

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
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Department of English  
Section of English

The Joker Unmasked: A Psychoanalytical  
Study of the Villain in *The Dark  
Knight* (2008) and *Joker* (2019).

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the Master Degree in Literature and Civilization

**Presented by**

Mr Aymen MEHDID

Mr Ilyas CHAMEKH

**Supervised by**

Dr. RAHMOUN OMAR

**Board of Examiners**

**Prof. Wassila MOURO**

**President**

**Tlemcen University**

**Dr. Omar RAHMOUN**

**Supervisor**

**Tlemcen University**

**Dr. Meriem MENGOUCHI**

**Examiner**

**Tlemcen University**

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# *Dedication 1*

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have been a source of strength and inspiration in my journey.

To my family, for your unconditional love and constant support which has been the basis of my success. Your encouragement, your sacrifices and your faith in me gave me the strength to pursue my dreams. Mom and Dad, your confidence in me has been my greatest motivation. To my brothers and sisters, thank you for always being there with your words of wisdom and reminding me to never give up.

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Aymen Mehdid

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This thesis is to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents. Whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears.

To my brothers Abderahman, Ayoub, Mohamed, Youcef for always being cheerful and very special.

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# Abstract

The Joker , as Batman's enemy, is an iconic villain redefined through various interpretations. This thesis aim to analyze two very popular versions: *The Dark Knight* (2008) performed by Heath Ledger and *Joker* (2019) performed by Joaquin Phoenix. By analyzing these versions, the study explores how the Joker represents psychopathy, trauma and social fears, and their impact on our perception of villains. Ledger's Joker embodies chaos and challenges order with his anarchist nature, while Phoenix's Joker offers a psychological dimension, showing a man driven to madness by societal neglect and personal trauma. Despite their differences, both versions show the Joker 's intelligence, cunning, and unpredictability. This study aims to understand the essential elements of the Joker that make these versions so memorable, using comparative analysis of character development, motivations and key scenes, as well as reviews and scholarly articles. The research seeks to uncover why these depictions of the Joker are so appealing and important, highlighting what makes a remarkable villain in modern cinema.

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# **General Introduction**

The silver screen has long been a source for the exploration of the human psyche offering a compelling mirror to society's fears, desires, and collective imagination. Within this cinematic realm, few characters have left an indelible mark as profound and unsettling as the Joker . From the early portrayals in silent films to the modern blockbuster interpretations, the Joker , as character, has evolved into an archetype of chaos challenging conventional notions of morality and sanity.

The Joker is one of the most iconic villains in popular culture, particularly known for his role as Batman's arch-nemesis. Throughout his appearances in comic books, movies, and TV shows, the Joker has been portrayed in numerous ways, each adding new dimensions to his character. Two of the most influential and critically acclaimed portrayals of the Joker are Heath Ledger's performance in *The Dark Knight* (2008) and Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal in *Joker* (2019). These two versions have captivated audiences and significantly contributed to the character's legacy.

The primary goal of this thesis is to analyze and compare these two distinct portrayals of the Joker . This thesis aim at exploring how each version represents different aspects of the character and what these interpretations reveal about the Joker 's nature.

To achieve this, it is necessary to address some key research questions:How does the cinematic portrayal of the Joker contribute to our understanding of psychopathy,trauma and social fears? How do mental illness,trauma and hysteria impact the trajectory of the Joker personality?

The starting hypothesis of these research question suggests that the portrayal of the Joker in cinema provides a comprehensive view of psychopathy, trauma and social fears, reflecting current anxieties and the complex interplay between mental illness and personal story. By showing the Joker's lack of empathy, manipulation, and antisocial behavior, these films fit clinical definitions of psychopathy. Additionally, the character's

traumatic history shows the profound impact of severe psychological disorders, linking trauma to deviant behavior. Finally, the Joker represents social fears related to chaos and the breakdown of order, highlighting cultural concerns regarding the stability and fragility of societal norms.

To answer these questions and achieve its objectives, this work is divided into two chapters, each approaching the subject from different angles and perspectives.

In the first chapter, we dive into the study of villains in cinema and books from the perspective of psychology. We use theories like psychological fiction and theory of mind to understand how they are shown. We also explore ideas like mind reading and psychoanalysis to decipher why these characters are so complicated. By examining the hidden parts of the mind and how the ego, id, and superego interact, this chapter attempts to understand everything about the portrayal of villains in stories, including what motivates them, how they act, and what this said about the company.

In the second chapter, we explored the psychological nuances of these two iconic interpretations of the Joker. Through comparative analysis, we examined how Joaquin Phoenix and Heath Ledger approached the role of this iconic character. We looked in detail at how each actor brought their own interpretation, highlighting the psychological aspects of their performance and their impact on the overall narrative of their respective films. By peering into the psychological depths of these depictions, we have gained insight into the complexity of the Joker as a character and his lasting influence in popular culture.

By studying these two versions of the Joker , we aim to gain a deeper understanding of what makes a great villain and why such characters are crucial to storytelling. The Joker is a complex and multifaceted character, and this thesis seeks to uncover the reasons behind the enduring appeal and significance of these two portrayals in the broader context of popular culture.

# Chapter One

## *Psychology and the Villain, a Conceptual Framework*

## *Content of Chapter One*

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# Chapter One : Psychology and the Villain, a Conceptual Framework

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## 1.1. Introduction

In this first chapter, we will delve into the heart of psychology by exploring the multiple facets of psychological fiction and its interaction with the theory of psychoanalysis. We will also discuss the representation of the villain in popular culture and its impact on our perception of the villain's appearance. By taking a critical look at these elements, this thesis aims to establish connections between psychological theory and its manifestation in society, highlighting the importance of understanding the motivations and internal dynamics that underlie characters' behavior. This introductory chapter will thus lay the necessary foundations for an in-depth exploration of the psychology of the villain .

## 1.2 Psychological Fiction :

Psychological fiction, also known as psychological realism, is distinguished by its deep and detailed exploration of the mental states of the characters and the motivations that underlie the plot. In this literary genre, the focus is on the characters' internal thoughts, emotions, and motivations rather than external events. In other words, the actions and developments of the story are primarily determined by the psychology of the characters rather than by external circumstances (What is Psychological Fiction).

This type of fiction is often characterized by the use of narrative techniques such as interior monologues, flashbacks, and streams of consciousness. These devices allow authors to explore the inner mentality of characters, thereby providing the reader with direct insight into their inner world. Therefore, in psychological fiction, the plot is often subordinate to character development, and events may not follow a strict chronological order, but rather be organized around the thoughts, memories, and reflections of the protagonist (What is Psychological Fiction).

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The popularity of psychological fiction has been closely linked to the discoveries of psychoanalysis, particularly those of Sigmund Freud. His theories on the unconscious, drives, and defense mechanisms have profoundly influenced this literary genre, providing authors with a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human psyche (What is Psychological Fiction).

Psychological fiction is distinguished by its deep exploration of characters' internal motivations, its use of innovative narrative techniques to depict the human psyche, and its reflection on the discoveries of psychoanalysis. This genre offers readers a fascinating dive into the twists and turns of the human mind, while inviting deeper reflection on the nature of human identity, consciousness, and relationships (What is Psychological Fiction).

Distinctive characteristics of psychological fiction encompass introspective storytelling, nuanced character portrayals, and narratives centered on human psychology. These stories typically unravel at a deliberate pace, enabling readers to immerse themselves in the intricate inner worlds of the characters and unveil the concealed layers of their psyche. As highlighted by the Fictionary journal, psychological fiction delves into the complexities of human behavior and relationships, often employing techniques like stream of consciousness and unreliable narrators to drive the narrative. Through a deep exploration of thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviors, this genre offers a profound insight into the human mind, inviting readers to contemplate existential questions and shared experiences through the lens of individual characters. (Lee and Seccombe)

Psychological fiction has many iconic works such as *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Shutter Island* by Dennis Lehane, *Inception* by Christopher Nolan, and *Black Swan* by Darren Aronofsky. These works explore a range of complex psychological themes, offering a profound reflection on the nature of the human soul and its internal maze.

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Bradley Lewis says these books can help us better understand how our minds work. By showing us the characters' inner struggles, they help us think about our own emotions and behaviors. He even thinks these stories can be useful in therapy. Therapists could use them to talk with their patients and help them understand their own feelings and experiences(Lewis,72).

According to Bradley Lewis, psychological fiction is important because it helps us better understand our thoughts and emotions. These stories show us how complicated our minds are and give us a better idea of what it is like to be human. In his book *Narrative Psychiatry: How Stories Can Shape Clinical Practice*. Bradley Lewis talks about psychological fiction as books that make readers think deeply about what's going on in their heads. He explains that these stories mostly focus on what the characters feel inside themselves, such as their emotions, their thoughts, and what motivates them. Unlike usual stories that mostly talk about events happening outside, psychological fiction immerses us in the thoughts and feelings of the characters(Lewis,72).

In the complex web of psychological fiction, authors often harness the power of mind-reading to plumb the depths of their characters' inner worlds. Through nuanced descriptions and subtle allusions, they invite readers to engage in psychological voyeurism, thereby accessing the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of the protagonists. This exploration transcends simple storytelling to become a journey of empathy and understanding, reflecting the intricacies of the human psyche. As readers navigate the twists and turns of the stories, they confront their own assumptions, biases and vulnerabilities, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Thus, theory of the mind becomes a powerful catalyst for introspection and revelation, creating a symbiotic relationship between reader and text.

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### 1.2.1 Theory of the Mind :

Theory of the mind allows people to guess what others are thinking and predict what they will do. It is a bit like reading minds, but for real it helps us understand why people act the way they do and interact with them. It is a skill that most of us have, and it is super important for our social relationships and how we understand the world.

According to Baron-Cohen, the theory of the mind is the ability to understand that other people have their own thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and perspectives that may be different from one's own. He discusses how this cognitive skill develops in typically developing individuals and how deficits in theory of mind can manifest in individuals with autism(Cohen,22). Baron-Cohen further explores the role of theory of mind in social cognition and interpersonal relationships. He discusses how theory of the mind allows individuals to infer and predict the behavior of others based on their mental states, facilitating empathy, cooperation, and effective social interaction(Cohen,56).

Michael S. Gazzaniga says that theory of mind is when you can understand what other people think and want. It is like you can read minds! It helps us understand why people act the way they do. And thanks to that, we can better interact with others and communicate(Gazzaniga 45).

Gazzaniga talks about the parts of the brain that help us understand what other people are thinking. It explains how parts of our brain work together to help us guess the thoughts and feelings of others. Gazzaniga also mentions studies where special machines are used to see what happens in the brain when we try to understand the thoughts of others. (Gazzaniga,156).

By understanding the theory of the mind, we learn to guess what other people think and why they act the way they do. It is like reading people's minds And when you master that, you enter the world of mind reading. We no longer just see how others feel, we

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actually try to predict their thoughts and feelings. It is a bit like an empathetic guessing game And in navigating relationships with others, one uses this ability to understand the hidden feelings and intentions behind people's actions. It is like discovering the mysteries of the human mind by decoding the unspoken emotions and thoughts of others.

### 1.2.2 Mind Reading :

Mind reading means guessing what other people are thinking and feeling and it can be really complicated. According to Michael Gazzaniga from *Cognitive Neuroscience: The Biology of the Mind* , mind reading is defined as the ability to attribute mental states to oneself and others“ (Gazzaniga,473).

Lisa Zunchine describes the notion of mindreading in relation to theory of mind, emphasizing that it is a complex process of understanding the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires of others. This ability is not simply a form of telepathy, but rather an essential part of our social cognition(Zunchine 6).

Exploring mindreading in the context of theory of mind highlights the complexity of our understanding of the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of others. This process, far from being a form of telepathy, is essential to our ability to navigate our social relationships. The author presents various examples illustrating how mind reading intervenes in our interpretation of observed actions and in our inference of the intentions behind social interactions. These examples highlight the importance of this process for interpreting human behavior and navigating interpersonal relationships(Gallese and Goldman).

Mindreading goes beyond simple verbal or visual interactions, involving complex interpretation of verbal, nonverbal, and contextual cues. Furthermore, it highlights the subjective nature of our attributions of states of mind, thus highlighting the complexity of this cognitive process. This perspective enriches our understanding of psychological

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fiction, which often explores the thoughts and motivations of characters to reflect the complexity of social cognition(Zunshine,7).

Daniel Goleman defines mindreading as the ability to accurately perceive and understand the emotions, thoughts, and intentions of others. He explains how this skill is essential for effective social interaction, empathy, and building meaningful relationships. Goleman may also discuss how mindreading contributes to emotional intelligence and its impact on personal and professional success(Goleman 123).

