

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer explained the classification of the elements of German Expressionist Film in *Joker* (2019). In terms of the film itself, the writer analyzed the plot, protagonist, set design, and cinematography, which were following the problem formulation the writer had for the research.

4.1. Plot

The plot of the film centered on Arthur Fleck, who has many discussions on issues of social concern. Further, he suffered from schizophrenia, which confuses the thought of changes in behaviour, leading the writer to understand that Arthur has a reason or intention to kill people when somebody hurts him. The plot technique that depicted the *Joker* (2019) is unexpected, strange, and twisted. It follows the dark story of Arthur Fleck or Joker about how he adopts, hallucinates, and ends up murdering someone. To summarize, these plot details are separated into 4 events so that a thorough explanation can be traced in this film.

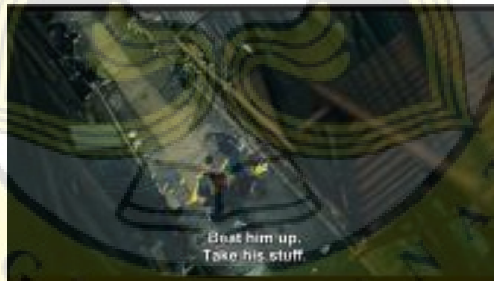
a. Event 1: The plot twist in *Joker* (2019)

The story was about an ignored and isolated man who eventually became a revolutionary figure who is supported by Gotham's people. However, Arthur suffers

from mental illness including a condition where he has a pathological laugh when faced with negative situations or thoughts.

At that time, Gotham city was full of crime and poverty. Everyone is depressed over the inflationary economic and social gap situations. In the earliest scene, Arthur got bullied by teens by dancing and waving the signboard of Kenny's Music Studio. At that time, he didn't want to take revenge on them, when in fact he could have done so. He only endured the pain of being kicked by them, until his back was covered with bruises. Following figure 4.1 a group of punk teens mercilessly kicked him until he fell in pain.

Figure 4. 1 A group of teens bullied Arthur at a quiet alley

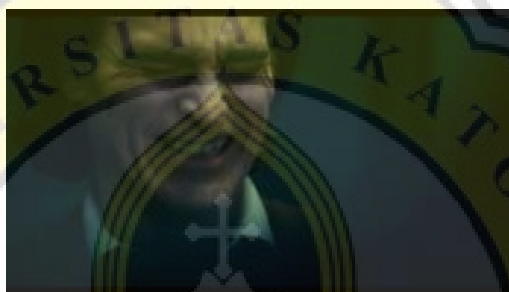


Source: Phillip, 2019, 00:02:55-00:03:10

Further, he met his social psychologist for his ongoing mental health therapy. During the therapy session, Arthur described himself as a lonely person in the world. Arthur asked her, "*is it just me or is it getting crazier out there?*" It reminds us of the human personality that often appears in holding back certain emotions. With a lot of backstories that linger on him, Arthur even asked his social psychologist about his

existence in the world and the reason people were ignoring him. Since Arthur was dissatisfied with the answer, he simply expressed his anxiety with an ironic loud laugh while remembering the signboard tragedy in Kenny's Music Studio. This scene implied how desperate Arthur is in living and socializing with other people.

Figure 4. 2 Arthur's pathological laughter in close-up



Source: Phillip, 2019, 00:03:58

After this hurting thing, Randall gives a gun to Arthur in self-defense. However, Arthur did not realize that he dropped it when he got a job entertaining some kids in the hospital as a professional clown. At night, he got home by subway with a clown appearance still stuck to his body.

He pitifully saw three young workers harassing a young woman. Arthur laughed out loud seeing it was pathetic. When Arthur desperately wanted to explain his condition, those people mercilessly punched him instead. The tension arises when Arthur Fleck is placed in an atmosphere of menace and a dangerous situation, so Arthur did self-defense by shooting that gun. He transformed into a Joker by dancing eerily in public toilets. Likewise, Joker as a killer-clown became a symbol of the

Gotham revolution starting from the 'Brutal Triple Tragedy' in the Subway. Moreover, following the figure 4.3 Joker with a face full of clown-style make-up and a red suit inadvertently sparked the rise of poor Gotham people to riot throughout the city. Arthur as a common and ignored citizen of Gotham City who turned into one of the revolutionary figures is an example of a plot twist in *Joker* (2019).

