other traumatizing event, struggling to adjust to newly gained power and depending on their opponent in order to exist in their role— to Arthur. Though he is a murderer, Arthur's victims are essentially all wrongdoers and his contribution to a bigger purpose — changing Gotham's system — makes Arthur become the initiator and symbol of mistreated citizens.

Secondly, JOKER plays with archetypal traits and superhero universe conventions within cinematography by using camera techniques and mise-en-scène to, on the one hand, continue to stress the morally ambiguous tone and state of Gotham as were established in the opening scene. On the other hand, these cinematographic aspects separate JOKER from the superhero universe, as the existence of superheroes or villains is not acknowledged and therefore creates new versions of Gotham and its Joker.

In conclusion, JOKER uses both narrative and cinematography to link Arthur to the traditional version of the Joker stemming from the Batman comics — for instance by renewing but using a clown-look and mentioning names such as Gotham, the Joker, the Waynes and Arkham State Hospital (JOKER's version of Arkham Asylum) — but plays with these conventions to separate the Joker from his roots in the superhero universe, showing how active the superhero film genre is. Provided that the audience is familiar with the character of the Joker through other renditions, superhero universe connections are recognizable in JOKER, but the film does not situate the character within the superhero universe itself. In fact, JOKER shows Arthur as a morally ambiguous character who can neither be described as the villain nor as the superhero of the story, but rather as the anti-hero in a superheroless Gotham.

5. Conclusion

As mentioned in my introduction, my first impression of JOKER was that the film seemed as if separate from the DC Universe. My research shows that JOKER not only breaks away from the traditional villainous labeling of the Joker, but also breaks away from the superhero universe setting by showing influences from other film genres. Though Arthur shows archetypal traits from both the superhero and the villain, JOKER completely removes the superhero storyline and superhuman forces from its story. Though JOKER technically exists within a superhero universe, as Gotham is a superhero universe city and the Joker is a superhero universe character, JOKER is not a typical superhero film, but rather a crossover film that combines superhero universe conventions with outsider films.

Though my analysis confirmed my first impression of JOKER, my theoretical research on the superhero and villain archetypes broadened my view on the good-evil spectrum of the superhero universe to such an extent that categorizing a character as ‘superhero’ or ‘villain’ turned out to be much more problematic than I initially expected it to be. After having conducted my research on JOKER’s Arthur Fleck’s moral ambiguity, it became clear to me that identifying a character as ‘good’ based on their superhero title or as ‘evil’ because of their villain title brings along complications. Since my theoretical research shows that many characters labeled as superheroes or villains share archetypal traits and my analysis shows how difficult labeling superhero universe characters is, I believe that an opportunity has arisen for larger research on traditionally labeled superheroes and villains. This way, more ‘good’ or ‘evil’ superhero universe characters can be researched and re-identified.

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Joker. Directed by Todd Phillips. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2019. DVD.

Taxi Driver. Directed by Martin Scorsese. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1976. DVD.

The Dark Knight. Directed by Christopher Nolan. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2008. Netflix.

The King of Comedy. Directed by Martin Scorsese. 20th Century Fox, 1983. DVD.

7. Appendix A. JOKER: Opening Scene Shot-by-Shot Segmentation

Time Code	Textual Narrative: radio news segment	Point of view camera and editing	Mise-en-scène: set decoration	Mise-en-scène: characters, events and movement in the shot	Mise-en-scène: costumes and makeup	Background sounds:
00:00:00 — 00:00:18	Brooks: <i>“The news never ends. This is 1080 GCR. You get all the news you need, all day long. Good morning. It’s 42 degrees at 10:30 on this Thursday, October 15th.”</i>	Black screen, fade in to Warner Bros. logo, fade out to black screen.				Traffic and street sounds. Lockers being shut.
00:00:18 — 00:00:38	Brooks: <i>“I’m Stan L. Brooks, and here’s what’s happening. It’s day eighteen of the garbage strike, with 10,000 tons of garbage piling up every day. Even the nicest sections of the city are looking like slums. Health Commissioner Edward O’Rourke is declaring a city-wide state of emergency for the first time in decades.</i> O’Rourke: <i>“There’s no need to wait until somebody dies or</i>	Hard cut to view of a room. The camera’s point of view shows a man’s (from this point onward referred to as Arthur) back directly. His face is visible in the mirror. The camera is slowly zooming in on Arthur and his reflection in the mirror, until Arthur is the only person who is seen directly within the camera’s field of view. His face is still only visible in the mirror. The mirror shows	A dark room with three large windows, which show an industrial looking city, including a bridge and passing traffic, is shown. Underneath these windows, three unicycles are visible. To the right, lockers and a wooden bench are visible. Between two windows, a mirror surrounded by lightbulbs is hanging above a table containing makeup and a green, curly wig. Arthur is sitting at the table.	Arthur is applying dark face paint to his eyes. Man 1 walks from right to left, towards the table, in front of the camera. To the left, man 2 is applying face paint in a mirror above a sink. A few men are seen sitting around a table. Man 3 (seen behind Arthur in the mirror) clocks in.	Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt. Man 1 is wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants. Man 2 is wearing a pink suit and an orange, curly wig. Man 3 is wearing a white button-up shirt, dark pants and a dark vest.	Traffic and street sounds. Stomping feet. Men talking in the room.

	<i>comes down with typhoid fever.”</i>	what happens behind him in the room.				
00:00:38 — 00:00:49	O'Rourke: <i>“It's already a serious situation.”</i> Brooks: <i>“It's something that affects almost everyone in the city, no matter who they are or where they live.</i> Interviewee 1: <i>You can't go down no one avenue without seeing nothing but garbage and rats.”</i>	A hard cut to a close up of side profile of the bottom half of Arthur's face. The camera slowly moves upwards, showing the top half of Arthur's face and his watery right eye. The camera is focused on Arthur's face, the background is blurry.		Arthur is painting his mouth area red with a brush.	Arthur's face is covered in white face paint and his eyes have dark blue diamond shapes painted on. Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt.	
00:00:49 — 00:00:53	Interviewee 2: <i>“It's starting to affect my business when customers can't get in here because of the garbage situation.”</i>	A hard cut to a close up of Arthur's hand holding the brush. The camera is focused on Arthur's hands.	Arthur's hand, holding a brush, above a palette of face paint.	Arthur's hand dips the brush into dark blue face paint and fidgets with the handle of the brush.		
00:00:53 — 00:01:04	Interviewee 3: <i>“I'm not out that long to smell it, but I think to look at it, it's terrible.</i> Interviewee 4: <i>It don't affect me except for the very bad smell here. It's horrific.</i> Interviewee 5: <i>It's a mess. I've been in this country for 50 years, and I've never...”</i>	A hard cut to the side profile of Arthur's face. The camera is focused on Arthur's face, the background is blurry.		Arthur's moves the corners of his mouth down and frowns while looking at his reflection in the mirror. He then smiles, showing his teeth. Arthur's smile quickly vanishes, he blinks and his eyes water up more. He places his index fingers in the corners of his mouth and	Arthur's face is covered in white face paint and his eyes have dark blue diamond shapes painted on. Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt.	Traffic, street sounds and sirens.