Goleman explains that mind reading involves understanding the feelings of others by observing how they behave. For example, facial expressions, the way they hold themselves, or even the tone of their voice give us clues about what they are feeling inside. By learning to spot these signals, we become better at understanding the emotions of others. And that helps us to be more emotionally intelligent(Goleman 54).

### **1.2.2.1 Theory-Theory :**

Social psychologists began studying mindreading as early as the 1940s. In the classic studies by Heider and Simmel (1944), participants were presented with animations featuring geometric shapes interacting with each other. When asked to report what they had seen, participants almost consistently interpreted these shapes as intentional agents with motives and goals, suggesting the existence of an automatic capacity for mentalistic attribution. This line of research led to Heider's seminal work, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (1958), which has become one of the major historical references in the scientific study of our mentalist practice. In this work, Heider describes common sense psychology as a sophisticated conceptual scheme that influences human perception and action in the social world in ways similar to Kant's categorical framework in the physical world (Marraffa).

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Heider's visionary work was central to the origin and definition of attribution theory, a field of social psychology that studies the mechanisms underlying ordinary explanations of our own and others' behavior. However, attribution theory represents a different approach to our mentalist practice. Heider placed real value on common sense psychology, suggesting that scientific psychology had much to learn from this perspective. In contrast, most research on causal attribution has followed the methodological lesson of behaviorism and focused on the epistemic fallacies of commonsense psychology. Two years before the publication of Heider's book, *Wilfred Sellars Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956) advanced the idea that our understanding of mental phenomena does not result from direct access to our inner life, but rather from a popular theory of mind acquired through enculturation. Sellars's speculation proved to be very philosophically productive and resonated with social psychological research on self-attribution, also known as "Theory-Theory" or "TT"(Marraffa).<sup>1</sup>

After the advances in theory-theory in social psychology, another important approach emerged: the theory of psychoanalysis. This theory, developed by Sigmund Freud and his followers, explores the deepest layers of the human unconscious. Unlike more cognitive models, psychoanalysis emphasizes repressed desires and internal conflicts, providing a deeper understanding of the complexity of the human mind.

### 1.3 Psychoanalysis Theory :

The theory of psychoanalysis, pioneered by Sigmund Freud in the early 20th century, has significantly shaped the landscape of psychology and remains a topic of both fascination and contention across various disciplines. Freud's groundbreaking theory introduced novel ideas concerning the architecture of the human psyche, defense

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<sup>1</sup>"Theory-Theory" (or "TT", term invented by Morton in 1980)

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mechanisms, and the workings of the unconscious mind, fundamentally altering the understanding of human behavior. According to the Positive Psychology article on psychoanalysis, this innovative theory has had a lasting impact on psychological thought, offering profound insights into the complexities of the human mind. By exploring the core tenets of psychoanalytic theory, its practical applications in clinical settings, and its enduring influence on contemporary perspectives, we can appreciate the enduring legacy of Freud's contributions (Nash).

First, we will examine the foundations of psychoanalysis, highlighting key concepts such as the unconscious, ego, id and superego, as well as defense mechanisms such as repression and sublimation. We will also discuss the importance of childhood experiences in personality development, such as psychosexual stages and Oedipal conflicts, and their influence on psychological dynamics in adulthood:

### **1.3.1 The Unconscious:**

Psychoanalysis teaches that the process of repression primarily involves preventing instincts from becoming conscious rather than abolishing them. Repressed ideas remain in a state of unconsciousness, but can nevertheless influence the conscious mind. To understand the unconscious, repressed content must be transformed into conscious content, often through psychoanalytic analysis where resistance must be overcome (Freud and Rieff116).

In both healthy and sick individuals, many mental processes can only be explained by the presupposition of other actions that escape consciousness. Missed acts, dreams, mental symptoms, obsessions, as well as sudden ideas and thought outcomes without a known source, illustrate this reality. This connection between conscious and unconscious acts becomes clear when we recognize the unconscious hypothesis as legitimate. This hypothesis helps us build effective practical methods for influencing conscious processes,

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which constitutes indisputable proof of its existence. Furthermore, it is plausible to argue that much of what we consider conscious knowledge remains latent in the unconscious for extended periods of time, further reinforcing the existence of the unconscious (Freud and Rieffl17).

The question of whether a latent memory is a residue of a mental process or a physical state may seem obvious, but in reality it relies on an implicit identification between the mind and the conscious. This identification is either a question of principle or a question of convention. However, this convention is impractical because it ignores the natural continuity of man, creates difficulties in psychophysical parallelism, overestimates the role of consciousness, and limits our ability to explore the field of psychological research. In reality, the undeniable latent states of mental life can be considered objects of psychological research, closely related to conscious mental acts, despite their lack of awareness (Freud and Rieffl18).

The reluctance to acknowledge a mental quality to latent mental processes may stem from a lack of study outside psychoanalysis. However, hypnotic experiments, including post-hypnotic suggestion, have long demonstrated the existence and operation of the unconscious mind, even before psychoanalysis. The assumption of an unconscious is also legitimate because it aligns with our customary mode of thinking. We infer consciousness in others based on their behavior and utterances, but this inference becomes less reliable as the disparity between our own consciousness and that of others widens. While we once extended this inference of consciousness to animals, plants, and even inanimate objects, our understanding has evolved, leading us to doubt consciousness in animals, reject it in plants, and regard assumptions of consciousness in inanimate matter as mystical (Freud and Rieff 119).

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### 1.3.1.1 The Unconscious Emotions :

It should be recognized that the sharp distinction between the conscious and the unconscious does not apply absolutely to instincts. Unlike conscious or unconscious ideas, an instinct can never be directly conscious by itself, but only through the idea that represents it. However, even in the realm of the unconscious, this instinct can only be represented by an idea. So when we talk about an unconscious or repressed instinctive drive, we are using wording that may seem vague, but it is relatively harmless in the sense that it essentially refers to a drive whose ideational representation is unconscious. Regarding emotions, feelings and affects, it seems logical to consider that they are felt and therefore conscious, given that their very essence involves a subjective feeling. However, within the psychoanalytic practice we are confronted with the common use of terms such as "unconscious love", "unconscious hatred", or even paradoxical constructions like "unconscious awareness of guilt" or "unconscious anxiety". Although it may seem contradictory, these terms refer to processes where an affect or emotion is misinterpreted or repressed, rather than purely unconscious states. For example, an affect may be perceived but misinterpreted, forcing it to be associated with another idea in consciousness. The term "unconscious affect" is then used to describe the fate suffered by this affect due to repression, although originally it was never unconscious and only its ideational representation was repressed. In summary, the use of terms such as "unconscious instincts" or "unconscious emotions" does not necessarily mean that they are completely devoid of consciousness, but rather that they can be misinterpreted or repressed as part of psychic processes. (Freud and Rieff126)

It is well established that the effects can undergo three different vicissitudes: they can remain unchanged, transform into an affective charge of a different nature, especially anxiety, or be completely suppressed, that is, their development is hindered. This dynamic

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is more easily observed in the technique of dream work than in neuroses. The real goal of repression is to suppress the development of affect, and this process continues until this goal is achieved. When repression succeeds in inhibiting the development of an affect, we label the restored affects “unconscious” when we remove the repression. However, there is a significant difference between unconscious affect and unconscious idea: while unconscious idea persists as an active formation in the Ucs system<sup>2</sup> after repression, unconscious affect corresponds to a potential disposition that is prevented from developing further. In other words, there are no unconscious affects in the sense that there are unconscious ideas, but it is possible that affective formations in the system can emerge into consciousness, as can other contents. This difference comes from the fact that ideas are memory investments, while affects and emotions correspond to discharge processes whose final expression is perceived as a feeling. It is particularly interesting to note that repression can succeed in inhibiting the transformation of an instinctual drive into affective expression, which demonstrates that the Cs<sup>3</sup> system controls not only affectivity but also access to motor skills. This highlights the importance of repression, because it shows that it is responsible not only for hiding something from consciousness, but also for hindering emotional development and the initiation of muscular activity (Freud and Rieff 127).

### 1.3.2 The Ego, the Id and the Superego:

Sigmund Freud divided mental life into three entities : the Id, the Ego and the Superego. The Id is the oldest and most primitive, representing the basic impulses, particularly sexual, which motivate the body to seek pleasure. The Ego is a modification of

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<sup>2</sup> Ucs : unconditioned stimulus, a stimulus that elicits an unconditioned response.

<sup>3</sup> Cs: The conditioned stimulus ,In psychology, a stimulus is any object or event that elicits a sensory or behavioral response in an organism.

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the Id, influenced by the external world, acting as the executive of the personality, regulating impulses to match the demands of reality. The self is the seat of reason, reality checking and common sense, and has defensive mechanisms to manage drive energies. The Superego is an extension of the Ego, representing its ideal, formed by the integration of parental values. While the Id seeks pleasure and the Ego is guided by the reality principle, the Superego strives for ideal goals and perfection, exercising moral censorship and conscience. (Lapsley)

Sigmund Freud defines the Ego being like the team leader of our mind. This is the part that tries to keep everything under control and make things happen realistically. For example, when we want to eat cake, the Ego says, “Maybe we can have a little piece of it later, after dinner.” It is like a gatekeeper between our desires and the outside world. This idea of the Ego is repeated several times in the book, especially at the beginning when Freud explain how our minds work and why we do what we do (Lapsley 25).

The Id is described as the part of the human psyche that contains the passions and instincts. Sigmund Freud, states that :

The Id is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality. We approach the Id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitations. It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle (Lapsley 3-4).

The Superego, in Freud's theory of the human psyche, is like the inner judge of our mind. It is formed from the rules and values that we learn from our parents and from society. It is a bit like a voice in our head that tells us what is right and what is wrong, based on what we have been taught. For example, when we feel guilty after doing

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something our parents told us not to do, it is often our Superego that reminds us. Basically, the Superego acts as our conscience, guiding us toward what we consider to be the right behavior.

Freud described The Superego as :

the ethical component of the personality and provides the moral standards by which the Ego operates. The Superego's criticisms, prohibitions, and inhibitions form a person's conscience, and its positive aspirations and ideals represent one's idealized self-image, or Ego ideal ( Lapsley 84).

According to Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud defense mechanisms are psychological strategies used by the Ego to alleviate anxiety caused by internal conflicts. Among these mechanisms, we find repression (the process by which unconscious thoughts are pushed back into the unconscious), sublimation (the transformation of impulses into socially acceptable activities), and others such as projection, rationalization, or denial. Defense mechanisms involve mental processes that enable the mind to reach compromise solutions to conflicts that it cannot resolve consciously. Some common defense mechanisms include repression, reaction formation, projection, regression, sublimation, denial, and rationalization, serve as a normal part of personality function and are not inherently signs of psychological disorder; however, excessive or rigid use of these defenses can be characteristic of various psychological disorders.(McLeod)

According to Freud, childhood experiences, especially those related to relationships with parents, are crucial in personality development. He described a series of psychosexual stages, such as the oral, anal, and phallic stages, which mark the psychological development of the child. Oedipal conflicts, for example, are conflicts between the child and parents that influence personality formation and can have lasting repercussions into adulthood. Early childhood experiences, particularly interactions with

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caregivers, shape an individual's personality through unconscious conflicts and processes. Freud's psychodynamic theory posits that personality is influenced by unconscious conflicts between different parts of the psyche, with childhood experiences playing a crucial role in shaping these conflicts. In Freud's view, unresolved conflicts from childhood can lead to the development of defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection, which influence an individual's personality traits and behaviors throughout life. Freud's theory underscores the importance of early experiences in forming the foundation of an individual's personality structure and coping mechanisms (Traylor).

Freudian concepts have been widely integrated into literature, influencing themes, characters, and plots. For example, the notions of the unconscious, repressed desires and complexes have inspired many writers in creating complex characters and exploring psychological motives. Furthermore significant impact on popular culture, being found in films, television series, comic books, and video games. Jungian archetypes, such as the hero and the shadow, are often used in character and plot construction. Additionally, Freud's ideas about sexuality, aggression, and repressed desires are frequently explored in popular media, influencing our collective understanding of the human psyche.

### **1.4 The Representation of the villain in Cinema and Literature:**

In the context of narratology, the villain is a character who opposes the positive forces represented by the protagonist and actively seeks to thwart their goals. Unlike the anti-hero, who can occupy the center of the narrative without effective opposition, the villain is defined by his opposition to good and by his role in creating conflicts that advance the plot. Villains are often depicted as powerful and their evil nature sets them apart from other characters. They are usually intended to be defeated in the story, which emphasizes their specific narrative role.