Figure 4. 3 The plot twist on Joker in an extreme long shot



Source: Phillip, 2019, 01:50:06-01:52:30

In this event, the writer showed that the plot was twisted. At first, no one cared about Arthur's existence because Gotham's own severe condition mentioned above made everyone's individualism high to the point that they had no tolerance for the society around them. Moreover, he was powerless and weak because judging from figure 4.1, he was bullied by a group of punk teens. However, when a clown in a train carriage brutally killed three Wall Street young workers men on the Subway, the Gotham people were in an uproar. Many poor people supported what the Joker was done; it can be seen in figure 4.3. This was proven by Tirto.id (2019) (as cited in Rachmad, Gelgel, & Joni, 2019, p. 2), Arthur Fleck or Joker is described as a

criminal figure who becomes a symbol of the resistance of the oppressed against the irregularities of a Gotham in the 1981s.

b. Event 2: The plot twist of Arthur’s point of view toward Murray Franklin

After Arthur Fleck took care of his mother, they watched the Murray Show on TV with Murray Franklin as the host. At that time, he was a fan of Murray Franklin because Arthur's face lit up when he watched the show. Suddenly, the scene changed to Arthur Fleck which caught Murray's attention as an audience member. At that time, they were talking about what Arthur had been doing all this time. Arthur replied proudly that he was taking care of his sick mother. Murray hugged him warmly and said Arthur was a good boy. However, this clear sequence only existed in Arthur's hallucination as the scene returned to their apartment room.

Later, Arthur did stand-up comedy at the Pogo cafe. Arthur did not convey the material well in his performance, instead, he just laughed out loud. His video of stand-up comedy was bombing on the Murray Show. Arthur initially looked happy due to his video aired on his idol show. However, Murray made a joke of Arthur’s stand-up. Then, Arthur looked irritated and wanted to take revenge on him. The back sound supports this scene with mysterious drum beats followed by the expression of Arthur who changed into an angered face (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4. 4 Arthur watched his stand-up comedian



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:59:50-01:01:00

Further, he got a call from the Murray Show's team that he was invited to the Murray Show because of his stand-up video. Then, he accepted the invitation with the thought of taking revenge on Murray Franklin for mocking him live on TV.

Figure 4. 5 Joker at Murray's Show



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:39:15

Long story short, Arthur arrived at The Murray Show with a face full of clown make-up and wore a red suit with matching trousers, a yellow-colored waistcoat, and a green button-up shirt. At 01:37:13 – 01:38:15, Murray had used a video of Arthur's lack of comedic skill again to introduce Arthur as a Joker, and the curtain opened up. His rage against Murray changed him who became a more whole person. In this

story, Joker or Arthur Fleck is a man who danced as a method of outward expression of his thoughts and feelings because he spent too much time alone as a common citizen of Gotham City. Throughout his character arc, the dancing Joker is a way of expressing himself. When he has the opportunity to truly be himself, his energy comes out in the form of a new personality that utilizes the steps and flowing arms as his form of dance expression. It is a fantastic blend of elegance and spookiness that develops slowly throughout the film's story and it becomes part of the characters portrayed. Before walking onto Murray's set, Joker's eerily dance appeared in public at 01:37:40-01:38:16. The tension in this not-so-long duration was well-played because Joker left the spectator with a sense of questioning "what is going on". However, he confidently and dramatically entered the set in full-white face paint.

Joker was interviewed by Murray by that time. At first, Murray asked him to perform another material of stand-up comedy. Murray mocked him in every word he told as if he underestimated Joker's comedy. However, Joker replied with sarcastic and sadistic jokes about the murder case. At 01:41:30 Joker confessed he was a murderer of three young worker men in the subway. Here is the conversation between Murray and Joker

Joker: I got nothing left to lose. Nothing can hurt me anymore. My life is nothing but a comedy (*Phillip, 2019, duration 01:41:59-01:42:08*)

Murray: Well, let me get this straight, you think that killing those guys is funny? (*Phillip, 2019, duration 01:42:10-01:42:16*)

Joker: I am tired of pretending it is not. Comedy is subjective, Murray. Isn't that what they say? All of you, the system that knows so much, you decide what's right or wrong. The same way that you decide what's funny or not! *(Phillip, 2019, duration 01:42:19-01:42:40)*

He disagreed with society and felt being ostracized by people. Murray kept digging the information about Arthur's hatred. Furthermore, Joker poured out all his anger into Live TV publicly.

Murray: Well, ok, I think I might understand that you did this to start a movement, to become a symbol? *(Phillip, 2019, duration 01:42:42-01:42:50)*

Joker: Come on, Murray. Do I look like the kind of clown that I start a movement [with]? I killed those guys because they were awful. Everybody is awful these days. It is enough to make anyone crazy. *(Phillip, 2019, duration 01:42:51-01:43:03)*

Murray: That is your defense for killing three young men? *(Phillip, 2019, duration 01:43:05)*

Joker: They could not carry a tune to save their lives. If it was me dying on the sidewalk, you would walk right over me! I pass you every day and you do not notice me. But these guys, what because Thomas Wayne went and cried about them on TV? *(Phillip, 2019, duration 01:43:10-01:43:30)*

In this part, Joker also eagerly confessed his thoughts about Thomas Wayne.