				pulls them upwards, creating a broad smile.		
00:01:04 — 00:01:16	<p>“...seen anything like it. What is this world coming to?”</p> <p>Interviewee 6: <i>Put 'em in a room, let 'em sit there and talk until they get it over with. 24 hours, 48 hours, how long it takes.</i></p> <p>Interviewee 7: <i>The idea of the National Guard moving in and cleaning up is a good idea.</i>”</p>	<p>A hard cut focused on Arthur’s back follows, showing his blurry reflection in the mirror. The camera then slowly focuses on his reflection, as Arthur pulls the corners of his mouth up and down.</p>		<p>Arthur pulls the corners of his mouth up again, higher this time, showing all of his front teeth and gums.</p>	<p>Arthur’s face is covered in white face paint and his eyes have dark blue diamond shapes painted on. Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt.</p>	<p>Traffic and street sounds.</p>
0:01:16 — 0:01:28	<p>“<i>In other news, the building industry and landlords today expressed concern over the latest increase in heating oil prices. Renters in the metro area are certain to feel the pinch...</i>”</p>	<p>A hard cut to Arthur’s face shows its entirety now. Arthur has a teardrop — colored dark blue from his face paint — underneath his right eye.</p>		<p>Arthur trembles a little from pulling the corners of his mouth up. The teardrop rolls down his cheek. He abruptly lets go of the corners of his mouth.</p>	<p>Arthur’s face is covered in white face paint and his eyes have dark blue diamond shapes painted on. A tear falls from his right eye, making blue paint run down his right cheek. Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt.</p>	<p>Other sounds: Traffic and street sounds. Non-diegetic, happy piano music begins to play (00:01:25).</p>

8. Appendix B. JOKER Film Segmentation

Time Code	Plot: event	Character	Textual Narrative (Synopsis)	Mise-en-scène: location (set decoration)	Mise-en-scène: sound	Mise-en-scène: costumes
00:00:57 — 00:01:28	While painting clown makeup on his face in front of a mirror, Arthur Fleck smiles and then pulls the corners of his mouth down and up using his index fingers, creating sad and happy faces. He cries once he pulls his mouth into an extreme smile.	Arthur.	A news anchor talks about the garbage strike and the situation in Gotham.	The changing room surrounding Arthur is filled with other men changing into clown outfits.	A non-diegetic radio broadcasting and street sounds in the background.	Arthur is wearing a plain white t-shirt.
00:01:28 — 00:02:02	Arthur is dancing to cheerful piano music while holding up a store sign.	Arthur.		A crowded street of Gotham.	A man on a piano plays diegetic, cheerful music (Claude Bolling — <i>Temptation Rag</i>) on the street.	Arthur is wearing a clown costume, consisting of dark red patchwork pants, a checkered jacket, a green wig, a little clown hat, clown shoes, neat clown makeup and a red clown's nose. He is holding a yellow sign that says "everything must go."
00:02:02 — 00:03:33	While Arthur works as a sign holder in a clown outfit on the streets of Gotham, a group of five teenage boys	Arthur, five teenage boys.	Teenage boys bully Arthur's clown appearance. They tease him about the way he looks and the way he does his job.	Streets of Gotham that are crowded and partly covered in garbage.	Diegetic, cheerful music (Claude Bolling — <i>Temptation Rag</i>) plays and fades away when the five teenage boys	Arthur is wearing his clown costume. The five teenage boys are dressed in basic, brown and gray clothing.

	walks past him. They initially verbally tease him, but then steal his sign. Arthur runs after them, but they hit him with his sign, breaking it, and continue to kick him repeatedly when he falls down. Arthur lies on the ground, next to his broken sign.		After the boys have run away, the film's title, JOKER, appears on the screen in big, yellow letters (00:03:30).		enter the picture. There are street sounds in the background. During the assault, non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises (Hildur Gudnadottir — <i>Defeated Clown</i>).	
00:03:33 — 00:07:22	While smoking a cigarette, Arthur continuously laughs, clears his throat, frowns and snuffles, followed by a conversation between him and a social worker.	Arthur, a social worker.	Arthur and the social worker talk about the city's situation, Arthur's (mental) health situation and his aspired career in comedy. Arthur mentions that all he has is negative thoughts. The social worker also takes a look at the jokes Arthur wrote down in his journal (which he calls his "joke diary"), and reads one of his about death ("I just hope my death makes more cents than my life"). Arthur also addresses that he wants to take more medication.	A small, dark office space.	During Arthur and the nurse's conversation, non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises.	Arthur is wearing a white shirt, a gray vest, dark pants and a brown jacket. The social worker is wearing a striped shirt and a blue vest.
00:07:22 — 00:08:52	While riding the bus, Arthur notices a small child making	Arthur, a small child and his mother.		The bus is crowded.	Street sounds are in the background. When Arthur	Arthur is wearing a white shirt, a gray vest, dark pants and a brown

	<p>frowning faces directed at him, sitting in seat in front of him.</p> <p>Arthur begins to entertain the child by making funny faces, which angers the child's mother. Arthur begins to laugh uncontrollably, and hands her a small card that explains that his laughter is the result of a mental condition.</p>				<p>begins to laugh, non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises.</p>	<p>jacket. The child is wearing a red jacket. The child's mother is wearing a dark jacket.</p>
<p>00:08:52 — 00:10:27</p>	<p>Arthur stops by a pharmacy and walks to his apartment building, holding his medication in a brown bag. In the lobby of his and Penny's apartment building, he checks the mailbox marked "P. Fleck," which is empty. Once he enters his apartment, he throws the brown bag into the kitchen and talks to Penny.</p>	<p>Arthur, Penny.</p>	<p>Penny asks Arthur if he checked the mail, to which Arthur replies that there was "nothing".</p>		<p>Non-diegetic music plays in the background of Arthur and Penny's apartment.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white shirt, a gray vest, dark pants and a brown jacket.</p>
<p>00:10:27 — 00:14:43</p>	<p>Arthur brings a tray with food to his mother, who is in bed. They talk and watch the Murray Franklin Show together. Arthur fantasizes</p>	<p>Arthur, Penny, Murray.</p>	<p>The news anchor speaks about the rats in the city. Penny talks to Arthur about the letters she writes to Thomas Wayne without receiving</p>		<p>Diegetic sounds of the television news anchor and later the Murray Franklin Show on the television.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white shirt, a gray vest and dark pants. Penny is wearing a nightgown. Murray is wearing a blue suit.</p>