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The villain often embodies the concept of evil in stories, symbolizing the struggle between good and evil. This opposition between the forces of good and evil often constitutes the heart of stories in Western culture. However, villains aren't simply archetypes of pure malice. They can also represent individual choices that lead to harmful actions, suggesting a deeper complexity in human and moral nature. In terms of the perception of evil, villains in popular narratives can steal the show, even if they ultimately fail in their plots. Their portrayal often suggests that they are inherently evil, but this interpretation is questioned by some who point out that evil can result from choices, circumstances, or predispositions rather than pure innate wickedness. Ultimately, villains are not just narrative tools, but they also contribute to how narratives are perceived and interpreted. They raise questions about the nature of evil, free will, and morality, which enriches the depth of the stories in which they appear.

### 1.4.1 The Emerging Villain:

In terms of narrative theory, establishing the role of the villain can be complex, especially when it involves a character transformation. In two examples studied, Michael Corleone from *The Godfather* (1972) and Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*, this transition is particularly difficult to define. Michael, although gradually evolving into a villainous character, is not the main antagonist of the story, which complicates his role. Heathcliff, on the other hand, clearly transitions from anti-hero to villain. The function of the emerging villain is to provide an in-depth understanding of his evolution, requiring exposition of the circumstances that transformed him. Literature excels at this presentation, exploring the character's psyche, while film, limited in its access to the character's psychology, can better illustrate external circumstances. In both cases, the complexity of the character and the multiple external influences contribute to his evolution towards the status of villain,

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which requires an in-depth analysis of all the elements of the story to understand the transformation (Vogler 65-69).

In literature, Severus Snape from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is an excellent example. At first, Snape seems to be an antagonistic and hostile character towards Harry. His true motivations and nature are shrouded in mystery for much of the series. His actions often appear suspicious and his allegiance is constantly questioned by characters and readers. It is only in the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, that Snape's true story is revealed, showing his deep loyalty and love that guided his actions. This revelation transforms his character from a simple villain into a complex and tragic figure.

Similarly, in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises*, Bane is presented as the main villain. However, it is revealed during the film that Miranda Tate, presented as a philanthropist and love interest for Bruce Wayne, is actually Talia al Ghul, the real person responsible for the plot to destroy Gotham. His emergence as a villain adds complexity and surprise to the narrative, aligning with Vogler's idea of a villain who gradually reveals his true intentions (Volger 70-73).

These examples from cinema and literature demonstrate the enduring appeal and narrative complexity of the emerging villain archetype. By slowly unveiling the villain's true nature and motivations, storytellers create a rich, compelling story that keeps the audience interested and emotionally engaged in the characters' fates.

### **1.4.2 The Main Villain:**

The main villain, unlike the emerging villain, is deliberately kept mysterious and inaccessible to provoke questions in the reader or viewer. His evil essence is clear from the beginning of the story, and he is presented as an accomplished villain without his previous developments necessarily being explored in depth. This antagonist directly embodies the binary framework of evil, although at times he can also play with the

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concepts of good and evil as relative strengths, as demonstrated by Lestat asserting that evil is a point of view. A prominent example is that of Dr. Hannibal Lecter in *Hannibal Lecter* (2001), a fascinating and frightening character in both the novel and the film. His direct interaction with the camera in the film, often placing emphasis on his eyes, enhances its unsettling effect on the viewer (Vogler 71-74).

In literature, a classic example of a main villain is Iago in William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Iago, cunning and manipulative, advances the plot by sowing seeds of doubt and jealousy in Othello's mind, ultimately leading to tragedy. His motivations come from jealousy and ambition, making him a powerful antagonist whose actions force Othello to confront his insecurities and weaknesses.

Another notable literary villain is Sauron in J.R.R. Tolkien's<sup>4</sup> *The Lord of the Rings* (2001). Sauron embodies pure evil and a relentless desire for power. His presence dominates the entire narrative, challenging the heroes at every step of their journey. The fight against Sauron and his forces highlights themes of courage, friendship and the battle between good and evil, pushing the protagonists to their limits.

In the cinema, Darth Vader from the *Star Wars* (1977) is a perfect example of a main villain. His transformation from the heroic Anakin Skywalker to Sith Lord Darth Vader provides a rich and complex antagonist, both terrifying and tragic. Vader's actions and motivations drive conflict in the series, forcing the heroes to confront their own fears and the darker aspects of their personalities. His eventual redemption arc also adds depth to his character, showcasing the potential for change and the constant struggle between light and darkness.

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<sup>4</sup>J.R.R. Tolkien's : John Ronald Reuel Tolkien

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Heath Ledger's portrayal of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* is another great example. The Joker is an agent of chaos, challenging Batman not only physically but also morally and psychologically. His lack of clear motivations and unpredictable nature make him a terrifying and fascinating villain. The Joker's actions force Batman to question his own principles and the effectiveness of his methods, creating a deep and compelling conflict.

### 1.4.3 The Philosophical /Trickster Villain:

The philosophical villain is defined by his function of exploring society or human nature on a philosophical level. Although its specific characteristics may be difficult to define, its behavior and statements are deliberate, often focusing on moral, social, or philosophical topics. Its plot may also involve the manipulation of plot, appearance, and character concept, but its effectiveness lies primarily in the point it conveys to the reader or viewer. This point can be a surprising idea that offers an alternative perspective on human nature or social dynamics. For example, the character Teatime in "*Discworld*" represents emotional detachment and lack of imagination, thus suggesting what human life would be like without these essential qualities. Likewise, the Joker in many adaptations of the series recognizes the duality of the forces of good and evil, and inspires viewers and readers to critically examine their own circumstances. In sum, The Philosophical Villain aims to provoke deeper reflection on fundamental aspects of humanity and society, thereby offering an alternative understanding of these themes (Vogler 77-80).

The philosophical villain embodies a deep intellectual dimension in the stories, engaging the reader or viewer in reflection on moral, social or philosophical questions. His characterization and role in the story depends on the issue raised by the author or filmmaker, which may cause him to overlap with other types of villains. However, what sets it apart is its engagement with ideas and concepts that transcend the simple conflict between good and evil. By inspiring the audience to think and question societal norms, the

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Philosophical Villain enriches the narrative experience by providing a deeper and complex perspective on the themes addressed in the work (Vogler77-80).

The essential role of tricksters in narration and society. They act as agents of change by reducing big egos and bringing people back to reality. Their ability to provoke healthy laughter strengthens common bonds and highlights the absurdities and hypocrisy of life. By disrupting the status quo, tricksters promote transformation and encourage a healthy challenge to stagnant situations. Their playful energy and propensity to point out the need for change is a reminder of the importance of keeping a balanced perspective and not taking yourself too seriously in life (Vogler 77-80).

### 1.4.4 The Repellent Villain:

Stepping back from the compelling villains that are intriguing, It is important to also examine the ones that elicit rejection and lack of involvement from the audience. A separate study was conducted to analyze the dynamics of these villains, incorporating an empirical approach that was not possible in the first study due to its broad scope. This analysis revealed that the reception of a villain as repellent calls for a specific narrative frame. Although similar to the Philosophical Villain in his ability to operate within the framework of the narrative, the main difference is that the Repulsive Villain does not need to make a specific statement on a philosophical or social issue. However, he possesses potential to function as a philosophical villain due to his interaction with the narrative framework and the reactions he elicits from the audience (Schäfer).

In movies, a prominent example of a loathsome villain is Joffrey Baratheon from the television series *Game of Thrones* based on the books by George R.R. Martin. Joffrey is cruel, mean and unpredictable. Unlike a villain who asks difficult questions or makes comments about society, Joffrey is evil just for the sake of being evil. People hate him because he is evil for no reason and shows no kindness. Even though he has no deep

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reasons for his actions, the audience finds him memorable because of the strong emotions he arouses.

In *No Country for Old Men*, Anton Chigurh is a villain whose actions seem random and driven by his own rules. Unlike thought-provoking villains, Chigurh is just a killer. He has no feelings and he kills coldly. His unpredictable and merciless behavior frightens the spectators.

### **1.5 The Effect of Mental illness , Trauma and Hysteria on Building the Character of the villain :**

Villains found in books, movies, and other forms of media often represent the fears, worries, and complicated things in society. Behind the frightening appearance of these enemies there are complicated things about the way they think and act. These characters are often influenced by things like mental illness, trauma, or even madness. This research examines how these issues affect the villains.

#### **1.5.1 Mental illness:**

Mental illnesses are health conditions that cause alterations in emotions, thoughts and behaviors, or a combination of these. They can manifest in different ways, from depression to anxiety to personality disorders. These disorders can have a significant impact on daily life, often leading to emotional distress and difficulties in social, professional, and family interactions (Parekh).

In constructing the villain's character, the exploration of mental illness provides fertile ground for creating psychological and emotional complexity. For example, a villain suffering from depression could be shaped as an individual tormented by a constant sense of emptiness and hopelessness, thus fueling their nefarious actions with a desperate search for relief or meaning. On the other hand, anxiety disorders could give rise to a paranoid and distrustful villain, constantly plagued by fear and suspicion of others. This anxiety

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could manifest as an obsession with control and a tendency to manipulate those around you to feel safe or powerful. Personality disorders, such as narcissism or psychopathy, could also shape the villain's character by giving them traits like lack of empathy, manipulation, and extreme self-centeredness. These characteristics can make him particularly fearsome and ruthless in his actions, while also making him fascinating to viewers or readers. Mental illnesses provide a rich and varied backdrop for the creation of complex and intriguing villain characters, whose internal struggles and dysfunctional behaviors add depth and nuance to their characterization (Shepherd).

Bipolar disorder, one of the many types of mental illness with its oscillations between depressive episodes and manic periods, offers a rich palette of traits that we can associate with a villain character in various forms of narration, whether in literature, cinema or video games. During depressive episodes, the villain could be depicted as a dark and tortured figure, imbued with melancholy and deep sadness. This depressed mood could be exploited in building his character, perhaps as a motivation for his malicious actions. Loss of interest in activities could be interpreted as emotional detachment from others, reinforcing their distant and cold side (Thourani).

On the other hand, during manic periods, the villain could reveal himself as an impulsive and reckless individual, acting with boundless energy and excessive confidence. The euphoria or irritability characteristic of these moments could be exploited to make the character even more unpredictable and dangerous. Racing thoughts could be represented by a complex evil plan or a series of rapid, chaotic actions. The combination of these depressive and manic episodes could also serve to create a fascinating duality dynamic in the villain's character, making him both terrifying and tragic. His struggle with his own condition could be a key aspect of his development, adding a dimension of psychological depth to his character. Bipolar disorder provides an interesting backdrop for developing a

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complex and nuanced villain character, capable of arousing both terror and compassion in viewers or readers (Mental Disorders).

### 1.5.2 Trauma:

Trauma is a complex and multifaceted concept that unifies different psychic and metapsychological modalities. It refers to the profound psychological impact resulting from significant events, such as separations, bereavements, accidents or illnesses, which have painfully marked an individual's existence. This psychic imprint can manifest through a variety of symptoms and reactions, ranging from anxiety and depression to more serious disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Trauma is characterized by its capacity to profoundly disrupt the psychological functioning of the individual, often by causing fissures in their psychological structure and altering their thought and perception processes. As such, it generates fundamental theoretical-clinical differences and requires a specific approach in clinical assessment and treatment. The concept of trauma is therefore essential for understanding the origins and manifestations of psychological disorders, as well as for developing adapted therapeutic interventions aimed at restoring the mental well-being of affected individuals(Bokanowski).

Trauma, with its power to profoundly disrupt psychic functioning, can serve as a basis for constructing the character of the villain in narrative stories. Traumatic events, such as significant losses, abuse, or personal tragedies, can sow the seeds of anger, hatred, and revenge in the character's mind. These painful experiences can create fissures in his psyche, causing him to engage in destructive or malicious behaviors as a way of coping with his own pain and despair. Thus, trauma can serve as a catalyst to transform an individual into an antagonist, motivated by feelings of resentment, contempt, and a desire for revenge against those they perceive to be responsible for their suffering. In this light, trauma plays a crucial role in constructing the villain's complex and often dark psychology,

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offering a nuanced explanation for his seemingly malicious actions and helping to make the character more human and understandable to the audience(Bokanowski).