Here is the conversation.

Joker: Have you seen what it is like out there, Murray? Do you ever actually leave the studio? Everybody just yells and screams at each other. Nobody [is] civil anymore. Nobody thinks what it is like to be the other guy. [Do] you think men like Thomas Wayne ever think, what is it like to be someone like me? [Do you think men like Thomas Wayne ever think] to be somebody but themselves? They do not. They think that we will just sit there and take it like good little boys! That we won't werewolf and go wild! (Phillip, 2019, duration 01:43:31-01:44:05)

Murray: [Are] you finished? I mean, it is so much self-pity, Arthur. You sound like you are making excuses for killing those young men. Not everybody and I'll tell you this, not everyone is awful. (Phillip, 2019, duration 01:44:06-01:44:16)

Next, Joker also confessed his thoughts about Murray who dared to share Joker's stand-up video publicly.

Joker: You are awful, Murray. [You were] playing my video [and] inviting me on this show. You just wanted to make fun of me. You are just like the rest of them. (Phillip, 2019, duration 01:44:19-01:44:36)

Murray blamed Joker for killing people, nevertheless. Joker was just laughing and making excuses about what he did. His face seems to contort itself into an entirely new personality.

Murray: You don't know the first thing about me, pal. Look what happened because of what you did. What it led to. There are riots out

there. Two policemen are in critical condition and you're laughing. Someone was killed today because of what you did. (Phillip, 2019, duration 01:44:37-01:44:51)

In the end, Joker replied eagerly and straightly that he has a mental health issue, "What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash?" (Phillip, 2019, duration 01:45:00-01:45:06).

Figure 4. 6 Joker shot Murray's head



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:45:10

Then, Joker shot Murray's head with a gun and immediately continued to shoot Murray's body. This tragedy was aired live publicly, therefore the audiences were screaming out loud. The studio was then in full chaos. Yet, Joker was just laughing with his legs shaking. He expressed this situation by dancing freely. A lot of TV news broadcasted this tragedy, so there was plenty of proof as to why Joker was then under arrest.

In this second event, the writer highlighted how this plot was unpredictable. Indeed, Arthur was a Murray fan. Arthur's admiration was seen in his sparkling eyes

when he saw Murray from the TV and became the audience in Murray's studio. In his hallucination, Arthur became the centre of attention because many people appreciated him as someone who loved and cared for his sick mother. In the hallucination, Murray embraced and also appreciated Arthur.

On the other hand, All of Arthur's admiration for Murray was shattered as Arthur's stand-up comedian video was mocked by Murray. However, he executed his feelings in the wrong way. He transformed himself into a Joker and dramatically killed Murray live on TV.

c. Event 3: Arthur's hallucination toward Sophie Dumond

Arthur became obsessed with a young single mother, Sophie Dumond. They first met in the apartment elevator because they lived in the same apartment building. While the elevator carried them up, Sophie's daughter kept parroting her. Arthur was attracted by the conversation between Sophie and her daughter which gave him a feeling of being loved and cared for (see Figure 4.7).

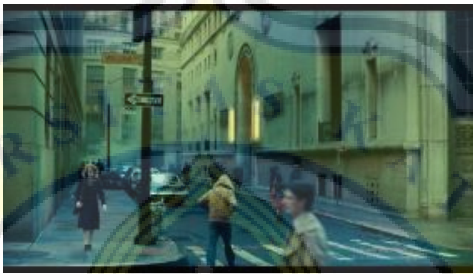
Figure 4. 7 Arthur Fleck was infatuated with Sophie Dumond



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:20:17

Suddenly, Sophie humorously imitated a gunshot suicide through gestures and grimaces to express that she could not bear such annoying behavior. Since then, Arthur became obsessed and stalked her everywhere (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4. 8 Arthur Fleck was stalking Sophie Dumond



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:23:42-00:24:50

Arthur fantasized about their relationship. It started when she rang Arthur's doorbell and asked if he had been stalking her. Arthur admitted this. In that hallucination, Sophie seemed to accept it. Therefore, Arthur invited her to watch his performance as a stand-up comedian. Sophie appeared on the show. Afterward, they went to the Doughnut shop to hang out.