	about being a guest on the Murray Franklin Show and being called on stage by Murray.					
00:14:43 — 00:16:20	Arthur’s colleague at Haha’s, Randall tells him that he heard about Arthur’s beat down from the night before. Randall expresses he thinks Arthur should protect himself and gives him a gun.	Arthur, Randall.	Randall tells Arthur that he did the right thing by going after the teenagers who stole his sign. Arthur says that he should have let them go because they were “just a bunch of kids”. When Randall gives Arthur a gun for self protection, he calls him “my boy” and laughs.	The clown dressing room.	Diegetic radio sounds are in the background.	Arthur is shirtless and untying his clown shoes.
00:16:20 — 00:18:25	A man named Gary tells Arthur he is being called into his boss Hoyt’s office. Randall makes a joke about Gary’s height. Arthur laughs hard and suddenly stops when walking into his boss’s office. Hoyt does not believe Arthur’s beating experience, which angers Arthur yet he laugh. He kicks garbage cans and bags in a back alley to relieve his anger.	Arthur, Randall, Gary, Hoyt.	Randall asks Gary whether or not people his height call miniature golf “miniature golf or just “golf”. Hoyt tells Arthur that his story does not make any sense, and says that the costs of the sign will be taken out of Arthur’s paycheck if he does not return it. Hoyt also says that all of Arthur’s coworkers do not want to be around him, because they think he is weird. Arthur smiles continuously, with	The clown dressing room, Hoyt’s office and a back alley.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises when Hoyt speaks to Arthur and drowns out Hoyt’s voice while Arthur smiles.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt and dark pants.

			tears in his eyes.			
00:18:25 — 00:20:07	Arthur walks home after work. In the apartment lobby, he holds the elevator door open forces neighbor Sophie and her daughter Gigi. They talk in the elevator and the hallway.	Arthur, Sophie and Gigi.	Sophie tells Arthur their building is “so awful,” and Gigi repeats her words. The woman folds her fingers into the shape of a gun and pretends to shoot herself in the head, making herself and Arthur smile. Once they arrive on the correct floor, Arthur calls out “hey,” and pretends to shoot himself. Arthur and Sophie smile.	The hallways of Arthur’s building and the elevator.	Diegetic of the elevator moving and getting stuck are drowned in non-diegetic, happy, upbeat music once Arthur’s neighbor enters her apartment.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown jacket and dark pants.
00:20:07 — 00:21:01	Arthur gives Penny a bath.	Arthur, Penny.	Penny tells Arthur why she thinks Thomas Wayne might not be answering her mail. When Arthur tells her about his stand-up comedy aspirations, Penny says “don’t you have to be funny to be a comedian?”		Non-diegetic, cheerful music (Lawrence Welk — <i>The Moon Is a Silver Dollar</i>) plays in the apartment.	Arthur is wearing a dark sweater and dark pants. Penny is naked.
0:21:01 — 0:22:36	Arthur watches television in the living room. He is talking to himself and playing with the gun Randall gave him. When he accidentally fires the gun and shoots the wall, he quickly turns up the television’s	Arthur, Penny.	Arthur listens to the television’s music and pretends he is talking to someone about him being a good dancer. Arthur uses the gun to point to an invisible someone who is not a good	Arthur and Penny’s living room.	Diegetic sounds of the television (Fred Astaire — <i>Slap That Bass</i>) are not loud enough to cover up the sound of the gunshot.	Arthur is wearing dark pants and no shirt.

	volume to cover up the shooting sound from Penny.		dancer, and accidentally shoots ‘him’. He panics and tells Penny that he is watching a war movie and apologizes to her.			
0:22:36 — 0:24:58	Arthur follows his neighbor to the school where she drops her daughter off, then on the subway and eventually to her job. Once she enters the building, Arthur turns around and stops following her.	Arthur, Sophie, Gigi, stand-up comedian.		An elementary school, the subway and the streets of Gotham.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music surrounds Arthur while he is staring at and following Sophie. The dark music is cut off by the stand-up comedian and his audience’s laughter.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown jacket with the hood pulled over his head and dark pants. Sophie is wearing a brown jacket and is carrying a red purse.
0:24:58 — 0:26:50	Arthur visits a comedy club. He watches a stand-up comedian perform and laughs at times when the rest of the audience does not laugh, and does not laugh when the audience laughs. With his right hand, he takes notes of the comedian’s performance. The image of Arthur’s notebook in the comedy club cuts to Arthur’s notebook at home. He uses his left hand to write. Sophie rings the doorbell to talk to Arthur.	Arthur, stand-up comedian. Sophie.	The stand-up comedian makes a sex-joke about him and his wife. Arthur writes down things the comedian does to create a performance that makes the audience laugh, such as “sexy jokes are always funny”. At home, Arthur writes down dark notes, such as “the worst part about having a mental illness is people expect you to behave as if you DON’T,” with a smiley face inside the O. Arthur laughs and	A comedy club and Arthur and Penny’s home.	Sounds of the audience’s laughter in the comedy club is cut off by non-diegetic, dark, ominous music once the screen cuts to Arthur at home.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a dark sweater and dark pants. In his apartment, he Arthur shirtless. When he opens the door for Sophie, Arthur is wearing a white t-shirt.

			smokes. Sophie rings the doorbell and asks Arthur if he was following her. She says she was hoping Arthur would come over to “rob the place,” to which Arthur replies that he has a gun. They both laugh.			
0:26:50 — 0:28:11	Arthur performs as a clown in a children’s hospital. While dancing, his gun accidentally falls out of his clothes. Arthur quickly picks up the gun and hides it under his clothes, making a so-called shush gesture towards the children and giggling. He then calls his boss from a phone booth and is fired from his job. Arthur hits his forehead against the phone booth’s glass and breaks it.	Arthur, children and staff at the hospital, Hoyt (telephone).	Arthur sings “if you’re happy and you know it” with the children at the hospital. After his gun falls, Arthur hides it under his clothes and proceeds to call Hoyt to beg for his job, as Hoyt wants to fire him for bringing a gun to a children’s hospital. Arthur lies about the gun being part of his performance. Hoyt says that Randall told him that Arthur wanted to buy a gun from Randall. Hoyt tells Arthur he is a “fuck-up” and a liar, and fires him.	A children’s hospital and a dark phone booth.	A non-diegetic children’s song (Chaim Tenenbaum — <i>If You’re Happy and You Know It</i>) and Arthur’s singing.	Arthur is wearing a clown costume, green wig, which is taken away from him by the three men, face paint and is carrying a large bag. The three young men are wearing dark suits.
0:28:11 — 0:34:44	Arthur rides the subway home after being fired. Three seemingly drunk young men wearing suits are in the same subway car and	Arthur, three young men.	The three seemingly drunk young men are bothering a young woman verbally. When the woman looks at Arthur, Arthur starts to	A dark subway car at night, the nightly streets of Gotham and a dark, dirty public restroom with flickering lights.	One of the Wall Street guys sings <i>Send In the Clowns</i> . Sounds of the subway are drowned by a high-pitched noise that follows a	Arthur is wearing his clown costume, green wig and face paint, until the Wall Street guys take away his wig.