### 1.5.3 Hysteria:

Hysteria is a term for emotionally charged behavior, often perceived as excessive and uncontrollable, where a person reacts disproportionately to a given situation. This reaction can manifest itself as physical symptoms having a psychological origin, thus characterizing certain medical conditions. Hysteria may be associated with manifestations such as panic attacks, convulsions, unexplainable pain or sensory disturbances. These symptoms may reflect deep psychological distress, often linked to past trauma, unresolved internal conflicts or emotional difficulties. Hysteria represents a state where emotions seem to dominate rationality, leading to excessive reactions and physical manifestations that defy purely medical explanation .Hysteria, with its excessive and uncontrollable emotional reactions, can be a key element in building the villain's character. Villain characters often described as hysterical may exhibit erratic and impulsive behavior, reacting disproportionately to events or provocations. Their emotionally charged reactions may be the result of unresolved past trauma, deep internal conflicts, or underlying psychological disorders. These characters can be driven to acts of cruelty and violence by their intense emotions and their inability to control them. Their hysteria can also make them unpredictable and manipulative, adding a dimension of dangerousness to their personality. Thus, hysteria can be used to create complex and disturbing villains, whose actions are driven by overwhelming emotions and inner torment, making them both terrifying and fascinating to the audience (Understanding Hysteria).

One of the most iconic villains in popular culture is the Joker . He perfectly embodies the themes of Mental illness, hysteria and trauma in his character construction. His chaotic and unpredictable nature, overreactions and unexpected acts of violence reflect

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a form of hysteria, where emotions seem to dominate rationality. Additionally, the Joker is often portrayed as having a past marked by deep trauma, such as the loss of loved ones or traumatic experiences. These events appear to have fractured his psyche, causing him to embrace chaos and become the ultimate antagonist and an iconic villain.

### **1.6 The History of The Joker and Creation of an Iconic Villain :**

The Joker is arguably one of the most iconic and complex villains in the DC Comics universe, best known as Batman's archenemy. Since his creation in 1940, the Joker has captured the public imagination with his unpredictable personality and distinctive appearance. This Chapter explores in depth the origins, creation and evolution of the Joker , analyzing how this character reflects the fears, anxieties and moral questions of society in different eras.

#### **1.6.1 The Creative Collaboration Behind the Joker :**

The creation of the Joker , one of the most iconic antagonists in the DC Comics universe, is the result of a fruitful collaboration between several key figures in the world of comics. At the heart of this team was Bill Finger, a renowned screenwriter who played a crucial role in shaping many aspects of the Batman universe. Although often overlooked in the early years of public recognition, Bill Finger is widely recognized today as a central architect of the Batman mythology. His contribution extends well beyond simple storylines, touching on the creation and characterization of the characters who populate Gotham City.

Bill Finger worked closely with Bob Kane, the illustrator officially credited as the creator of Batman. Bob Kane, known for his role in the visual design of many characters in the Batman universe, helped bring the Joker to life with his artistic talent. Kane, with his flair for the dramatic and visual, brought an essential graphic dimension to the creation of

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the Joker , working closely with Finger to ensure the character was both visually striking and narratively captivating(Collins).

However, the initial idea for the Joker and his distinctive appearance are largely attributed to Jerry Robinson, a young illustrator and inker of the time. Robinson, who joined the creative team in its early days, came up with the concept of a villain based on a card game Joker card. This idea proved revolutionary, symbolizing unpredictability and chaos – themes that would become central to the character’s identity. Robinson’s vision for the Joker quickly took hold and was adopted and expanded upon by the team, resulting in one of the most memorable villains in comic book history (Collins).

### **1.6.2 The Joker ’s Influences and Sources of Inspiration :**

The inspiration behind the Joker came from several distinct sources, which came together to create a character that was both terrifying and fascinating. A major influence is the film *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), in which actor Conrad Veidt plays a character named Gwynplaine. Gwynplaine is a man whose face has been disfigured into a permanent smile, an image both tragic and grotesque. This striking visual representation had a profound impact on Jerry Robinson’s imagination and served as the visual basis for the Joker . Gwynplaine’s perpetual smile symbolizes the juxtaposition of comedy and tragedy, a theme that has become central to the Joker ’s characterization (Faraci).

In addition to this cinematic influence, the Joker in a deck of cards also inspired the name and nature of the character. The Joker, in the context of cards, is often associated with unpredictability and chaos, characteristics that perfectly define Batman’s Joker . This symbol of anarchy and fickleness has become a powerful metaphor in the DC Comics universe, representing the uncontrollable and destructive forces that the Joker embodies. The mixture of these influences created a character who is not just a simple criminal, but

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an archetype of madness and disorder. (“The Joker : How a German Silent Film Star Served as Inspiration for the Batman Villain”)

Bill Finger, although often in Bob Kane’s shadow in terms of initial public recognition, was a driving force in the creation of Batman and his enemies. He brought a narrative depth and sophistication to the Batman universe that helped establish the series as a comic book mainstay. His contributions range from elaborate storylines to distinctive character traits. For the Joker, Finger emphasized the need for a recurring, memorable adversary for Batman, someone who could pose a constant and complex threat, adding a psychological dimension to the vigilante’s fight against crime(Myth Stories - Animated Legends).

Bob Kane, on the other hand, used his artistic talent to bring Finger and Robinson’s ideas to life. Kane has captured the visual essence of the Joker , creating a character that is instantly recognizable and frightening. Kane’s early sketches, influenced by Robinson’s suggestions and Finger’s directions, laid the foundation for the Joker ’s appearance – a mix of grotesqueness and theatricality that became iconic. The collaboration between these three creators made it possible to forge a multidimensional character, whose impact on popular culture goes far beyond the comic book pages.(Myth Stories - Animated Legends)

### **1.7 The Origins of the Joker :**

The Joker ’s origins have been told in different ways over the decades, but one particularly influential version comes from the comic strip *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988), written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Brian Bolland. This version explores in depth the character’s tragic origins and transformation(Ruvalcaba).

In *The Killing Joke*, the Joker was originally an unsuccessful engineer who dreamed of becoming a comedian. Despite his efforts, he constantly failed to make his audience laugh, gradually plunging into despair. To support his pregnant wife, he agrees to

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take part in a heist as a masked criminal, the Red Hood. However, the heist goes wrong, and during a confrontation with Batman, the future Joker accidentally falls into a vat of chemicals in a factory. This chemical incident transforms his physical appearance dramatically: his skin becomes white, his hair green and his lips red. More importantly, this accident triggers a mental breakdown, driving him completely insane (Ruvalcaba).

This physical and psychological transformation of the character in *The Killing Joke* highlights the fragility of the human spirit and how desperate circumstances can lead to acts of madness. This interpretation humanizes the Joker, showing that he was not always a monster, but an ordinary man pushed to the brink by tragic circumstances. The Joker's origins have been told in different ways over the decades, but one particularly influential version comes from the comic strip *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988), written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Brian Bolland. This version explores in depth the character's tragic origins and transformation.

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### 1.8 The Evolution of the Joker :

Since his creation in the 1940s and 1950s, the Joker was initially portrayed as a prankster criminal, using wacky gadgets and elaborate traps to cause chaos. At this time, he

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was often seen as a clown prince of crime, a troublemaker who was more comical than truly menacing. The light, humorous tone of his early appearances reflected the standards of the time for comics, where content should be accessible and appropriate for young audiences.

The Joker 's evolution as a popular culture character is a fascinating journey, marked by significant transformations and reinterpretations over the decades. First introduced in 1940 in the first issue of the Batman comics, the Joker was intended as a cold-blooded and calculating killer, in stark contrast to the masked hero. In these early depictions, he was a character with a macabre sense of humor and a penchant for elaborate crimes, becoming Batman's nemesis. However, the character underwent significant change in the 1950s and 1960s, a period when the comics industry was under scrutiny and facing pressure from the Comics Code Authority. During this period, the Joker became a more comedic and less threatening character, engaging in light mischief rather than murder. This fanciful version was popularized by Cesar Romero in the 1960s Batman television series, which emphasized humor rather than dark themes.

The 1970s marked a return to the Joker 's darker roots. Comics like *The Killing Joke* and *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth* explored his psychopathic nature and tragic history, adding depth and complexity to his character. This darker depiction paved the way for cinematic interpretations. Jack Nicholson delivered an iconic performance in Tim Burton's 1989 film *Batman*, where the Joker was a flamboyant but deadly adversary.

Heath Ledger redefined the character in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*(2008) in 2008, presenting the Joker as an agent of chaos with a deeply anarchic philosophy, earning him a posthumous Oscar.

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Joaquin Phoenix portrayed the character in the 2019 film *Joker* directed by Todd Phillips offering an origin story that explored the psychological and social factors that led to Arthur Fleck's transformation into the Joker . This film was significant because it separated the character from the Batman universe, focusing on a realistic exploration of mental illness and social neglect. Each version of the Joker reflects the cultural and artistic trends of its era, showing the character's remarkable versatility and enduring appeal as one of fiction's most fascinating villains.

Today's Joker is like a mystery that is difficult to understand. It represents the disorder and chaos in our society. His weird smile hides a person without empathy or morality. He enjoys causing disorder and confusion, defying everything that is normal and accepted. We never really know what motivates him, but he often seems to criticize the lies and wickedness in our world. His enemy, Batman, is his complete opposite, but he is also fascinating to him. Their relationship is complex, full of conflicting feelings like Attraction and rejection. By refusing to follow the rules, the Joker becomes more than just a villain it becomes a symbol of what is wrong in our world and in our heads.

### **1.8 Reception Theory :**

The Joker character is often seen as a double-edged sword, having both positive and negative aspects. In card games, the Joker can be a very powerful card, and in poker it can be used as a joker. In the films, the Joker is depicted as having the power to influence events in unpredictable ways.

Many people are drawn to the character of the Joker, but it's hard to say why exactly. Some think it's because of the actor playing the role, others say it's because of the director's vision or the story itself. The Joker is a villain, but also a tragic character with a complicated history. His motivations, actions, and way of thinking are often left up to interpretation, making him fascinating and intriguing. It could be argued that the real

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reason people are drawn to the Joker is his unique and complex personality(What Makes the Joker so Popular?).

The Joker is also a particularly interesting villain. Unlike the majority of villains, who are often caricatured and predictable, the Joker is distinguished by his unpredictability and the complexity of his actions. Where many villains simply plot and twirl their mustaches in classic patterns of villainy, the Joker can go from an act of extreme violence, such as the murder of wealthy citizens, to a personal vendetta against someone who 'simply interrupted or insulted. This contrast makes his motivations difficult to pin down and his actions impossible to anticipate. In addition, his character has a dark humor and a disconcerting charm, which makes him even more fascinating(What Makes the Joker so Popular?).

People love his striking appearance and the freaky gimmick of leaving his victims with grins. Then the clever exploit of explaining the different iterations of the Joker throughout the eras with the character's inherent unpredictability. On the other hand others may find the character neither a masterpiece nor trash, well executed in some parts and poorly in others. Many reviews say that it is not a film only about the joker. It is a realistic portrayal of someone(anyone!) who can become like him. Which they find it disturbingly brilliant(“*Joker* - Movie Reviews”).

### **1.9 Conclusion:**

In summary, this first chapter introduced us to understanding the motivations of villains in stories and films. We've seen how psychology, which studies how people think and behave, can shed light on their actions. By exploring psychoanalysis, which delves into hidden thoughts, we found that the reasons behind the actions of evil people are often more complex than simple malicious intentions. We also looked at how villains are presented in popular culture, such as in films and books, and how this can influence our perceptions of

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good and evil. This chapter has emphasized that wickedness is not reduced to simple villainy; it is often motivated by deeper factors. Moving forward, it seems crucial to understand the villains' motivations. By delving deeper into these ideas, we enrich our knowledge of ourselves and the world around us. So, in our upcoming exploration, we will continue to analyze the psychology of villains to better understand what drives them and what the implications are for all of us.

## ***Chapter Two:***

# *The Multifaceted Madness: A Deep Dive into the Joker 's Mind*

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### 2.1 Introduction :

In this chapter, we dive into the captivating world of the Joker , this enigmatic character who has intrigued for a long time. This research aims to unravel the mystery behind his actions by examining his inner thoughts and motivations. The Joker goes far beyond being a simple villain; he embodies chaos and challenges the norms established by society. Over time, we see how he evolved from a simple criminal to an iconic figure of disorder and madness. However, opinions about him are divided: some see him as glorifying violence, while others see him as a complex and intriguing character. This thesis will also explore the diverse reactions to his presence, demonstrating that the Joker is a complex subject of debate. Focusing on 2019's *The Joker* film and Heath Ledger's performance in *The Dark Knight*, we hope to better understand what makes the Joker so compelling, analyzing all facets of his personality and his lasting impact on the Batman universe.