Figure 4. 9 Arthur was kissing Sophie Dumond in his hallucination



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:36:35-00:36:43

After the public toilet tragedy, Arthur rang her doorbell and quickly kissed her (see Figure 4.9). She enjoyed this kind of surprise. Their relationship was getting closer. When Penny Fleck was hospitalized, Sophie was seen accompanying Arthur to comfort him (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4. 10 Dumond accompanied Fleck in his hallucination with a medium shot



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:58:46-00:59:07

After several incidents that broke Arthur's sanity, he continued to visit Sophie's apartment. At this time, Sophie was frightened and asked him politely to leave her alone. It is speculated that Arthur's past interactions with Sophie were all delusions of his suffering.

Figure 4. 11 They were dating in his hallucination



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:16:40-01:18:50

At this event, the writer highlighted how dramatic this plot was. In this story, Arthur and Sophie's relationship is described as beautiful as people who love each other. However, an unexpected thing happened when the relationship between the two people turned out to be unreal. They are depicted in several parts of Arthur hallucinating about his relationship with Sophie Dumond.

d. Event 4: The background of Arthur and Penny Fleck

One of the most interesting subplots in *Joker (2019)* concerns the fact about the background of Arthur Fleck himself. The writer emphasized Arthur's pain experienced towards his mother that had a big influence on Arthur's transformation into the Joker. In this film, Arthur was dwelling together with his ailing mother, Penny Fleck, in such a small apartment. Arthur was described as a kind-hearted son who always prioritized his mother.

Figure 4. 12 Arthur took care of his mother, Penny Fleck



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:10:40-00:11:45

On one such occasion, Penny Fleck claimed that she once had an affair with Gotham City's mayor, Thomas Wayne. She used to work for Wayne's family as a household assistant. So, she believed he would improve their bad life situation by writing a letter to him. However, Wayne was not replying to her letter.

In her last letter, Penny revealed that Arthur was Thomas' biological son. Arthur insisted on knowing the truth from her point of view. However, when evidence began to mount, he confronted Thomas about the allegations.

Figure 4. 13 Arthur met Wayne in person for the first time



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:05:00-01:07:01

Thomas Wayne rejected her assertions instead of telling Arthur she was

simply delusional. Therefore, Thomas gave him a clue to go to Arkham Asylum to reveal the shocking facts. Arthur was shaken and broke down in tears reading the document (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4. 14 Arthur examined and knew the truth



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:15:27

The lowest point of Arthur's life is that Penny Fleck got delusional psychosis for so long, and was not even Arthur's biological mother. More severely, she was hurting Arthur a long time ago until he did not remember his memories. The jovial stand-up comedian, who took care of his ailing mother, slowly became the subject of jokes. Arthur goes even further off the deep end, killing his mother by covering her face with a pillow. Arthur transformed himself into a new personality. He used a solution to kill those who hurt, ignored, and laughed at him.

Figure 4. 15 A scene before Arthur killed Penny Fleck



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:20:30

The plot features of expressionist films are proven in this subchapter. The whole film was made up as a commentary on real-world issues on behalf of “expressionist works typically convey an urgency” (Delahoyde, n.d., p. 1). The urgent part that was shown in the same *Joker* (2019) as the German Expressionist Movement was the level of social inequality that was getting wider between rich and poor people of Gotham City.

After the First World War, Germany’s anxiety and distrust reached the highest level in history. A film such as *Joker* (2019) was an example of art imitating life. In the film, Thomas Wayne represented the nepotism of personal greed for power in the real world when he made a good image of a politician to Gotham’s people to elect him as mayor of Gotham. Other examples are the anarchy and riots in the film that showed what was going on in the world today in which the actions of someone with mental health problems have a knock-on effect on the people around us.

4.2. Protagonist

Seeing Arthur Fleck or Joker as a world-famous icon, the eyes of the world were on Joaquin Phoenix's acting. To deepen his role, Phoenix presented himself as something he is not, even physically, Phoenix had lost over 50 pounds before filming. He is significantly underweight and has a pale sunken face. Phoenix communicates virtually the meaning of every scene he performs with subtle elegance and depth especially when a grieving heart and happiness come alive. Phoenix's creativity to use expressive and behavior details make the distribution of the storyline and the character of Arthur Fleck or Joker conveyed. Therefore, his efforts to achieve success in this film amazed the spectator.

Arthur Fleck is a fictional central character who forms a state of anxiety, suffering, and confrontation into one. Behaviorally, he is too odd and characterized as an anti-social person because he cannot adapt to society. The oddity is seen when Arthur Fleck forced himself to act as if he did not have a mental illness. He has no special powers because he is just an ordinary human. In this subchapter, the writer analyzed the protagonist from the beginning to the end of the scene so that the expressionist cinema could be traced in this film. The origins of an Arthur or Joker remain relatively mysterious and raise questions about how this clown-killer is made.