<p>0:28:11 — 0:34:44</p>	<p>are bothering a young woman. The woman looks at Arthur but leaves the subway car when Arthur starts to laugh uncontrollably. The three young men walk over to him and begin to bother him verbally and physically. Before Arthur can explain he has a condition, they begin to beat and kick him. He tries to fight back but he ends up falling to the ground. Arthur shoots and kills two of the men. The subway then stops, and when the third man tries to escape from the subway car, Arthur shoots the third man repeatedly and kills him. He runs away and hides in a public bathroom, where he spontaneously starts to dance slowly and eventually looks at his own reflection in the mirror.</p>		<p>laugh uncontrollably and the three young men walk over to him and begin to bother him by singing “Send in the Clowns,” taking Arthurs wig from him and laughing at him. As Arthur tries to fight back and then shoots and kills two men, the third man screams for help and tries to escape from Arthur.</p>		<p>gunshot. Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur has killed all three men and runs away.</p>	
<p>00:34:44 — 00:35:15</p>	<p>Arthur goes to Sophie’s apartment, knocks</p>	<p>Arthur, Sophie.</p>			<p>Non-diegetic, dark music plays.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing part of his clown costume and</p>

	on the door, kisses her once the door opens, enters the apartment and closes the door behind him.					faded face paint.
00:35:15 — 00:36:40	Arthur is clearing out his locker at work after being fired from his job. His fellow clowns ask him about the gun and start to joke about Arthur shooting himself. Arthur then tells them the truth about the gun belonging to Randall. When leaving the building, Arthur ‘punches out’ by repeatedly hitting the punch clock with his fist, until it falls from the wall. He laughs while walking through the hallway and down the staircase, towards the exit of the building, Arthur shakes a parker. He then stops walking to cross out the words “forget to” on the sign that says “Don’t forget to smile.” Arthur continues to dance while walking down the stairs and kicks the door open with his	Arthur, Gary, Randall, two fellow clowns.	While Arthur clears out his locker at work, two men are discussing the subway murders. One man believes the murderer was wearing a mask, another man believes it was a man wearing clown’s makeup. They claim that these murders being committed by a clown is “good for business,” because now clowns are printed on the front of every newspaper, which means clowns are in the news and becoming more popular. Arthur remains silent. Gary tells Arthur he heard what happened to him and he is sorry for Arthur being fired. Randall says it “doesn’t seem fair” to be fired like that. A fellow clown asks Arthur if and why he really brought	The clown dressing room, the accompanying hallway and staircase.	Non-diegetic radio music (Jackson C. Frank — <i>My Name Is Carnival</i>) is playing in the background. The radio music becomes clear and no longer sounds like radio sounds once Arthur walks down the staircase.	Arthur is wearing dark blue pants, a white button up-shirt and a brown hooded jacket. He is carrying a brown paper bag that holds the stuff from his locker.

	<p>right foot before leaving.</p>		<p>a gun to the children's hospital. Another fellow clown jokes about the gun being part of Arthur's new act, asking him if he will shoot himself if his dancing doesn't work, and Arthur's coworker clowns laugh. Arthur says they should ask Randall about it because it was his gun, and Randall quickly acts as if he does not know what Arthur is talking about. "Stop talking out of your ass, Art," Arthur says as he honks a clown horn and walks away. He then comes back to say he forgot to punch out and laughs while he breaks the punch clock.</p>			
<p>00:36:40 — 00:38:18</p>	<p>Arthur is at home with his mother Penny, when the television news segment discusses the subway murders. Arthur watches the news segment in silence, while smoking a cigarette. Arthur smiles and his leg trembles when</p>	<p>Arthur, Penny, a news anchor, Thomas Wayne.</p>	<p>Penny calls Arthur to say that Thomas Wayne is on tv, but Arthur shushes her. Thomas Wayne informs that the three victims were his employees, but he did not know them personally. The news anchor addresses that the</p>	<p>Arthur and Penny's living room and kitchen.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises when The news segment ends and Arthur begins to smile.</p>	<p>Arthur is shirtless and wearing dark blue pants. Penny is wearing pajamas and a bathrobe. The news anchor and Thomas Wayne both wear dark suits.</p>

	<p>Thomas Wayne speaks.</p>		<p>less fortunate residents are taking the side of the killer. Thomas Wayne then addresses that Gotham has lost its way, and that the killer's "clown mask" proves that the killer is a cold-blooded coward who hides behind a mask because he is envious of those more fortunate than himself. Thomas Wayne indicates that the killer is part of the people who have not made something of their lives, and they are seen as clowns by those who have made something of their lives. when Arthur smiles, his mother Penny tells him that it is not funny.</p>			
<p>00:38:18 — 00:40:30</p>	<p>Arthur is back in the office space with the social worker. While smoking a cigarette, Arthur talks to the social worker.</p>	<p>Arthur, social worker.</p>	<p>Arthur tells the social worker that he heard a song on the radio about someone saying his name was Carnival, and Arthur says that his name at work is also Carnival. He tells the social worker that for a long time he felt</p>	<p>A small, dark office space.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, slightly upbeat music arises when Arthur says his last words to the social worker.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a dark green sweater and dark pants.</p>

			<p>as if he did not exist, but the social worker interrupts him to say there is bad news. Arthur says she does not listen to him, she does not hear him. He tells her again that he felt as if he did not exist, but now “people are starting to notice.” The social worker does not reply to this, but tells Arthur that the government cut the funding and this is therefore their last meeting. She says they do not care about people like Arthur or people like herself. Arthur asks where he can get his medication and who he can talk to in the future.</p>			
00:40:30 — 00:43:24	<p>Arthur performs at a comedy club. He is seen pacing before he is allowed up on stage. Once on stage, Arthur cannot control his laughter for the first few seconds. He laughs uncontrollable and nearly chokes several times. He eventually sees</p>	<p>Arthur, the man who announces him at the comedy club, the comedy club audience, Sophie.</p>	<p>The man who introduces Arthur on stage says that Arthur describes himself as someone who was, from a young age, always told that “his purpose in life was to bring laughter and joy into this cold, dark world.” Arthur laughs uncontrollably</p>	<p>A dark comedy-club and its backstage space.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music plays while Arthur is waiting to go on stage and while he is trying to get is laughter under control. While on stage, once Arthur gets his laughter under control and while he starts to tell a joke, non-diegetic, cheerful</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a burgundy vest and burgundy pants. Sophie is wearing a black jacket and dark jeans.</p>