### 2.2 Analyzing the minds of the *Joker* (2019) portrayed by Joaquin Phoenix and Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight* (2008) :

#### 2.2.1 *Joker* (2019) portrayed by Joaquin Phoenix :

What makes Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal in *Joker* so unique is that at the start of the film, Arthur Fleck is not yet the Joker and has no connection to Batman. He is simply a man with his own struggles and stories. The film succeeds in giving the audience a new perspective on Arthur's life. By following his evolution, the public reevaluates its opinion on the character of the Joker . Joaquin Phoenix went to great lengths to portray the Joker , losing 52 pounds to get into character. There have been many interpretations of the Joker by different actors, so it was interesting to see how this one compares to the others. Phoenix transformed his physical

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appearance and captured the tormented essence of Arthur Fleck<sup>5</sup>, delivering a disturbing and memorable performance.

the Joker takes on a more human and complex dimension, focusing on the psychological and social origins of the character. This version stands out for its realism and its exploration of themes of mental health and society, marking a new stage in the evolution of the Joker .

The film follows Arthur Fleck, a lonely, shy and struggling clown who is terrorized daily on the streets, while trying to do his job as a sign holder. He struggles to make a living because he has to take care of his sick mother and has trouble holding on to the low paying job he does have. Throughout the movie we see how most of Gotham City is struggling from its failing economy and plagued by crime, unemployment and poverty. Fleck is struggling just as much as the rest of them maybe even worse with his mental illness.

We follow Fleck's journey as he tries to make a living as a comedian while also trying to figure out where he came from. Between all the major twists and turns, the audience gets to see how his mental illness affects his daily life and how it affects how people interact with him. Arthur suffers from a disorder that causes uncontrollable laughter at inappropriate times, and he relies on social services to obtain his medication. He has difficulty communicating with others, often making them feel uncomfortable due to his poor social skills and strange behaviors. For example, he stares at people for too long, uses abnormal facial expressions, and doesn't understand social interactions well.

Arthur's life mainly consists of taking care of his mother and fantasizing about a TV show hosted by Murray Franklin. Arthur imagines that he is invited on the show and gets

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur Fleck :the name of the charcter of the Joker in the movie ‘ *Joker* ’(2019) portrayed by Joaquin Phoenix's.

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everyone's attention and admiration. He also believes he is having a romance with his neighbor, Sophie<sup>6</sup>, but it later turns out that all their encounters were hallucinations.

A series of dramatic events drives Arthur into madness. After being mocked and attacked by three men on the subway, he kills them. Then his therapy sessions are canceled, and he stops taking his medication. Later, he discovers that he was adopted by Penny<sup>7</sup>, who was mentally ill and abused him as a child.

Arthur finally realizes his dream of appearing on Murray Franklin's show, but instead of committing suicide on air as he seemed to want to do, he kills Murray<sup>8</sup> instead. The film ends with Arthur committed to a mental hospital, where he appears to have killed his psychiatrist. He is then seen running and dancing through the corridors, leaving trails of blood behind him, suggesting that he has completely lost his mind.

By the end of the film, audiences are left perplexed, unsure of what was real and what was Arthur Fleck's imagination. Unlike previous representations, where the Joker is clearly a villain, this new film allows us to discover his beginnings and understand what led him to become what he is. It pushes us to question the preconceived ideas we had about the character. The film doesn't just show a villain, it explores the transformation of a man into a complex and disturbing figure.

### 2.2.1.1 Psychological Aspects of the *Joker* (2019) :

In 2019's *Joker*, the psychological aspects of the main character are explored in depth. The film delves into the mind of the Joker to understand what drives him to act the way he does. The emotions and thoughts that motivate him are closely examined, allowing the viewer to better understand his complex behavior. Through intense scenes and interactions with other

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<sup>6</sup> Sophie : a single mother living in the same apartment building as Arthur Fleck (the Joker).

<sup>7</sup> Penny : The mother of the Joker in the movie.

<sup>8</sup> Murray : a name of a charcter in the movie *Joker* (2019) ,portrayed by Robert De Niro.

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characters, the film offers a fascinating insight into the psychology of the Joker and his impact on the story.

### 2.2.1.1.1 Psychopathy and Sociopathy:

Psychopathy is the most dangerous antisocial personality disorder. When psychopaths commit crimes, they plan every detail carefully and often have backup plans. Psychopathic criminals are generally calm and very meticulous. They make few mistakes and never let their emotions destabilize them.

The Joker's mental state, as presented by Joaquin Phoenix, is complex and multifaceted. Although he exhibits traits of psychopathy and sociopathy, his behavior is also influenced by his personal history and environment. By examining these aspects, we can better understand the troubled and chaotic nature of the character(Einzelgänger).

To understand the mental state of the Joker, played by Joaquin Phoenix in the film *Joker*, it is important to explore the concepts of psychopathy and sociopathy. These terms are often used to describe personality disorders characterized by a lack of empathy, impulsive behaviors, and a tendency toward manipulation and delusion. In the case of the Joker, the character presented by Phoenix exhibits traits that correspond to these disorders. First of all, there is a pronounced lack of empathy as seen in the movie where Arthur is seen laughing in *Arkham Asylum*, and when asked what's funny, he replies, "You wouldn't get it," indicating his ongoing detachment from societal norms and lack of empathy(*Joker* 01 :58 :00). The Joker appears incapable of feeling compassion or empathy towards others, leading him to commit acts of violence without apparent remorse ,which is shown in the movie where Arthur kills three Wall Street men on the subway, demonstrating a lack of remorse and impulsive violence (*Joker* 00 :33 :00).We notice impulsive and unpredictable behaviors. As Arthur, now as Joker, kills Murray Franklin on live television(*Joker* 1 :46 :00) showcasing extreme violence and a complete break from societal norms.

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The Joker often acts impulsively, without considering the consequences of his actions. For example, he may go from a state of apparent calm to an outburst of extreme violence in an instant, indicating an inability to control his impulses. He had no brain or developmental issues that would prevent him from making moral choices. For most of his life, he chose to work in the legal field. Later, even though he became a criminal which is rare for someone with disorders like psychopathy or sociopathy, he chose to embrace the darker sides of his personality. He justified his violence by telling his story.

Arthur Fleck showed no improvement in his mood as the weeks went by. His way of speaking became faster and he felt more important. He had trouble sleeping in the film there is a scene where he climbs into a refrigerator(*Joker* 01:12:00). He felt depressed almost all the time. Although his actions seemed irrational to some, he had his own internal logic. For example, a manic person may sleep very little and still feel very important. He changed his behavior, but he was still depressed and near agony. His desires to be important were constant and did not change over time.

However, it is important to note that Phoenix's Joker is also a product of his environment and life experiences. His journey is marked by neglect, violence and social rejection, which helped shape his personality and behavior. Thus, while psychopathy and sociopathy may explain some aspects of one's mental state, it is also necessary to consider the environmental and social influences that contributed to its development. In the film they show a character who we want justice for, and some sort of growth and transformation in that character takes place. Joker clearly demonstrated empathy. Although odd, his kindness towards his mother—giving her a bath, greeting her when he got home—seemed like he was an immature and childlike boy trying to show kindness to her. Further, when he made a kid laugh on the bus, we saw his human side, his desire to connect to others. He seemed to feel empathy for his coworker, Gary, and sorrow when the other clowns made fun of him. Towards

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young Bruce, he demonstrated humor and also a desire to connect. When reflecting on the kids who beat him up, he said, “Oh, they were just kids.” (*Joker* 00 :16 :06)

### 2.2.1.1.2 Nihilism :

Arthur Fleck begins the film as a man ignored and mistreated by society. His journey shows how he loses all hope and meaning in his life. Arthur is alone, mistreated and forgotten by a world that does not care about his suffering. The film shows how this loneliness can lead to a nihilistic vision of life, where the rules and values of society no longer mean anything.

When Arthur becomes the Joker , he completely rejects social and moral rules. He accepts chaos and disorder, no longer seeking to find meaning or morality in the world around him. The Joker shows his nihilism through his unpredictable and destructive behavior, and through his rejection of human values like compassion and empathy.

A key scene in the film that clearly demonstrates the Joker ’s nihilism is when he is a guest on the “Murray Franklin Show. Arthur Fleck is a guest on Murray Franklin’s talk show after a video of his failure as a comedian is broadcast. Arthur, now dressed as the Joker ,reveals his true feelings:

Murray Franklin: “Arthur, this appears to be a confession. You mean you killed those people?”

Joker :“Yes.”

Murray Franklin: “And why does this amuse you?”

Joker : “Why? I’ll tell you why. What difference does it make? You never listen, do you? You always ask the same questions: ‘How are you, Arthur?’ ... What you call a sick society is not me. It’s the people. You’re all sick. ‘invite to your show. You make me look like a clown. No one cares about anyone. ’(*Joker* 01 :01 :30)

In this scene, the Joker expresses his nihilistic vision of society. He shows his contempt for social rules and values, highlighting people’s hypocrisy and indifference.

He says that “no one cares for anyone”( *Joker* 01:34:00), which is a central idea of nihilism: human relationships have no real meaning and moral values are unimportant.

The Joker rejects any moral responsibility for his actions, saying that it is society that is sick and corrupt. This scene shows how, in his nihilistic state, he finds meaning in chaos and

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destruction, subverting established expectations and norms. His act of violence live on television is a statement against a society he sees as empty and hypocritical.

The film *Joker* (2019) uses this character to explore ideas of nihilism, showing how a person who has lost all hope and meaning can adopt a worldview where nothing has value, and chaos becomes a form of freedom.

### 2.2.1.1.3 Madness and Insanity :

The film *Joker* (2019) uses Arthur Fleck to explore themes of madness and sanity. It illustrates how suffering and isolation can cause a person to lose touch with reality. Furthermore, it shows how this madness can become a form of power and freedom in a cruel and indifferent world.

Arthur Fleck is a man who struggles with mental issues from the beginning of the film. He lives in a society that does not understand him and mistreats him. His mental illness is ignored or ridiculed by those around him. This indifference and cruelty push him more and more towards madness. As the film progresses, we see Arthur gradually losing touch with reality, feeling more and more isolated and desperate.

When Arthur becomes the Joker , he completely embraces his madness. He stops struggling with his mental illness and accepts his identity as the Joker . He no longer tries to conform to society's expectations or follow its rules. Instead, he finds power and meaning in his madness, using his mental state to challenge and disrupt the world around him.

A key scene in the film that clearly shows the Joker's madness is when he imagines himself being embraced by Murray Franklin on "The Murray Franklin Show," showcasing his detachment from reality and growing delusions (*Joker* 00 :12 :18).and also Arthur begins to descend into violent madness when he kills three men on the subway after being harassed. This act marks a key moment in his mental disorder (*Joker* 00 :33 :00).

In this scene, the Joker fully expresses his madness. This contrast shows how Arthur,

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by becoming the Joker, abandoned all rationality and all moral conscience. he lives in his own world, where his actions have no consequences and he is free to do as he pleases.

### 2.2.1.1.4 Dark Humor :

The film *Joker* (2019) uses dark humor to explore themes of pain and rebellion. The character of Arthur Fleck shows how humor can be used to cope with suffering and to challenge social norms. His dark humor is both a means of survival and a weapon against a society he perceives as cruel and unjust.

Arthur Fleck is a man who wants to be a comedian, but he can't make people laugh in the traditional way. His life is full of sadness and despair, and he uses dark humor as a way to cope with his suffering. The Joker 's dark humor reveals the pain hidden behind his smile and shows how he transforms his own misery into something disturbing and provocative.

When Arthur becomes the Joker , his humor becomes even darker and twisted. He begins to find humor in acts of violence and chaos. His laughter becomes a weapon, a way of defying society and making fun of his own suffering and that of others.

A key scene in the film that clearly shows the Joker 's dark humor is when he kills Randall<sup>9</sup>, his former colleague, in front of another colleague, Gary<sup>10</sup>, who is short in stature.

After killing Randall, the Joker turns to Gary, who is horrified and panicked. The Joker, with a smile and a sarcastic tone, tells Gary that he can leave, but plays with him by pretending to attack him and saying "You were the only one who was ever nice to me", before finally letting him go (*Joker* 01 :35 :50).

Dark humor is present in the contrast between the extreme violence of the act and the

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<sup>9</sup> Randall : was a coworker of Arthur Fleck when he worked as a clown.

<sup>10</sup> Gary: was a clown working alongside Arthur Fleck and Randall

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Almost playful manner in-which the Joker treats Gary afterwards. This scene shows the Joker's dark humor in full action. Randall's murder is brutal and shocking, but the Joker finds humor in Gary's terror. He plays with the audience's and Gary's expectations by pretending to attack him, which adds a disturbing dimension to the act of violence. Dark humor here is used to emphasize the Joker's madness and his ability to find humor in horrific situations.

The Joker uses dark humor as a way to challenge and criticize society. By mocking violence and suffering, he exposes the hypocrisy and indifference of those around him. This scene shows how his black humor is a form of resistance against a world that has rejected and mistreated him.