Figure 4. 16 Arthur as a professional clown



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:01:18

Arthur Fleck was a professional party clown. In addition, he has a dream to become a successful stand-up comedian. Arthur believed that his goal in life was to instill happiness in others. His overactive fantasy portrays his mother as his first supporter, "*You were on this earth to spread joy and laughter,*" he imagined his mother saying to him lovingly.

Arthur Fleck was suffering from a medical condition causing him to uncontrollably laugh that was spontaneous, incompatible with his inner state of feeling, and inappropriate laughter. This uncontrollable laugh is usually triggered by an intense feeling of nervousness, anxiety, or shame. In therapy scenes with his social psychiatrist, the laughter may last longer than minutes, and increase intensity and loudness. Therefore, this pathological laughter made Arthur uncomfortable, causing him to cry, stutter, and choke. In other laughter scenes, for example, while watching another stand-up comedian at Pogo's café (see Figure 4.17), the crowd laughed as the comedian cracked a joke, but Arthur did not. Rather, when they fell silent, Arthur

laughed instead. The laughter in this scene only lasted a few seconds but made others feel disturbed by the moment.

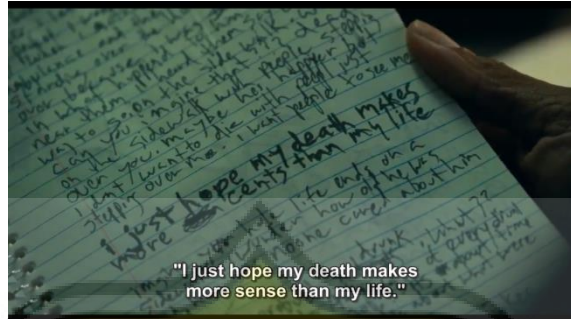
Figure 4. 17 Arthur at Pogo's cafe as an audience



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:25:00-00:26:00

He had a personality that sought acknowledgment of his existence and wanted his death to mean something. It appeared in the early scene when Arthur visited his social psychologist for his ongoing mental health. He wrote in his journal (see Figure 4.18), *“I just hope my death makes more cents [sense] than my life.”* These words showed the ambiguity of Arthur Fleck as he was giving up on his life situation regarding Gotham’s economic situation (cents), but also being reasonable (sense) to expect others to remember after his brutality killed several people.

Figure 4. 18 Arthur's journal



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:06:26

Fleck has poor communication skills with others. Moreover, he uses abnormal facial expressions and behaves oddly. Consequently, he makes people feel uncomfortable near him. For instance, Arthur sat behind a boy and a mother on his way home by bus. Arthur intended to comfort the boy by putting on a silly face. He was well-meaning toward the boy. However, the mother assumed Arthur was bothering her son (see Figure 4.19). Arthur Fleck looked desperate and had a conflict in his inner self. When he seemed to want to explain what he meant, the mother seemed indifferent. He was desperate and ended up in silence. It might have happened because people despair of bad governance and economic inflation that causes people to appear individualistic.

Figure 4. 19 The mother felt that Arthur was annoying



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:08:19

Furthermore, Arthur Fleck was in a train carriage containing a young woman and the three young worker men. One time, those three people disturbed a young woman which caused her to become uncomfortable. All of a sudden, Arthur laughed not because it was funny, but because he was disappointed with such treatment. Those three approached Arthur and punched him mercilessly without knowing the condition of Arthur's pathological laughter.

He first intended not to retaliate against the bad treatment of those people. As they continued to beat him, Arthur did self-defense by taking the gun and shooting 2 men. He brutally ended up killing two young worker men in the subway. The one remaining person ran away asking for someone's help. Then, Arthur shot the man's leg followed by multiple shots in the chest. In his temper and being "under the pressure of successive disasters and injustices, Arthur Fleck descends into madness and goes on a killing spree" (Bolea, 2020, p. 46). He became a person who has already been brave enough to express his feelings openly. No more Arthur, but the

Joker. Joaquin Phoenix as an actor seemed to deliberately show the spectator that this scene was the turning point for Arthur to transform into the Joker.

Figure 4. 20 Arthur chased and shot the last man with a long-shot



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:33:13-00:34:00

The theatrical principle is seen in the 'Brutal Triple Tragedy' scene. This function is used to emphasize and strengthen character traits. The protagonist uses strange gestures, for example (see Figure 4.20) Arthur's gait looks odd while chasing the last working young man. He walked briskly with a shrug and had a gun ready to shoot.

After the 'Brutal Triple Tragedy' on the subway, he panicked and ran towards the public toilet. He danced eccentrically and eerily with a gripping back sound like he released his chaotic life and found a new power rising within him. The tension in this film was prominent and well-played because this dance seemed to leave the spectator with a sense of discomforting, questioning and pondering thought.