	his neighbor Sophie sitting in the crowd.		during the first few lines of his first joke. During his next joke, about rich people, Arthur’s laughter stops and cheerful music overpowers his voice.		music starts to play. Diegetic sounds of the audience’s laughter mixes with the non-diegetic music (Jimmy Durante — <i>Smile</i>).	
00:43:24 — 00:44:26	Arthur is accompanied by Sophie on the nightly streets of Gotham. Arthur stops at a newspaper stand. He looks at a newspaper that shows a drawing of the “killer clown”’s face and pictures of the three victims, and mimics the expression on the clown’s face. Sophie says that she thinks the murderer is a hero and Arthur smiles. A cab drives by, and when Arthur sees that the person in the back seat is wearing a clown’s mask, he smiles again. Arthur and Sophie sit inside a donut shop.	Arthur, Sophie.	Sophie says that she thinks the murderer is a hero. “Three less pricks in Gotham city. Only a million more to go,” she says and Arthur smiles widely.	The nightly streets of Gotham.	Non-diegetic, cheerful music plays while diegetic street sounds are heard.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a burgundy vest and burgundy pants. Sophie is wearing a black jacket and dark jeans.
00:46:26 — 00:48:20	Arthur arrives at home to find Penny asleep in her chair while the Murray Show ends. Arthur wakes Penny,	Arthur, Penny.	Penny tells Arthur to not forget the mail. The letter Arthur opens includes the sentence “your son and I need	Arthur and Penny’s apartment.	Diegetic sounds of the Murray Franklin show. Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises when Arthur asks his	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a burgundy vest and burgundy pants. Penny is wearing pajamas and a bathrobe.

	<p>dances with her and she goes to bed. Arthur opens an envelope addressed to Thomas Wayne, which contains a letter written by Penny. In the letter, Arthur reads that Penny calls Arthur Thomas's son. She writes these letters to her former boss Thomas Wayne to ask for his help in these difficult times. Arthur looks angry and Penny locks herself in the bathroom, making Arthur pound on the bathroom door using his fists.</p>		<p>your help.” Arthur gets angry at Penny and when she locks herself in the bathroom, she says Arthur could have given her a heart attack and she will not talk to him until he stops being angry. Arthur says he is not angry but smiles, and asks Penny if he is really Thomas Wayne's son. Penny tells Arthur, who she nicknames Happy, that she and Thomas Wayne were in love, but that she had to sign papers to keep their relationship and their supposed child, Arthur, a secret. She tells Arthur to imagine what people would say about them and about Arthur. Arthur asks Penny what they would say, but Penny is not seen answering.</p>		<p>final question, which goes unanswered.</p>	
<p>00:48:20 — 00:49:07</p>	<p>Arthur sits on the train, surrounded by men in suits reading newspapers. Arthur tears a picture of Thomas Wayne and his</p>	<p>Arthur.</p>			<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music and train sounds.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown sweater, dark pants and a brown jacket.</p>

	family out of his newspaper, folds it up and puts it into his joke diary.					
00:49:07 — 00:52:59	Arthur walks next to a mansion's fence, to see a young boy on the other side of the wall. He hides behind the wall to quickly put a red clown nose on his nose, and shows his face to the child again. While continuing to walk next to the wall, Arthur smiles and hums, making the child on the other side of the wall follow him. They meet on other ends of the gate, where Arthur performs a magic trick by handing the boy a stiff magic wand through the gate, but having it become limp once the boy holds it. Arthur smiles and hums while dancing and turning the wand into a fake bouquet of flowers, which he again gives to the boy through the gate. After the two introduce	Arthur, Bruce Wayne, security guard.	After Arthur and the boy meet at the gate, Arthur greets the boy and asks for his name. The boy tells Arthur that his name is Bruce, and Arthur introduces himself and smiles. After Arthur uses his fingers to make the boy's mouth look like a broad smile, Bruce is being called by a security guard. The guard asks Arthur who he is and what he is doing, to which Arthur replies that he is "a good guy" and he is only here to speak with Thomas Wayne. The guard tells Arthur he should not speak to Thomas Wayne's son and asks him why he gave Bruce flowers. Arthur says it was just a magic trick to make Bruce smile. The guard says it is not funny, and asks Arthur if he needs	The Wayne residence.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur begins to choke the guard.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants. Bruce Wayne is wearing a white turtleneck sweater, a beige trench coat and dark pants. The security guard is wearing a black suit.

	<p>themselves to each other, Arthur reaches through the fence and places his thumbs in the corners of the boy's mouth, forcing them up to form a big smile. A security guard calls Bruce away and tells Arthur to leave. Arthur tries to choke the guard through the fence, but runs away when he sees Bruce staring at him. The guard takes Bruce back to the house.</p>		<p>to call the police. Arthur asks him not to. Arthur tells the security guard that his mother is Penny Fleck and that she used to work for Thomas Wayne and that he needs to speak with him. The guard asks if Arthur is Penny's son, to which Arthur replies that he knows about their past relationship. The guard tells Arthur that they were never together and that his mother was delusional and sick. Arthur defends his mother and says Thomas Wayne is his father, but the guard tells him to go away before he makes a fool of himself and laughs. Arthur begins to choke the guard through the gate, but runs away once he sees Bruce staring at him.</p>			
<p>00:52:59 — 00:54:01</p>	<p>Arthur arrives at his apartment building to find an ambulance take Penny, and he travels to the hospital in the ambulance.</p>	<p>Arthur.</p>	<p>Arthur asks what happened to his mother.</p>	<p>The streets of Gotham.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music and street sounds.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants.</p>