### **2.2.1.1.5 Sadism :**

The film *Joker* (2019) uses the character Arthur Fleck to explore the theme of sadism, showing how a person can come to take pleasure in the suffering of others after experiencing so much pain themselves. The Joker's sadism is a manifestation of his madness and total rejection of society's moral standards.

Arthur Fleck begins the film as a person who is oppressed and mistreated by society. His transformation into the Joker marks a radical change where he begins to take pleasure in the suffering he causes. By becoming the Joker, he frees himself of his inhibitions and guilt, and he begins to see the pain and fear of others as a source of pleasure.

The Joker's sadism is a way for him to take revenge on a society that has rejected and humiliated him. Every act of cruelty is a form of revenge, where he gains power by inflicting the suffering he suffered. His pleasure in violence and cruelty shows how he has been broken by his own pain and how he uses that pain to fuel his madness.

In the film, the Joker's sadism is evident. He kills Randall not only for revenge, but also for the pleasure of the violence and pain he inflicts. The Joker revels in Gary's fear, taking pleasure in mentally tormenting him before letting him go (*Joker* 01 :35 :50).

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This scene shows how the Joker derives satisfaction from the pain and terror of others, turning his own suffering into a weapon against those around him. The Joker 's sadism is an expression of his hatred towards society and his desire to seek revenge on those who mistreated him. By inflicting pain, he feels powerful and in control, which contrasts with the feeling of helplessness he had before becoming the Joker. This cruelty shows how he embraced chaos and violence as a form of personal liberation.

### 2.2.1.1.6 Moral Ambiguity :

The film *Joker* (2019) uses ambiguity to create a complex and intriguing character. The Joker remains a mystery until the end, leaving the audience to question the nature of his character and the motivations behind his actions. This gives the film additional depth and stimulates thought on the themes of madness, society and morality.

Arthur Fleck, before becoming the Joker , is a troubled and misunderstood man. His behavior and social interactions are often ambiguous, leaving the viewer wondering whether he is truly a villain or simply a victim of tragic circumstances. Even after his transformation into the Joker , his motivations and actions remain unclear at times, creating narrative tension and uncertainty about his true intentions.

The Joker himself is an ambiguous character. It oscillates between extreme violence and moments of vulnerability, between black humor and pure madness. This ambiguity makes the Joker both terrifying and fascinating, because it's hard to know what he'll do next or what he's really thinking. This creates a constant tension that keeps the audience's attention.

A key scene in the film that clearly demonstrates the Joker 's ambiguity is when he appears on the "Murray Franklin Show." Here is a description of the scene with a simple analysis:

Arthur Fleck is a guest on Murray Franklin's talk show after a video of his failure as a comedian is broadcast. Arthur, now dressed as the Joker , reveals his true Feelings, as he says:

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“i got nothing to lose , nothing can hurt me anymore, my life is nothing but comedy”(Joker 01:02:00).

Arthur, now the Joker , is invited to the set of Murray Franklin’s talk show. What begins as a normal interview quickly becomes tense, with the Joker revealing his true thoughts and emotions. This moment is filled with ambiguity, as the audience is unsure whether the Joker is telling the truth or lying to shock and manipulate others.

In this scene, the Joker ’s ambiguity is at its peak. It is hard to tell if his words are sincere or just a front to sow confusion. His presence on the talk show set is already ambiguous in itself, because the audience does not know what he is going to say or do. This scene highlights the duality of the Joker ’s character, between his clown façade and his unpredictable true nature.

The Joker uses ambiguity as a weapon, keeping others uncertain and leaving them wondering what his true intentions are. This ambiguity reinforces his power and influence over others, as it is unclear whether he is a calculating criminal genius or simply a broken man searching for meaning in a chaotic world.

### **2.2.1.1.7 Attracting Attention :**

The film *Joker* (2019) shows how the eponymous character uses various means to attract attention to himself, whether through his violent acts or his spectacular public appearances. Attention is an essential aspect of his character, as it allows him to get his message out and claim his power in a society that has marginalized and oppressed him.

Before becoming the Joker , Arthur Fleck is an anonymous and insignificant man, but he longs to be noticed and appreciated. His desire for attention manifests in his attempt to become a comedian and make others laugh. However, his inability to get the attention he wants pushes him to extremes, transforming him into the Joker , a character who gets attention through much more sinister means. Once he becomes the Joker , Arthur actively seeks

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attention. He uses violence, chaos and spectacle to stand out in a society that has ignored and mistreated him. His transformation into the Joker is a way for him to stand out and get revenge on those who rejected him.

A key scene in the film that demonstrates how the Joker attracts attention is when he was on the subway with the three rich guys. After killing the 3 rich men, he says,"For my whole life, I didn't know if I even really existed. But I do. People are starting to notice" (*Joker* , 00:40:35).

He also commented that his social worker was not seeing him. She lacked empathy for his particular world ,"My social worker says I need to be more positive.Which I thought meant she wanted me to be happy, but I think she just wants me to pretend that I am" (*Joker* , 00:25:00).

Violence became the way he received attention in a world where he walked around feeling like a ghost. He played the clown to gain attention and wanted to be a comedian to gain attention, but finally, in violence, he gained the attention he so clearly wanted. He liked being loved and admired—it even made him dance. Attention became the positive feedback that continued his violent path.

The Joker uses attention as a way to claim his power and influence over society. By standing out, he creates a lasting impact on those who watch him, leaving an indelible impression of his chaotic and unsettling presence. His ability to attract attention demonstrates his determination to be seen and heard in a world that has long ignored him.

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### 2.2.2 *The Dark Knight* (2008) portrayed by Heath Ledger :

The Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008) , played by Heath Ledger<sup>11</sup> , is a character who sows chaos and fear in Gotham City. From his first appearance, during a bank robbery, he pushes the members of his own gang to kill each other so he can escape with all the money. This scene illustrates his love for chaos and his talent for manipulating people into turning against each other. Unlike most villains, the Joker doesn't seek money or power. Its main purpose is to sow confusion and demonstrate that people can become monsters under pressure.

The Joker 's evil side is particularly revealed when he kidnaps Harvey Dent<sup>12</sup> and Rachel Dawes<sup>13</sup> , two key characters in Gotham. He places them in two different locations, both rigged with explosives, forcing Batman to make an impossible choice. Batman manages to save Harvey, but the explosion horribly disfigures his face, transforming him into Two-Face, a man hungry for revenge. Unfortunately, Rachel dies, which devastates Bruce Wayne<sup>14</sup>. This shot shows that the Joker enjoys inflicting pain and suffering and seeks to push people to the edge to see if they will break.

One of the Joker 's most notorious schemes involves planting bombs on two ferries: one carrying ordinary citizens, the other prisoners. He gives each group the other boat's detonator, forcing them to choose between blowing up the other ferry to survive or risking their own lives. This cruel game aims to prove that people will do anything to survive, even kill. However, in the end, neither group chooses to blow up the other ferry, which surprises the Joker and demonstrates that people can still act morally, even in desperate situations.

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<sup>11</sup> Heath Ledger :he preformed the character of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008) , in the movie ,the Joker was called the Joker.

<sup>12</sup> Harvey Dent :Two-Face made his debut as Harvey Dent, however DC soon changed the name to "Harvey Dent".

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Dawes :the girlfriend of Harvey Dent before he became Two-Face and Bruce Wayne's closest friend.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Wayne : Batman

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Throughout the film, the Joker 's interactions with Batman reveal that he sees Batman as his one true equal. He enjoys their confrontations and respects Batman's rule of not killing. The Joker is convinced that everyone has a dark side and wants to push Batman to his limits to prove it. He wants to show that even Batman can be corrupted and become a killer. Although chaotic, the Joker is extremely intelligent and always seems to be one step ahead of his opponents. He plans his attacks carefully to maximize fear and confusion.

Heath Ledger's interpretation of the Joker is both powerful and unforgettable. With his performance, the Joker goes beyond being a villain to become a force of nature, calling into question the very foundations of Gotham City. The Joker 's actions have a profound and lasting impact, corrupting Harvey Dent and forcing Batman to make difficult choices. Even after his capture, the chaos wreaked by the Joker continues to haunt Gotham. His belief that everyone has a dark side and his ability to create chaos make him one of the most iconic and frightening villains in cinematic history. Through his schemes and twisted philosophy, the Joker leaves an indelible mark on Gotham City and its heroes, proving that sometimes the most terrifying enemy is the one who makes us question our own morality and humanity.

In *The Dark Knight* (2008), Heath Ledger's Joker embodies and intensifies the character's anarchic philosophies. Like other versions of the Joker , Ledger's is murderous, hostile, and unhinged. However, this Joker stands out for his obsession with the destruction of civil society. He is driven by the symbology of disorder and the ideology of chaos, without regard for the process or precision required to achieve it.

Unlike Jack Nicholson's Joker , who sought to disrupt and reinvent authority, Ledger's Joker aims for a total dismantling of the establishment. Where Mark Hamill's Joker in *Batman: The Animated Series* combined violence and pleasure, Ledger's Joker detaches himself from emotions to embrace intellectualism. He positions himself as a moral philosopher, a provocateur and an empiricist, seeking to demonstrate that the elimination of

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the state could lead to a freer and more just society. This rejection of order and quest for destruction makes Ledger's portrayal a particularly frightening version of the Joker . This is not simply a criminal seeking chaos for its own sake, but an individual who sees chaos as a means of revealing the fragility and hypocrisy of social structures. By questioning the very foundations of society, Ledger's Joker exposes the underlying darkness of human nature and the fine line between civilization and barbarism. This makes his version of the Joker deeply disturbing and unforgettable, leaving a lasting impression on viewers(The Vile Eye).

In his most intense moments with his adversaries, the Joker tells a story about his facial scars. Each time the story is different. In one version, the scars come from childhood abuse. In another, they are self-inflicted. He uses these stories to instill terror in his victims. He knows that a horrific, traumatic story arouses fear, which helps him remain unpredictable and threatening. By constantly changing his story, the Joker becomes difficult to pin down for authorities, psychologists and criminologists. They can't profile him accurately. This confusion reinforces his radical ideas about the social order. By presenting himself as everyone else, he becomes nobody. This contrasts with previous versions of the Joker , who sought to be unique and did everything to be seen as important, exceptional, and special.

### **2.2.2.1 Psychological Aspects of *The Dark Knight* (2008) portrayed by Heath Ledger:**

In 2008's *The Dark Knight* the psychological aspects of Heath Ledger's character are explored in depth. The film delves into the mind of the Joker to understand what motivates him to act the way he does. The emotions and thoughts that guide him are closely examined, providing a better understanding of his complex behavior. Through tense interactions with other characters and moments of dramatic tension, the film offers a captivating insight into the psychology of the Joker and his influence on the story.

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### 2.2.2.1.1 Psychological Depth and Complexity :

Heath Ledger's iconic portrayal of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* not only redefined the character, but also set a new standard for cinema villains. Ledger's Joker stands out sharply from lighter, more colorful depictions of the past, instead embodying a dark, anarchic force that brings a raw, unsettling realism to the character. Ledger himself described his portrayal of the Joker as a "psychopathic, murderous, schizophrenic clown with no empathy whatsoever." This chilling characterization highlights the Joker 's complete detachment from humanity and his deep enjoyment of chaos and destruction.

Ledger's interpretation influenced future incarnations of the Joker , including Joaquin Phoenix's in *Joker* (2019). Phoenix's Joker , like Ledger's, is portrayed as a social outcast, someone marginalized and pushed to the brink by a society that ignores and mistreats him. Phoenix builds on the foundation laid by Ledger, adding layers of psychological depth and social commentary. His Joker is not only a symbol of chaos, but also becomes the catalyst for broader societal upheaval. The character's descent into madness and his rise as the leading figure of a protest movement reflect a deep dissatisfaction with the existing social order.

### 2.2.2.1.2 Chaos:

Heath Ledger plays the Joker in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, perfectly portraying the chaotic nature. This character embodies chaos through his actions, his philosophy and his interactions with other characters. Here are some key scenes from the film that show this chaotic nature:

The film begins with a bank robbery where the Joker plans betrayals between his accomplices. Each thief kills the one before him to reduce the number of shares. This scene shows the chaos orchestrated by the Joker . Even though the heist seems well planned, it relies on betrayal and anarchy, proving his love of chaos and unpredictability As he reveals his true identity, the Joker tells the bank manager, "I believe whatever doesn't kill you simply makes

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you...stranger" (*The Dark Knight*, 00:04:00). After capturing Harvey Dent and Rachel Dawes, the Joker attaches them to explosives. When Batman questions him about where they are, the Joker explains that he wants to introduce chaos.