Figure 4. 21 Arthur danced dramatically with thriller back sound



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:34:33-00:36:12

Ever since the news of 'Brutal Triple Tragedy' has been broadcasted on TV news, the Joker has indirectly represented the poor against the influential rich in Gotham. With the resistance of the Joker, Gotham's people have new hope for surviving in the broken city. Bolea (2020, p. 47) added when Arthur becomes Joker, he turned into the worst possible version of himself; however, he gained the world, or at least the acceptance of a few parts of it, turning into a symbol of the revolution.

Figure 4. 22 Arthur Fleck's simple appearance



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:14:10

The whole story characterized something dark with the background of a killer clown who was famous throughout the city, supported by the cinematography of this

film. Further, this dark life of Arthur Fleck in Gotham City looked contrasting to what he was wearing when he turned into the Joker. This protagonist has been depicted through make-up and dress into visual symbols.

Figure 4. 23 Another simple appearance of Arthur Fleck



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:09:39

Being an unstable criminal with a dark history made Arthur Fleck or Joker has a unique sense of fashion. Visually, costume and makeup design is a development of the style concept used in the real-life of a character. The concepts were created to distinguish the duality of Arthur Fleck or Joker so that it symbolizes a trait. When Arthur Fleck hallucinated as an audience member at Murray's show, he wore a simple-looking white shirt and blue sweater in the early scene (see Figure 4.22). Besides, when Arthur Fleck went to Arkham Asylum (see Figure 4.23), he wore another simple neutral look with a brown jacket and dark brown shirt. Arthur's general appearance (see Figures 4.22 and 4.23) contrasts with his inner conflict, however, complementing the idea that he is just an ordinary person living in a broken city.

Figure 4. 24 Joker danced in the subway



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:34:21

However, Joker wore a red suit with matching trousers, a yellow-colored waistcoat, and a green button-up shirt. Also, he covered his face in full white make-up, dyed his hair green, and lathered his tongue in white paint. Further, he also encircled his eyes with a triangle of blue and put the red lipstick into his lips, nose, and eyebrow. His new appearance is reminiscent of his past as a killer clown, allowing the spectator to identify him as "already changed". This aimed to strengthen the character in bringing his trademark into the film.

Figure 4. 25 Joker danced happily on the stairs



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 01:30:37-01:31:32

Joker happily danced with his new appearance on the stairs (see Figure 4.25) to celebrate his freedom from the sorrows and miseries of his past. While dancing, the two detectives were chasing Joker because he became a suspect in the murder of his mother, Penny Fleck. However, he showed no cooperative behavior. Joker ran towards the subway and entered a train full of rioters wearing clown masks. When the two detectives got caught in the crowd, Joker showed his happiness by dancing in the subway (see Figure 4.24) to celebrate his freedom.

This theatrical part was full of symbols about the world of reality that all paradox and irony filled into it. Therefore, there was a credible thing about the characters, not only questionable but also understandable to the spectator as explained above. Indeed, Fleck was a criminal who killed people when he should not. Ironically, Fleck knew that he had a mental illness, but he never received the proper care and help he needed. To be sure, Joker's madness sometimes seemed natural considering the state of the world at that time was crazy and chaotic.

He might be a supervillain in the world, but he found his true nature. As Bolea (2020, p. 47) cited, Joker, turned into the worst possible version of himself until he killed people who hurt him. Each tension created by the protagonist in conveying the meaning of a character is well-described in this film. Arthur's misery, disappointment, and strangeness have eroded throughout the process of becoming the Joker, reminding the audience of a dynamic character and complexity as part of the German Expressionism protagonist elements. Moreover, Arthur Fleck or Joker's character is

influenced by the conflict between his inner state and society thus making the demonic, larger-than-life, and strange character of a protagonist visible in the film.

4.3 Set Design

The setting of *Joker* (2019) was in fictional Gotham City but used the 1970s-1980s Newark, New York City as a visual and tone reference. The set design in *Joker* (2019) looks realistic and naturalistic to show off the influence of German Expressionism. The colors in the film are an augmented reality of the feeling of the city at that time. To underscore the dark experience of German Expressionism the movie pictures Gotham City at the beginning to completely have dark undertones, with the buildings' painting peeling, and garbage piled up around the area. The film described the city as full of chaos, causing a high level of poverty and crime. The world that used to be fun before the great depression is pictured as messy and shabby. Those settings looked powerful, kind of real. When Arthur Fleck came into the scene, his colorful costumes contrasted as he danced in front of Kenny's Music Studio. This concept serves to create dark and bleak tones, as well as to create eeriness effects. In addition, the concept of nightmares, paranoia, insanity, and murder have encountered greater concerns about groups of people who are rejected by the world community.