<p>00:54:01— 00:56:09</p>	<p>Arthur is smoking a cigarette outside of Gotham General Hospital, where his mother Penny has been taken after Arthur returned from the Wayne mansion. Two police detectives find Arthur to ask him about the subway killings. Arthur denies owning a real gun and walks away, into a glass exit-only door.</p>	<p>Arthur, two police detectives.</p>	<p>The two police detectives tell Arthur they came by his and his mother's apartment to ask him some questions, but because he was not home they asked his mother a few questions. Arthur asks if they are the reason she is in the hospital, to which one of the detectives replies that she “got hysterical,” started hyperventilating and collapsed. Arthur says the doctor said Penny had a stroke. One of the detectives says the questions they have are about the subway killings, to which Arthur replies that they are “horrible.” The detective tells Arthur that his former boss at Haha’s told them Arthur brought a gun to the children’s hospital. Arthur claims that the gun was a prop for his act, and that he was fired because he was</p>	<p>Outside of the Gotham General Hospital.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur gets up to walk away from the detectives.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants. The two detectives are wearing black suits and long, black coats.</p>
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			<p>not funny enough. When Arthur says he has to go take care of his mother, one of the detectives asks him if his laughing condition is real or “some sort of clown thing.” Arthur walks off and walks into a glass exit-only door.</p>			
00:56:09 — 00:58:31	<p>Arthur and Sophie sit by Penny’s bed. Sophie comforts Arthur. Murray’s show comes on the television when Sophie leaves the room. Murray shows a clip of Arthur’s performance at the comedy club and makes fun of him, which angers Arthur.</p>	<p>Arthur, Sophie, Penny, Murray.</p>	<p>Sophie tells Arthur that Penny will be alright, and leaves the room to get coffee. Murray’s show comes on the television and Arthur laughs at his joke. Murray then shows clips of Arthur’s stand-up performance, which excited Arthur at first. Murray then begins to ridicule Arthur’s performance and calls him a “joker.” The longer Arthur watches the television, the angrier he looks.</p>	<p>Penny’s hospital room.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark and pounding music arises once Arthur notices Murray is ridiculing him.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants. Sophie is wearing a dark sweater, a dark jacket, dark pants and a headscarf. Penny is wearing a hospital gown. Murray is wearing a white suit.</p>
0:58:31 — 0:59:44	<p>Arthur lies in Penny’s bed, with the revolver</p>	<p>Arthur, Thomas Wayne.</p>	<p>In the news segment, Thomas Wayne does not</p>	<p>Penny’s bedroom.</p>		<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown</p>

	and a newspaper with the clown's face next to the bed. He then smiles as he watches images of the riots using Arthur's clown face paint as their symbol. In the news segment, Thomas Wayne claims he is the only solution for the city's current state.		apologize for calling the lesser fortunate of Gotham clowns, but claims that "there is something wrong with those people," that he wants to help them and that he is their only hope.			hooded jacket and dark pants. Thomas Wayne is wearing a dark suit.
0:59:44 — 1:04:26	Arthur walks through the riot in front of the theater, where people fight police officers, and smiles. He then sneaks off and enters the theater. Once inside the theater, Arthur is wearing a bellboy outfit. He smiles while watching MODERN TIMES. Arthur then looks over at how Thomas and Martha Wayne are watching the film. Once Thomas Wayne leaves the theater, Arthur follows him to the restroom. They argue, resulting in Thomas Wayne punching Arthur in the face.	Arthur, Thomas Wayne.	Rioting people protest against Thomas Wayne and Gotham's system. Inside the restroom, Arthur tells Thomas Wayne who he is and they get into an argument about whether or not Arthur is Thomas Wayne's son. Thomas Wayne tells Arthur he was adopted, that his mother is crazy and punches him in the face when Arthur's laughter begins. Thomas Wayne leaves saying "I'll fucking kill you."	Outside and inside of a Gotham movie theater and its men's restroom.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur leans on the restroom sink.	Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants outside the theater, and a bellboy outfit inside the theater. Thomas Wayne is wearing a dark suit.

1:04:26 — 1:05:30	While a message from Detective Garrity plays on Arthur's answering machine, Arthur clears out his refrigerator, sits inside and closes its door.	Arthur.	Detective Garrity tells Arthur that he and his partner have some more questions for Arthur. Since he was not home when the detectives came by his apartment, Garrity asks Arthur to call him back.	Arthur's dark kitchen.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music plays while the non-diegetic sounds of a phone ringing and his answering machine taking a message from Detective Garrity, one of the detectives Arthur met at Gotham General Hospital arises. Non-diegetic phone ringing is heard again.	Arthur is wearing dark pants and no shirt.
1:05:30 — 1:06:45	Arthur lies on the in his bed, smoking a cigarette and touching himself. Arthur gets up to answer the phone once he hears the phone call is coming from someone who works for the Murray Franklin show.	Arthur, Shirley Woods.	Shirley Woods tells Arthur that Murray's audience loved the clips of Arthur, and that Murray wants him as a guest on the show.	Arthur's bedroom and Kitchen.	Diegetic phone ringing continues until the answering machine takes a message from Shirley Woods.	Arthur is wearing white underpants and a dark red shirt.
1:06:45 — 1:12:35	Arthur takes the subway to Arkham State Hospital to look at his mother Penny's files. With the help of a clerk reading Penny's record and a 'flashback' with Penny and a police detective, Arthur find out that Penny was admitted and	Arthur, Arkham State Hospital clerk, young penny, a police detective.	Arthur and the clerk talk about the people in the mental hospital. Arthur tells him that he sometimes does not know what to do, that he recently "ended up taking it out on some people," that he "fucked up" and "did some bad shit" and that it is hard	The Gotham subway and Arkham State hospital.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises when Arthur laughs and cries in the staircase.	Arthur is wearing a dark red button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants.

	<p>diagnosed there. Arthur steals the record and runs down a staircase, where he reads files that claim that Penny allowed a former boyfriend to abuse Arthur and adoption papers that claim he was abandoned. Arthur laughs and cries simultaneously.</p>		<p>to be happy at the time, but that what he did does not bother him. The clerk tells him that he cannot help Arthur, but that he should see someone and that there are programs that might help him. Arthur tells him they were cut by the government. The clerk then reads Arthur Penny's file and tells him she was diagnosed with delusional psychosis and narcissistic personality disorder. In a 'flashback,' a police detective tells young penny about the abuse and young Penny says that she never heard him cry and that "he's always been such a happy little boy."</p>			
<p>1:12:35 — 1:16:33</p>	<p>Arthur walks to his apartment building through the rain and sees an image of his memory of Sophie pointing the 'finger gun' to her head. He enters her and Gigi's apartment and sits</p>	<p>Arthur, Sophie.</p>	<p>After Sophie has put Gigi to bed, she is startled when finding Arthur in her living room and tells him he is in the wrong apartment. Sophie tells him he needs to leave. Arthur</p>	<p>Outside and inside of Arthur's apartment building, Sophie's living room, Arthur's living room.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music plays while Arthur enters his apartment building and fades away once he enters Sophie's apartment's living room. Non-diegetic, dark,</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a dark red button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants. Sophie is wearing a short, gray robe. At home, Arthur is wearing white underpants.</p>