In this scene, the Joker explains his vision of the world to Batman: "Introduce a little anarchy. Disrupt the established order and everything becomes chaos. I am an agent of chaos." He sees himself as a driver of disorder, believing that social structures are fragile and easily destroyed. Another scene where the Joker visits Harvey Dent in the hospital, pushing him to become Two-Face. Then he blows up the hospital while calmly walking away. This scene shows the influence of the Joker and his ability to cause chaos. He causes both physical and psychological destruction, driving Dent to madness. His calm in the face of the explosion shows his comfort in the chaos. (*The Dark Knight*, 02:31:00).

In another scene he places explosives on two ferries, one filled with civilians and the other with prisoners. Each ferry has the detonator to detonate the other, and he says "Tonight, you're all going to be a part of a social experiment. Through the magic of diesel fuel and ammonium nitrate, I'm ready right now to blow you all sky high" (*The Dark Knight*, 02:01:00). One must destroy the other before midnight or it will detonate both.

This scene highlights the chaotic nature of the Joker. He forces ordinary people to face terrible moral decisions, hoping to prove that chaos reigns when people are pushed to their limits. However, neither ferry chose to blow up the other, contradicting his view of inherent chaos. Also during his interrogation, the Joker tells Batman that they are two sides of the same coin, and that Batman gives meaning to his life.

This scene shows that the Joker sees chaos and order as interdependent. By saying that Batman completes him, the Joker admits that his own chaotic nature exists in opposition to Batman's order and justice. He thrives on creating chaos in the face of Batman's efforts to maintain order. Throughout the film, Heath Ledger's Joker represents chaos. His actions,

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motivations and interactions aim to undermine the social order and show the fragility of human structures. His unpredictable behavior, love of anarchy, and psychological manipulation create a world where chaos dominates.

### 2.2.2.1.3 Unpredictability:

In Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, unpredictability is a central trait of the character of the Joker, played by Heath Ledger. An iconic scene depicting this unpredictability is when the Joker walks into an underworld meeting and performs a magic trick with a pencil.

In this scene, the Joker interrupts a meeting of Gotham's mob bosses. He begins with a magic trick, declaring that he will make a pencil disappear, "How about a magic trick? I'm gonna make this pencil disappear" (*The Dark Knight*, 00:25:00). He plants a pencil on a table vertically and, when one of the henchmen tries to attack him, he crushes his head against the pencil, effectively causing him to disappear.

This scene is a perfect example of the Joker 's unpredictability:

- **Element of Surprise:** The Joker begins with a magic trick, a harmless and childish act, but quickly transforms it into an act of brutal and shocking violence. This juxtaposition between the innocent and the violent creates a destabilizing effect of surprise for his enemies and for the spectator.
- **Demonstration of Power:** The Joker doesn't just talk or threaten; he acts in unexpected and extreme ways to prove his point. By killing a man so unexpectedly, he demonstrates his power and determination to everyone present.
- **Terror:** The Joker seeks to establish a reign of terror based on unpredictability. The mob bosses, accustomed to rules and codes even in the criminal world, are caught off guard by his erratic and unpredictable behavior, making them realize that they cannot control or predict him.

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The Magic pencil's scene embodies the Joker 's philosophy, he is an agent of chaos, someone who revels in anarchy and who believes that anything structured or ordered can be destroyed by a single act of unpredictable madness. And also illustrates how the Joker uses his unpredictability to sow fear and take control of situations where brute force alone would not be enough. Its unpredictability thus becomes a weapon as powerful as any physical weapon.

### 2.2.2.1.4 Dark Humor:

Another iconic scene that shows the character of Heath Ledger's Joker , but this time through his use of dark humor, is the hospital scene where he visits Harvey Dent.

In this scene, the Joker , disguised as a nurse, visits Harvey Dent, who is hospitalized after the accident that transformed him into Two-Face. The Joker, dressed as a nurse, humorously introduces himself, saying, "Hi. You know, I don't want there to be any hard feelings between us, Harvey. When you and, uh, Rachel were being abducted, I was sitting in Gordon<sup>15</sup>'s cage. Now, I didn't rig those charges" (*The Dark Knight*, 01:50:00). The Joker tries to convince Harvey that chaos is the only justice in this world. At the end of their conversation, the Joker gives Harvey a gun and places the barrel against his own forehead, prompting Harvey to shoot if he wants. Harvey fires the gun, but it is empty, and the Joker bursts out laughing.

This scene illustrates the Joker 's dark humor in several ways:

- **Ironic Disguise:** The Joker is disguised as a nurse, a symbol of care and healing, which is a deep irony given that he is the direct cause of Harvey's injuries and embodies destruction and chaos . This visual element is already a form of black humor.
- **Interaction with Harvey Dent:** The Joker 's dark humor is evident in his conversation with Harvey. He uses sarcasm and manipulation to convince Harvey of the inevitability

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<sup>15</sup> Gordon: James "Jim" Gordon was a Gotham City police officer.

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and justice of chaos. The fact that he finds it amusing to play with Harvey's emotions and beliefs adds a layer of cruelty tinged with humor.

- **Dehumanization:** He uses humor to dehumanize his violent acts, turning them into games or jokes, which makes his actions even more terrifying.

### 2.2.2.1.5 Disturbing Appearance:

An iconic scene depicting the unsettling appearance of Heath Ledger's Joker in *The Dark Knight* is the interrogation scene with Batman at the police station.

In this scene, the Joker sits alone in an interrogation room, lit by harsh light that highlights the disturbing details of his appearance. Batman enters and begins a brutal interrogation for information on the whereabouts of Rachel and Harvey Dent. The Joker provocatively questions Batman's morality, saying, "Don't talk like one of them. You're not! Even if you'd like to be" (*The Dark Knight*, 01:24:00).

This scene highlights the Joker 's disturbing appearance and its meaning in several ways:

- **Dripping Makeup:** The Joker 's makeup is deliberately imperfect and dripping, with red dripping from his lips and black around his eyes. This makeup, reminiscent of a clown but distorted, creates a feeling of unease. The image of a clown, usually associated with joy, is subverted here to evoke terror and disorder.
- **Prominent Scars:** The permanent smile-shaped scars on the Joker 's face, particularly visible in the intense light of the interrogation, are a constant reminder of the character's violence and madness. They tell a story of pain and mutilation, reinforcing the idea that the Joker has an intimate and disturbing relationship with violence.
- **Facial Expression:** The Joker uses his facial expressions to amplify the unsettling effect of his appearance. His eerie smiles, stares, and inappropriate laughs add a layer of worry. During interrogation, he even smiles when Batman punches him, showing his indifference to pain and disturbing pleasure in the chaos.

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- **Body Behavior:** The way the Joker stands and moves is also disturbing. He is often casual, even provocative, which contrasts with the intensity of the situation. During the interrogation, he remains calm and almost amused, despite Batman's violence, which reinforces the idea that he is detached from human norms of fear and pain.

The Joker 's unsettling appearance in this scene serves several thematic functions:

- **Reflection of the Psyche:** The Joker 's appearance is the external reflection of his deviant psyche. Every aspect of his look, from the makeup to the scars, is designed to disrupt and destabilize, illustrating his deeply disturbed nature and his pleasure in instilling terror.

The interrogation scene in *The Dark Knight* uses the Joker 's unsettling appearance to reinforce his role as a chaotic and unpredictable antagonist. His look is carefully crafted to evoke an emotional response of unease and fear, perfectly illustrating the threat he poses to Gotham and its residents.

### 2.2.2.1.6 Nihilism:

A key scene depicting the nihilism of the Joker , played by Heath Ledger, in *The Dark Knight* is when he burns a huge pile of cash in front of a group of criminals.

In this scene, the Joker has captured Lau<sup>16</sup>, the mob accountant, and he has taken possession of all the money in Gotham's underworld. He piles this money into an enormous pyramid and, he sets it on fire, He declares: "It is not about money... It is about sending a message. Everything burns!" (*The Dark Knight*, 01:28:00). under the shocked gaze of the criminals.

This scene is a powerful demonstration of the Joker 's nihilism and worldview:

- **Rejection of Material Values:** Burning a huge amount of money, the ultimate symbol of wealth and power in capitalist society, shows that the Joker does not care about material

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<sup>16</sup> Lau : He is the owner of Lau Security Investments in China who is working in Gotham City.

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values. For him, money is of no importance, which is a profoundly nihilistic act in a world where money is often seen as an end in itself.

- **Destruction for Pleasure:** By burning money, the Joker does not seek to gain anything. His act of destruction is gratuitous and only serves to illustrate his philosophy of chaos and nihilism. He finds pleasure in pure anarchy and aimless destruction, which is a clear manifestation of nihilism.
- **Chaos Truth Speech:** During this scene, the Joker explains to the criminals that what really motivates people is not money but fear and chaos. He rejects the foundations of society, claiming that everything is a joke and that the only truth is chaos. This nihilistic perspective overturns all conventional values and offers a worldview where nothing has meaning except destruction and disorder.
- **Indifference to Life and Death:** The Joker shows no respect for human life or social institutions. His act of burning the money, even at the risk of attracting the hatred of criminals, shows that he has no fear of consequences. His nihilism makes him indifferent to his own survival and that of others.

The Joker 's gesture is a scathing criticism of the values of modern society. By burning money, it exposes the hypocrisy and fragility of social structures based on greed and power.

### 2.2.2.1.7 Manipulation and Deception:

The scene of the Joker with Batman illustrates the Joker 's manipulation and deception in *The Dark Knight* is when he traps Batman and the police with the double hostage situation, using Rachel and Harvey Dent.

In this scene, the Joker reveals to Batman and the police that Rachel Dawes and Harvey Dent have been kidnapped and placed in two separate locations, both rigged with explosives. The Joker gives addresses for both locations, forcing Batman to choose who to save. Batman decides to save Rachel and sends the police to rescue Harvey, but the Joker gave reverse

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addresses. Batman arrives to save Harvey, and Rachel dies in the explosion at the Other Place (*The Dark Knight*, 01:30:00).

This scene shows the Joker 's manipulation and deception in several ways:

- **Manipulation of Emotions:** By forcing Batman to choose between Rachel and Harvey, the Joker plays on Batman's emotions and personal attachments. He knows that Batman is emotionally tied to Rachel and uses this weakness to torment him.
- **Intellectual Deception:** The Joker gives reversed addresses for the two hostages, which fools Batman and the police. This deception shows his diabolical intelligence and ability to anticipate the actions of his opponents.
- **Creation of Chaos:** The result of this manipulation is twofold: Rachel dies and Harvey is horribly disfigured, becoming Two-Face. The Joker transforms a symbol of justice into an agent of chaos, which was his main goal. This transformation shows how the Joker uses deception to sow despair and chaos.
- **Psychological Control:** By manipulating Batman in this way, the Joker gains psychological control over him. It shows that even with all his strength and skills, Batman can be tricked and manipulated, shaking his confidence and sense of justice.

The double hostage scene serves several thematic purposes in *The Dark Knight*:

- **Hero Vulnerability:** The Joker 's manipulation reveals the vulnerability of heroes, showing that even the strongest and fairest can be manipulated and deceived. This humanizes Batman and shows that justice is not invincible in the face of chaos.
- **Perversion of Justice:** By transforming Harvey Dent into Two-Face, the Joker perverts the idea of justice. Harvey, once a symbol of hope for Gotham, becomes an instrument of vengeance, illustrating how manipulation can corrupt even the noblest intentions.

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- **Theater of Cruelty:** The Joker treats the situation like a cruel game, where human lives are pawns in his theater of cruelty. His manipulation shows his complete disregard for human life and his pleasure in causing suffering.

The double hostage scene in *The Dark Knight* is a masterful demonstration of the Joker's manipulation and deception. By using Batman's emotions, giving misleading information, and orchestrating a plan to sow chaos, the Joker shows his ability to control and corrupt others. This scene perfectly illustrates the themes of the vulnerability of heroes, the perversion of justice, and the theater of cruelty, making the Joker a fearsomely effective antagonist.

### 2.2.2.1.8 Master Planner:

An iconic scene that illustrates the Joker as the Master Planner in *The Dark Knight* is when he orchestrates the prison escape and sets up a series of events that culminate in the explosion of the hospital telling Harvey Dent: “Introduce a little anarchy. Disrupt the established order, and everything becomes chaos. I am an agent of chaos” (*The Dark Knight*, 01:53:00).

This scene shows the Joker as Master Planner through several elements:

- **Complex Planning:** The Joker planned his arrest and imprisonment as part of his overall plan. He anticipated the police and Batman's every move, using his own imprisonment to sow chaos. This shows his ability to think several moves in advance, like in a game of chess.
- **Resource Manipulation:** The Joker hid a cell phone inside a prisoner, turning the man into a human bomb. This shows his shrewd use of available resources and his ability to manipulate others to achieve his goals.
- **Orchestration of the Escape:** The Joker uses the confusion created by the explosions to orchestrate his escape from the prison. He knows exactly when and how to act to

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maximize the effect of surprise and evade law enforcement. This precision in the execution of his plan demonstrates his strategic intelligence.