Figure 4. 26 The building of Gotham City, 1980



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:01:32

The description of Arthur or Joker's life in this film is a representation of the world today, where his social life is messy, full of corruption and dirty, and lacks empathy for other social beings. Piles of garbage are scattered downtown, and the stench has permeated daily life as if it had become a habit.

Figure 4. 27 Gotham was full of garbage



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:02:36 – 00:03:00

This is why the production design of the *Joker* (2019) reveals an atmosphere of depression and uncertainty: narrow corridors and hallways, low ceilings, common ornaments, and shadowy lighting. This is a gloomy dark tone associated with German Expressionism. With these sensibilities, *Joker* (2019) borrowed heavily from German

Expressionism. Figure 4.28 showed a dark, messy, yet simple portrait of Fleck's apartment room. The contrasting lighting (*chiaroscuro*) effect in Fleck's apartment is not intended to emphasize the actual situation in the apartment. The *chiaroscuro* effect emphasizes the expression of the inner and mood of each family member, especially Arthur Fleck and Penny Fleck. This effect is depicted as a picture of a bleak, helpless, and hopeless situation.

Figure 4. 28 Arthur's apartment portrait



Source: Phillip, 2019

Parts of the film also showed height and stairs, which appeared as recurring patterns, to symbolize the protagonist's intrigue in behavior. In figure 4.29, Arthur Fleck as a loner was in stark contrast to the image of the Joker in figure 4.30 who seemed happy to dance, releasing his bleak past. The stairs are important because it was a visual metaphor in the latest version of Joker. It was in the middle tier of the stairs that the perfect stage for Joker's mood-altering dance transitions.

Figure 4. 29 Arthur at the stairs with different moments



Source: Phillip, 2019

Figure 4. 30 Joker at the stairs with different moments



Source: Phillip, 2019

The scene that portrays the great shadow while Arthur Fleck was running towards the public toilet is a high instance of using shadow. The lighting created sharp contrasts and eerie shadows that brought the spectator into the dark world and produced a scene with a good deal of shadow. Further, Joker's unexpected improvisational dance approach in a public toilet makes the atmosphere in the film very interesting and gripping.

Figure 4. 31 The great shadow of Arthur after the Brutal Triple Tragedy



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:34:17

The setting in German expressionism films is usually portrayed as something far from reality by using lighting techniques that contrast shadows and light to add a dark and bleak effect to a situation. Yet not with the *Joker* film (Phillip, 2019), the setting of Todd Phillip's *Joker* design is made real by highlighting the condition of Gotham City that takes visual and tone references from Newark, New York (the 1970s-1980s). In addition, the depiction of the atmosphere uses contrasting lighting techniques and dark tones, making the characteristics of this German Expressionist film visible.

4.4. Cinematography

Joker (Phillip, 2019) was another expressionist film. Indeed, the German Expressionism era has rarely existed. F.W. Murnau and Robert Wiene have produced expressionist films around 1920 in Germany. They not only provide insight but also offer film techniques and styles such as dramatic emphasis, heavy white makeup, and film scenes. It served as a benchmark for future directors. Using those aforementioned, Todd Phillips copied and reinterpreted the German Expressionist

film style into cinema nowadays. In the case of *Joker*, these intentions may include the screenwriter (Todd Phillips and Scott Silver), the main actor (Joaquin Phoenix), cinematographer (Lawrence Sher), composer (Hildur Guðnadóttir), and the director (Todd Phillips) who creates an atmosphere and facilitates interpretation of the film.

The use of a slow plot in this film serves to emphasize the conditions and situations in the film. Meanwhile, to support this goal, the use of long shots is very important. Slow plots and long shots are ways that the spectator can also feel the inner situation of the protagonist and feel the atmosphere of each scene. From the camera angle to the lighting and movement, even the shot, everything in this film adds to the tension of the story. The story told of Arthur Fleck who wore 2 types of masks: a physical one (heavy white makeup paint) and an emotional feeling as he gradually transformed into a Joker. This film intends to create a tense emotional moment and connect with the spectator that was tension-filled. For example, the fact that Arthur became more and more isolated from the rest of Gotham City, he became increasingly insane.

A camera placed in several scenes in the film shows many high and low angles with a vignette-style lens and dark fade tone. In addition, some scenes are intentionally steady and otherwise use dolly cameras. For instance, when Arthur with his clown appearance is stuck in the public toilet after the 'Brutal Triple Tragedy' (see Figure 4.32), and when Arthur was chasing the last young worker man that was using a slow-moving dolly camera (see Figure 4.33).