	<p>on the couch. Sophie is heard putting Gigi to bed before she enters the living room to find Arthur on her couch. Sophie is startled and asks Arthur to leave and not hurt her or her daughter. Arthur experiences a flashback to all the moments he shared with Sophie and realizes he imagined it all.</p>		<p>says he “had a bad day,” and points the ‘finger gun’ to his head, scaring Sophie. He leaves to go home and sits on his couch in his underwear, smoking a cigarette and laughing. Through his window, ambulances are seen pulling up.</p>		<p>ominous music arises when Arthur leaves Sophie’s apartment to go home. Once Arthur is home, ambulances’ sirens arise.</p>	
<p>1:16:33 — 1:18:49</p>	<p>Arthur sits by Penny’s hospital bed and smokes a cigarette. He talks to Penny and then walks over to the bed, takes the pillow from underneath her head and suffocates her with it.</p>	<p>Arthur, Penny.</p>	<p>Arthur says he has always hated his last name and that his laughter is not a condition but that it is the real him. Penny calls him “Happy,” to which Arthur replies that he has never been happy and his life is not a tragedy but a “fucking comedy.”</p>	<p>Penny’s hospital room.</p>	<p>The heart monitor beeps continuously and stops once Arthur has suffocated Penny. Non-diegetic, cheerful music begins to play once Arthur removes the pillow from Penny’s face.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a dark red button-up shirt, a brown hooded jacket and dark pants. Penny is wearing a hospital gown.</p>
<p>1:18:49 — 1:21:01</p>	<p>Arthur replays the entrance of a guest on the Murray Franklin show and imitates the entrance through a portière in his living room. Arthur pretends to enter the Murray Franklin Show’s</p>	<p>Arthur.</p>	<p>Arthur pretends to have a conversation with Murray about him being a comedian on the Murray Franklin Show.</p>	<p>Arthur’s living room.</p>	<p>Diegetic, cheerful music continues to play as Arthur rewatches the entrance of a guest on the Murray Franklin show. Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once Arthur</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing a white button-up shirt, a dark red vest and dark red pants.</p>

	stage, shake hands talk to Murray and shoot himself.				makes a joke using his gun. In the background, the Murray Franklin show's laughs, sighs and applauds. Once Arthur pretends to shoot himself, non-diegetic, cheerful music (Frank Sinatra — <i>That's Life</i>) begins to play.	
1:21:01 — 1:26:33	Arthur dances in his bathroom while dyeing his hair green. He then paints his face white in his bedroom while smoking a cigarette. He looks at a picture of young Penny and crumples it in his hand. When the doorbell rings, Arthur hides a pair of scissors in the back pocket of his pants, opens the door and lets Gary and Randall in. After a short conversation, Arthur kills Randall by stabbing him in the neck and hitting his head against the wall. Gary screams and Arthur lets him go	Arthur, Gary, Randall.	The back of young Penny's picture says "Love your smile. TW." Gary asks Arthur if he has a new job and Randall asks Arthur if he is going to the rally at City Hall. Arthur says he is wearing the makeup because he is celebrating that his mother died. Randall says they came by because they heard Penny died and they wanted to cheer him up with alcohol. Arthur says he feels good because he stopped taking his medication and Randall asks Arthur what he	Arthur's bathroom, bedroom and living room.	Non-diegetic, cheerful music (Frank Sinatra — <i>That's Life</i>) plays. The music turns into a radio version of the song once the doorbell rings. Non-diegetic, dark, upbeat music (Gary Glitter) arises after Arthur closes the door.	Arthur is wearing white underpants and has green hair. When he paints his face white, he is wearing dark pants. After killing Randall, Arthur's white face is covered in blood spatters.

	after unlocking the door, which Gary cannot reach, telling him he was the only one who was ever nice to him and kissing his head.		told the police about him, provoking Arthur to stab and kill him. After Randall dies, Arthur tells Gary that he will be a guest on the Murray Franklin show that night.			
1:26:33 — 1:30:58	Arthur, now wearing his full clown's face makeup, walks down the hallway, into the elevator. He smiles and smokes a cigarette as he dances down the street's stairs. Once Arthur reaches the bottom of the stairs, the two police detectives Arthur spoke with outside of the hospital earlier arrive at the top of the stairs and call out Arthur's name. Arthur runs away and the two police detectives chase him down the streets of Gotham. Arthur gets hit by a cab while running to the subway station and enters a train, followed by the two police detectives. Once on the train, the two police	Arthur, two police detectives, rioting crowd on the subway.		Arthur's apartment building's hallway, elevator, the streets with stairs, the Gotham subway.	Non-diegetic, dark, upbeat music (Gary Glitter — <i>Rock & Roll Part 2</i>) turns into non-diegetic, slow, ethereal music when Arthur dances. While Arthur escapes from the chase, non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises again.	Arthur is wearing his clown's makeup, a green button-up shirt, a yellow vest and a dark red suit.

	<p>detectives continue to follow Arthur, but lose him in the crowd of people wearing Arthur's clown makeup or masks of it. The two police detectives get into a fight with other rioting 'clowns' and after one of the detectives' gun accidentally fires and a man is shot, they are pushed out the subway cart and beaten by the crowd. Arthur laughs and dances while watching the beating and then walks away while smoking a cigarette.</p>					
<p>1:30:58 — 1:33:03</p>	<p>Arthur watches television while smoking a cigarette and waiting backstage of the Murray Franklin show, and Murray and his producer Gene Ufland come to see Arthur in his dressing room. After Murray leaves, Arthur dances in the mirror, sits down and puts the gun to his throat.</p>	<p>Arthur, Murray Franklin, Gene Ufland.</p>	<p>A news anchor on the television speaks about the two detectives, who are now hospitalized, and Arthur laughs. Murray asks Arthur if his makeup is part of the protest, but Arthur says he does not believe in any of that. Gene Ufland argues that Murray should not have Arthur on the show, but Murray insists that "it's gonna</p>	<p>Backstage of the Murray Franklin show.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music continues until it is drowned by the television sounds. Dark, ominous music arises once Murray leaves Arthur's dressing room.</p>	<p>Arthur is wearing his clown's makeup, a green button-up shirt, a yellow vest and a dark red suit. Murray is wearing a gray, checkered suit. Gene Ufland is wearing a black suit.</p>

			work.” Murray tells Arthur the rules of live television and Arthur asks Murray if he can announce him as ‘Joker,’ since that is what he named Arthur when showing his clips. On Arthur’s dressing room mirror, the phrase ”Put on a happy face” had been written with red lipstick.			
1:33:03 — 1:41:34	Arthur waits backstage to be called on stage. He watches the show live on a television and sees Murray ridiculing him and playing his clip from the comedy club again. Arthur slowly dances while waiting, and two employees of the show stare at him. Arthur dances onto the stage, shakes Murray’s hand and kisses Doctor Sally, another guest on the Murray Franklin Show. Arthur stares blankly ahead before talking to Murray. The audience applauds as	Arthur, Murray, The Murray Franklin Show’s guests, The Murray Franklin Show’s audience, The Murray Franklin Show’s employees.	Before Arthur comes on stage, Murray says that his next guest “looks like he’s got a lot of problems.” Murray makes fun of Arthur’s joke diary and tells him his death by a drunk driver-joke is not funny. Arthur says “I’m sorry. It’s just, you know, it’s been a rough few weeks Murray. Ever since I killed those three Wall Street guys.” Murray believes Arthur is telling the truth and asks if he thinks that killing the three men is funny. Arthur tells Murray, and	Backstage and on the stage of the Murray Franklin show.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous plays until Murray calls Arthur on stage. A band plays cheerful music as Arthur makes a dancing entrance through the curtains and onto the stage. Non-diegetic, dark, upbeat music plays while Arthur yells at Murray before shooting him. When the test card comes on screen, upbeat music plays.	Arthur is wearing his clown’s makeup, a green button-up shirt, a yellow vest and a dark red suit. Murray is wearing a gray, checkered suit.