- **Chaos Coordination:** The scene culminates with the explosion of the hospital, an action that was carefully coordinated to coincide with other chaotic events across the city. This shows the Joker 's ability to orchestrate multiple elements of chaos at the same time, while maintaining complete control of the situation.

The prison escape scene serves several thematic purposes in *The Dark Knight*:

- **Challenge the Authorities:** The Joker 's plan challenges the authorities of Gotham, showing that he is always one step ahead of them. His ability to manipulate and orchestrate complex events shows the weakness of authority structures in the face of his criminal genius.
- **Psychology of Terror:** By planning every detail to maximize fear and confusion, the Joker uses the psychology of terror as a weapon. His planning shows that chaos can be a form of control, used to destabilize and dominate one's enemies.

The prison escape scene in *The Dark Knight* perfectly illustrates the Joker as a Master Planner. Through his intricate planning, cunning manipulation of resources, precise orchestration of escape, and coordination of chaos, the Joker demonstrates his strategic intelligence and ability to defy the authorities. This scene highlights themes of mastering chaos, defying authority structures, and using psychological terror, cementing the Joker as a fearsomely intelligent and unpredictable antagonist.

### 2.2.2.1.9 Fearlessness:

An iconic scene illustrating the fearlessness of the Joker , played by Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*, is the scene where he provokes Batman during their first face-to-face meeting at a gala evening organized by Bruce Wayne.

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In this scene, the Joker and his men burst into the gala evening to search for Harvey Dent. The Joker terrorizes the guests by saying, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We are tonight's entertainment" (*The Dark Knight*, 00:37:00). but when Batman steps in to stop him, the Joker shows remarkable fearlessness by confronting Batman without any hesitation or fear. This scene shows the Joker 's fearlessness through several elements:

- **Direct Confrontation:** The Joker deliberately enters a well-guarded, public place and directly confronts Gotham's elite, including Bruce Wayne/Batman. His ability to walk calmly in the midst of danger shows his complete lack of fear.
- **Provocation of Batman:** When he finds himself facing Batman, the Joker shows no signs of fear. Instead, he openly provokes him, even knowing that he is facing a formidable opponent. His fearless behavior is shown when he laughs and mocks Batman, even when he is physically dominated.
- **Calculated Risks:** The Joker deliberately endangers his own life to achieve his goals. His willingness to take extreme risks without any hesitation demonstrates his fearlessness. For example, he does not hesitate to threaten Rachel and throw one of his henchmen out of the window, while remaining ready to face the consequences.
- **Calm Under Threat:** Even when Batman holds him over the edge of the balcony, ready to let go, the Joker remains calm and continues to talk and laugh, demonstrating his complete indifference to death and to danger. This reaction underlines his intrepidity in the face of the most perilous situations.

The gala scene serves several thematic purposes in *The Dark Knight*:

- **Challenge to Fear:** The Joker , through his intrepidity, challenges the very concept of fear. His ability to remain indifferent in the face of dangerous situations shows that he is a character who is not intimidated by physical threat or death.

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The Joker 's insatiable thirst for madness and destruction is a tell-tale sign of the shadow archetype at work. His twisted desire to push people toward the edge of sanity manifests his inner turmoil as he struggles to confront and integrate his repressed instincts and impulses.

The Joker embodies the darkness and chaos that lurks within us all, and his determination to bring others to the brink of madness is a haunting reminder of the power and influence of the shadow. It is a profoundly intriguing and complex facet of the Joker 's character that speaks to the universal human experience of confronting the darker aspects of the self. The collective unconscious is often represented by archetypes, universal symbols representing fundamental human experiences and emotions. The trickster archetype, for example, is often associated with chaos and disruption, and The Joker 's behavior can be seen as a manifestation of this archetype.

### **2.3 Synthesis :**

Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal in *Joker* (2019) and Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight* (2008) offer complex and diverse explorations of this iconic character, each offering a unique perspective on his tortured psyche and its impact on the world around him .In *Joker* , Joaquin Phoenix's masterful interpretation transcends the simple limits of the character to immerse us in the disturbing depths of the human soul. As Arthur Fleck, a man broken by life and marginalized by a merciless society, Phoenix delivers a gripping performance that resonates beyond the screen. Through every movement, every look and every word, he transports us into the dark and chaotic universe of an individual in the grip of pain and disillusionment.

Arthur's rise to Joker status is a tortured journey marked by a series of personal tragedies and accumulated defeats. As he struggles to find his place in a world that rejects him, Arthur increasingly turns to chaos and violence as a means to free himself from his miserable and hopeless existence. In the portrait painted by Phoenix, we see a man in deep psychological pain, desperately searching for meaning and purpose in a cruel and indifferent universe.

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The themes of alienation and the search for meaning are central to Phoenix's portrayal of the Joker . Through his actions, we see an individual desperate to be heard in a world that refuses to listen to him, rebelling against the injustices and indifference around him. The Joker 's acts of violence and depravity become both a manifestation of his own inner pain and a response to the injustice and oppression he feels in the face of a society that has abandoned him.

Phoenix's performance invites us to delve into the darkest corners of the human mind, confronting us with the complexity of human nature and the fragility of society. Through the prism of the Joker , we are forced to question our own prejudices and our own certainties, confronted with the brutal reality of the human condition. In *Joker* , Joaquin Phoenix offers us much more than a simple interpretation of an iconic character; it gives us a poignant insight into the pain and disillusionment that lies at the heart of the human experience.

On the other hand, In *The Dark Knight*, Heath Ledger presents a Joker who transcends the simple status of a movie villain to become an emblematic figure of social and moral subversion. His Joker is much more than a conventional antagonist; he is the embodiment of a nihilistic ideology, a destructive force that calls into question the very foundations of society. Through his unpredictable actions and disturbing speeches, Ledger's Joker exposes the flaws and contradictions of the established order, highlighting the hypocrisies and moral compromises that society makes to maintain a semblance of order.

In every act of violence and chaos orchestrated by the Joker , Ledger manages to capture the tension between fascination and horror that he arouses in the audience. His interpretation of the character is by turns captivating and disturbing, leaving us questioning the very nature of evil and madness. Ledger succeeds in giving the Joker a psychological depth and moral complexity that sets him apart from simple superhero villains. His Joker is not simply a

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criminal seeking power or wealth; it is an anarchic force seeking to destabilize the very foundations of civilization.

One of Ledger's great achievements is his ability to make the Joker both terrifying and enigmatic. As we witness his heinous deeds, we are also intrigued by his character, fascinated by his worldview and dark motivations. Through his performance, Ledger raises fundamental questions about human nature and the fragility of society, forcing us to confront our own prejudices and moral limitations.

Ultimately, Ledger's performance as the Joker in *The Dark Knight* remains one of the most memorable in cinematic history. His interpretation of the character transcends the superhero film genre to become a powerful commentary on the human condition and the nature of civilization. While Ledger himself tragically passed away before the film's release, his legacy as the Joker continues to inspire and fascinate audiences, serving as a reminder of the power of cinema to make us think about the world around us.

Despite their differences, Phoenix and Ledger's performances highlight the cracks in the foundations of civilization and humanity. Their Joker is a symbol of both terror and pity, inspiring the audience to question their own convictions and beliefs. Their lasting impact on popular culture is a testament to the power of the Joker character as a distorting mirror of our deepest fears and darkest desires.

Ultimately, the Joker continues to fascinate and disturb audiences across generations, leaving an indelible mark on the collective imagination. Its power lies in its ability to force us to confront the darkest aspects of ourselves and the society we live in, prompting us to reflect on what truly means to be human.

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### 2.4 Conclusion :

The Joker is much more than just a villain in the stories, he represents a complex and mysterious character who has intrigued for a long time. His love for chaos and his enigmatic character have always fascinated people. Looking closely at his psychology, we realize that he is not content to be an ordinary villain; it symbolizes disorder and madness.

Opinions on the Joker vary greatly. Some believe he glorifies violence, while others see him as a profound character worth studying. The varied reactions to its presence in stories show how much it is debated and analyzed.

By studying Joaquin Phoenix's performances in 2019's *The Joker* and Heath Ledger's in *The Dark Knight* we discover the many facets of this iconic character. His impact on the Batman universe is immense because he pushes us to think, to question established rules, and he remains etched in our memories as one of the most intriguing and powerful villains of all time.

# ***General Conclusion***

## General Conclusion

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This thesis aimed to analyze and compare two of the most acclaimed portrayals of the Joker : Heath Ledger's performance in *The Dark Knight* (2008) and Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal in *Joker* (2019). By examining these interpretations, we sought to uncover the complexities of the Joker 's character and understand his enduring appeal and cultural significance.

Heath Ledger's Joker represents chaos and anarchy, embodying a force that disrupts the established order. Ledger's performance captures the essence of the Joker as an unpredictable and malevolent figure, whose actions challenge Batman's moral code and societal norms. His Joker is characterized by his enigmatic nature, with an unclear backstory and ambiguous motivations. This ambiguity, combined with Ledger's intense and nuanced performance, creates a character that is both terrifying and captivating. Ledger's Joker is a master manipulator, using intelligence and dark humor to unsettle and provoke. His portrayal underscores the thin line between order and chaos, compelling audiences to question the stability and morality of societal structures.

In contrast, Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal in *Joker* presents a deeply psychological and humanized version of the character. Phoenix's Joker , Arthur Fleck, is depicted as a victim of societal neglect and personal trauma, whose descent into madness is a poignant commentary on mental illness, economic disparity, and social isolation. Phoenix's performance brings a new dimension to the Joker , highlighting the impact of societal failures on individuals and evoking empathy despite his ultimate transformation into a villain. This portrayal resonates strongly with contemporary audiences, reflecting real-world issues and the consequences of ignoring the marginalized in society. Phoenix's Joker is a tragic figure, whose actions are rooted in a sense of betrayal and abandonment, making his journey into darkness both pitiable and horrifying.

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Despite their differences, both portrayals share core traits that define the Joker : intelligence, dark humor, and a profound sense of unpredictability. These characteristics make the Joker a formidable antagonist and a compelling figure in popular culture. Ledger's and Phoenix's interpretations challenge audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about morality, society, and the human condition. The Joker , in both portrayals, serves as a mirror to Batman and to society, reflecting the darker aspects of human nature and the potential for chaos and violence within us all.

The critical and popular acclaim of these portrayals underscores the Joker 's significance as a cultural icon. Ledger's Joker forces us to question the nature of order and chaos, highlighting the fragility of societal norms and the ease with which they can be disrupted. Phoenix's Joker , on the other hand, emphasizes the impact of societal neglect and the failure to address mental health issues, serving as a powerful reminder of the consequences of systemic neglect. Both interpretations have left an indelible mark on the character's legacy, demonstrating the Joker 's versatility and depth as a villain.

The portrayals of the Joker by Heath Ledger and Joaquin Phoenix have elevated the character to new heights, offering rich, multi-dimensional interpretations that resonate with audiences on multiple levels. These performances have deepened our understanding of the Joker and redefined the archetype of the cinematic villain. By exploring these two versions of the Joker , we gain valuable insights into the nature of villainy, the complexities of the human psyche, and the power of storytelling in reflecting and shaping cultural narratives. The Joker remains a powerful symbol of chaos and tragedy, a character whose legacy will continue to intrigue and inspire for generations to come.

Heath Ledger's and Joaquin Phoenix's portrayals have not only redefined the Joker but also influenced the broader landscape of film and character development. Ledger's performance set a new standard for portraying villains in cinema, emphasizing the importance of depth and nuance in character development. Phoenix's portrayal, meanwhile,

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has sparked discussions about mental health and societal responsibility, highlighting the role of cinema in addressing and reflecting real-world issues.

The Joker, as depicted by Ledger and Phoenix, serves as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and the complexity of human nature. Both performances challenge us to look beyond the surface of villainy and explore the underlying factors that drive individuals to darkness. They remind us that villains are not merely evil for the sake of being evil but are often products of their environments and experiences. This deeper understanding of the Joker enriches our appreciation of the character and underscores the importance of nuanced portrayals in storytelling.

Ultimately, the study of these two portrayals of the Joker reveals much about the character's ability to adapt and remain relevant across different contexts and interpretations. The Joker's enduring appeal lies in his complexity and the way he reflects the darker aspects of humanity. As society continues to evolve, so too will the interpretations of the Joker, ensuring that he remains a compelling and significant figure in popular culture for years to come.

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