The use of the steady camera technique as shown in figure 4.32 creates an atmosphere in the public toilet set that is all panicky, tense, and restless. This technique is used to support the feelings of the protagonist who has done great and criminal things. This method aims to make the spectator feel what the protagonist feels. After being in a public toilet, this scene is followed by Arthur's strange and eccentric dance which becomes the character's transition in his transformation into the Joker. This scene in the toilet lasted for two minutes but felt very slow. The protagonist conveys a dance scene with strange body movements and facial expressions to achieve a heavy, sad, dark impression, but there is also a slight feeling of joy at the end of the dance.

Figure 4. 32 The Steady camera



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:34:34 – 00:36:14

However, the use of the slow and static dolly camera in figure 4.33 engaged the spectator into the subject, brought the character closer, and created a sense of emotional connection and intimacy as if a witness in a crime scene. *Joker* (Phillip, 2019) was a heart-warming sad story due to its expressive use of colours, especially

blue and yellow. Its frequent moments seen under blue light (as in Figure 4.32) bring the spectator into Arthur Fleck or Joker's depression, sadness, and inner dissatisfaction. In addition, yellow (see Figure 4.33) stood for optimism and happiness, but its dark bleak side also implies his illness, depression, and madness. This created a visual guide to Arthur's struggles; although he tried his best to find happiness, he still could not get out of a hard time.

Additionally, when Arthur fully transforms into the Joker (see Figure 4.37), his inner anger is manifested by using a deep and attractive red colour around him. Yellow is often combined with red to indicate the relationship between madness and anger.

Figure 4. 33 The Dolly Camera



Source: Phillip, 2019

Different from above, in this German Expressionist Movement, Lawrence Sher and Todd Phillips tried not to be at eye-level camera movement. They wanted to draw the spectator into Arthur or Joker's point of view. In figure 4.34, the camera was at a high-angle to depict that he was almost invisible in this dark city like he was a small person in a large space.

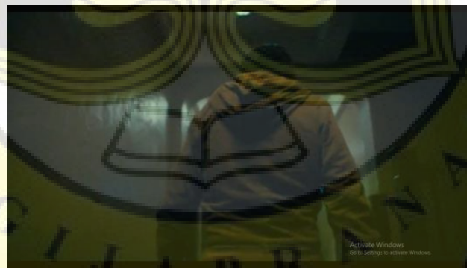
Figure 4. 34 High-angle Camera with a Long-shot



Source: Phillip, 2019, duration 00:02:55-00:03:10

Otherwise, at figure 4.35, the camera was a low-angle camera with a steady camera to depict the movement and a mysterious moment of Arthur or Joker after he was out from Sophie Dumond's apartment. Giving a low-angle to this scene makes a story more dramatic so that details in the scene can be included.

Figure 4. 35 Low-angle Camera with Steady Camera



Source: Phillip, 2019

In figure 4.36, the angle of Arthur dancing in the public toilet was strange and expressed attention. The camera shot involved psychological tension in the subject is in the frame after he killed those three young worker men. The setting at horizontal lines angle portrays the uneasiness or tension of the character in the scene.

Figure 4. 36 Canted Camera Angle



Source: Phillip, 2019

Further, in this film, the extreme close-up in figure 4.37 is also depicted in the early scene when Arthur Fleck make-up his face for being a professional clown. The opening shot framed him in a gloomy room, and then the camera closed up in the mirror as he tried to force a smile. The first glance at the man behind the clown makeup, Arthur Fleck, was almost depressing and filled with a pathetic understanding of his condition.

Figure 4. 37 Extreme Close-up



Source: Phillip, 2019

Additionally, Hildur Guðnadóttir's excellent soundtrack strengthens the atmosphere and theme of the film, which is simple yet intense. The editing and sound (music and sound design) reinforce the darkness created by the story and visual

effects, for instance, when Arthur gradually transforms as a Joker in a public toilet with a gripping back sound. Visually, as Arthur changes, the film gets darker and the mirrors show his two different selves. The mirror is a sad reflection at first but in the end, it is restless but powerful. The point of view taken in this film is centered on Arthur Fleck. When Fleck has fully transformed into Joker and does his dance celebration, he goes further into the darkness.

Choosing the right cinematography can increase the dramatic visualization of a story, so it can effectively convey emotions and attract people's attention to important objects and details in the scene. Otherwise, taking a careless point of view can worsen the story in the film itself.

The German Expressionism movement put more emphasis on the composition of visual and expressive shots of the characters displayed. Moreover, the use of a slow plot emphasized the conditions and situations in the film with long shots being important. Although over time, the development of the German expressionist era will certainly produce synergy with the development of film in the current era, such as Hollywood. The meaning may be different from the German era, but Todd Phillips' Joker has indelible similarities with the German expressionist era.