Murray asks Arthur to tell a joke and laughs as Murray makes fun of Arthur's joke diary. Arthur's joke is badly received, and he confesses to killing the three Wall Street guys. After talking to Murray about it, Arthur shoots and kills Murray. The audience screams and runs away while Arthur smiles, his face covered in Murray's blood. Arthur gets up, shoots Murray's dead body again, dances on stage and approaches to camera and holds it to say good night to the audience, but a test card and music and cut him off.

Gotham, that "Comedy is subjective, Murray, isn't that what they say? All of you, the system that knows so much: you decide what's right or wrong the same way you decide what's funny or not." Murray asks Arthur if he committed the murders to start a movement, but Arthur says he killed those men because they were "awful." Arthur sighs and asks "why is everybody so upset about these guys? If it was me dying on the sidewalk you'd walk right over me! I pass you everyday and you don't notice me! But these guys? Well because Thomas Wayne went and cried about them on TV?" Arthur confronts Murray about ridiculing him and laughs when Murray talks about the riots and the people being killed because of Arthur's actions.

			<p>Arthur makes his final joke, “what do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash?” After the punchline, “I’ll tell you what you get! You get what you fucking deserve!,” Arthur shoots Murray in the head, killing him instantly. Arthur tells the audience through the camera “Good night. And always remember, that’s —,” intending to say Murray’s catchphrase, “that’s life,” before a test card and music and cut him off.</p>			
1:41:34 — 1:42:13	A backstage broadcasting room shows 24 different screens broadcasting news about Murray’s death.		24 televisions show replays of Arthur shooting Murray and news anchors and reporters from different television networks speak about Murray’s on-air murder, the last line being “and as you see, Gotham is burning.”	A backstage broadcasting room of a television station.	Upbeat music (Herb Albert & The Tijuana Brass — <i>Spanish Flea</i>) plays when the test card is seen and fades away when the news anchors and reporters talk.	
1:42:13 — 1:44:37	A police car with it sirens on drives Arthur through	Arthur, two police officers, rioting Gotham citizens.	When Arthur laughs, one of the officers driving	Inside of a police car and the dark streets of Gotham.	Non-diegetic, upbeat music plays (White	Arthur is wearing his clown’s makeup, a green

	<p>the rioting streets of Gotham. He looks through the window and smiles when seeing Gotham burning. An ambulance hits the police car from the side, causing a cab to crash too. A man wearing Joker masks steps out of the ambulance and, with the help of two other men wearing Joker masks, he lifts Arthur through the window and lies him down on the hood of the car.</p>		<p>Arthur says “Stop that, you freak! This isn’t funny.” The second officer says “Yeah, the whole fucking city’s on fire ‘cause of what you did.” Arthur smiles and replies “I know. Isn’t it beautiful?”.</p>		<p>Room — <i>Cream</i>). The streets of Gotham are filled with screaming, alarms, sirens, burning, shooting and breaking sounds. The police radio reports a message to the officers. Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music arises once the police car crashes.</p>	<p>button-up shirt, a yellow vest and a dark red suit. The two police officers are wearing police uniforms. The rioting Gotham citizens are wearing Joker masks or makeup.</p>
<p>1:44:37 — 1:45:32</p>	<p>In front of the movie theater, rioting people wearing Joker masks and makeup slam car windows and burn cars down. Movie theater visitors, including Thomas, Martha and Bruce Wayne, run away to escape the scene. A man wearing a Joker mask follows the Wayne family down into an alley behind the movie theater and shoots both Thomas and Martha Wayne.</p>	<p>Thomas Wayne, Martha Wayne, Bruce Wayne, rioting Gotham citizens, an unknown man.</p>	<p>The sign above the movie theater entrance shows the film title ZORRO, THE GAY BLADE. The man following the Wayne family down the alley says “Hey Wayne,” and when Thomas Wayne turns around he says “You get what you fucking deserve.” When Thomas Wayne yells “No! Pal!,” the man shoots and kills Thomas Wayne. When Martha Wayne</p>	<p>The dark streets outside of the movie theater.</p>	<p>Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music plays.</p>	<p>Thomas Wayne is wearing a black suit and a dark coat. Martha Wayne is wearing a light dress and a dark fur coat. Bruce Wayne, is wearing a black suit and dark coat. The rioting Gotham citizens are wearing Joker masks or makeup. The unknown man is wearing a black leather jacket, dark pants and a Joker mask.</p>

			screams, the man shoots and kills her too, covering Bruce's face in blood and making her pearl necklace break.			
1:45:32 — 1:47:54	Arthur awakes on the hood of the police car and coughs up blood. Rioting Gotham citizens wearing Joker masks or makeup are surrounding the car and cheering for Arthur. Arthur stands up on the hood of the car, dances, feels his mouth with his fingers paints a smile on his face with his own blood. The crowd cheers for him.	Arthur, rioting Gotham citizens.		The dark streets of Gotham, covered in smoke.	Non-diegetic, dark, ominous music plays. Non-diegetic, dark, victorious music arises once Arthur gets up. The music intensifies when Arthur paints his bloody smile.	Arthur is wearing his clown's makeup, his head covered in blood, a green button-up shirt, a yellow vest and a dark red suit. The rioting Gotham citizens are wearing Joker masks or makeup.
1:47:54 — 01:50:54	Arthur laughs while he smokes and talks to an employee in a mental hospital. He thinks about young Bruce standing next to his murdered parents. When Arthur leaves the room and walks into the all white hallway, his shoes leave behind bloody prints. Arthur dances in front of a big, white window and	Arthur, a mental hospital employee.	The social worker asks Arthur what is so funny, and when young Bruce is seen standing next to his murdered parents, Arthur says "you wouldn't get it". Arthur then begins to sing along to non-diegetic music.		After Arthur's final words, non-diegetic, cheerful music plays (Frank Sinatra — <i>That's Life</i>).	Arthur is wearing white hospital clothes. The social worker is wearing a dark jacket.

	runs past it two times, followed by himself.					
01:50:54 — 01:56:49	Credits.		Credits.		Non-diegetic, cheerful music plays (Frank Sinatra — <i>That's Life</i>).	



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