

The Research on the Audio-visual Language and Social Profiling in Film Joker

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Abstract. *Joker* is a film adaptation of the DC Comics super-villain The Joker, which focuses on the Joker's origin story. The film externalizes the spiritual world of the protagonist Arthur, showing the evils and madness of Gotham City through his perspective, and in the process, Arthur is gradually destroyed and begins his criminal career. The film is a film that brings to life the spiritual world of man through audio-visualization and is full of criticism and reflection on the morality of society. Taking the film *Joker* as the object of study, this paper attempts to investigate the audiovisual language and social impact in *Joker*, and mainly by describing and examines the typical symbolic representations and camera use in the film, it analyzes how the film presents the mental world of the character, and on this basis, it explores the film's feedback on the real world. According to the research results, the symbolic representation in scene of the film include colour, music and dance, composition of Shooting. The reflection and revelation of the real society based on the depiction of extreme society in the film include "Joker is not as anti-social and inflammatory as the media make them out to be", "madness and indulgence under absolute freedom" and "film is above reality but not reality".

Keywords: Joker, Symbolic Representation, Audio-visual Language, Social Reality..

1. Introduction

Joker in theatres in 2019, starring Joaquin Phoenix and was directed by Todd Phillips, who is an American film producer and extras, famous for directing The Hangover Film Series in 2010s. Although this is a superhero comic book adaptation in terms of subject matter, as previously announced by Warner, it will be a "standalone" film with no narrative ties to other film series in the DC Universe, including the DCEU (DC Extended Universe). Therefore, it can be expected to see more of the director's personal style in film, in fact, Joker clearly lives up to expectations. The film mainly tells the story of Arthur, an underclass comedian, who after experiencing the oppression of life and the destruction of his dreams and hopes, went to destruction and degradation and became the head of criminals. The Joker does not appear as a role model, but the film reflects the darkness of society through his perspective, making him a sympathetic character [1]. This result is due to the director's mastery of the camera and the plot, which externalizes Arthur's spiritual world and allows it to be shown to the audience on screen. The purpose of this paper is therefore to describe and analyse how the director externalized Arthur's spiritual world, as well as the themes of Joker that the audience captures as a result.

This paper is divided into two sections, separately from "How the director achieves externalization of the character's spiritual world in film through Audio-visual Language" and "The feedback of extreme social situations in films to the real world", to discuss how Joker shows the audience the destructive path of a socially underprivileged man, and what kind of warning the society in the film gives to the real world. In the section 2, the main parts can be divided into "Symbolic Representation in scene of film - colour, music and dance, shooting composition" and "The clever use of camera language", to illustrate the director's means of externalising the character's spiritual world. In section 3, it can be divided into "Joker is not as anti-social and inflammatory as the media make them out to be", "Madness and indulgence under absolute freedom" and "Film is above reality but not reality", to show that the society in the film is different from the real one and that it serves as a warning to the real world.

2. The Application of Audiovisual Language to the Externalization of the Character's Spiritual World in Film

2.1 Symbolic Representation in Scene of the Film - Colour, Music and Dance, Composition of Shooting

Symbolic representations are a form of knowledge representation, it is something that individuals use to represent something else, and the representations are not necessarily similar to the things they represent [2]. These symbolic representations in Joker may differ from their traditional meaning, or may not be a traditional symbolic representation, but what is certain is that they were instilled by the director, and played a representational role in Joker used to embody Arthur's spiritual world. This section focuses on identifying and understanding the symbolic representations that appear in the film. The reason for choosing colour, music and dance, composition of shooting as the main object of analysis in this section, is that they are important symbolic representations throughout the film, and have a significant impact on the tone and development of the film.

2.1.1 Colour

First of all, the use of colour in Joker changes according to the ebb and flow of Arthur's mental world, it becomes an external representation of Arthur's spiritual world, a symbolic representation that conveys a message to the viewer. Joker mainly chooses the contrasting pair of blue and yellow as the main colour palette of the film, for example, in the first half of the film when Arthur is on his way home for the first time (00:09:16-00:09:14), the blue natural light in high colour temperature renders the whole scene very melancholic, and this reflects Arthur's inner loneliness and sadness. It is not until Arthur arrives at the door of the flat he lives in that a warm yellow light appears in the scene, and from the moment he enters the residential building, the tone of the scene switches from blue to yellow. Yellow may evoke emotion like comfort, and home, love, tranquillity [3]. Therefore, the yellow tone signalling Arthur's return from a society full of unease to his home with a sense of security, a warmth appeared in his heart. However, the same colour does not have the same emotional effect depending on the plot and other representational symbols. At 00:17:20 of the film, Arthur is approached by his boss to talk, and on his way there he crosses a corridor, the main colour of the second half of this corridor is also yellow, but conveys a completely different mood. It is not hard to find Arthur laughing frontally as he crosses the first half of this corridor, which is relatively well lit and wide. Then, Arthur stops laughing and crosses the second half of the corridor with his back to the camera, which is relatively dimly lit and more confined. At this point, the yellow colour on the walls accentuates the space in a depressing way, which, combined with the boss's criticism of Arthur later in the plot, shows Arthur's internal frustration and depression at this time. This is not only the result of differences in plot, but also in conjunction with other symbolic representations, such as lighting and spatial layout, which also play a representational role in this paragraph.

Corresponding to the real world is the world of Arthur's fantasies, for example, at 00:12:16 in the film, Arthur imagines himself entering Murray Franklin's TV show and being approved by him. Here Arthur becomes the guest of honour, enjoying the applause of the audience, and this world is very colourful, with a curtain of red, orange, yellow, green and blue, and layers of light and shade, in contrast to the monotonous and gloomy yellow and blue tones of the real world. Through the above three scenes, the director through the colours in the scene, showing the melancholy and loneliness of Arthur in society, feel warm and comforting at home, as well as in the fantasy world of colourful joy, successfully externalizing Arthur's spiritual world, allowing the audience to understand his inner changes. In addition, these three scenes make the colours in Joker form a new representational meaning in the hearts of the audience, that is, when the scene becomes colour monotonous, the story takes place in the real world, and when the scene becomes colourful, the story takes place in Arthur's fantasy world. This provides the possibility that when Arthur becomes the joker this thing does not really happen, because when he becomes the joker, the world turns into colourful and bright, and it may all be just Arthur's fantasy.

2.1.2 Music and Dance

Secondly, the scenes of Joker also contain other symbolic representations, so this paragraph will select music and dance of these representative symbols for further description and analysis. Take the film's 01:30:36-01:31:29 as an example, Arthur lets himself go completely, and after he kills someone, he dresses up as a clown and dances alone on the steps. In addition to colour, the signature elements of this sequence are the music and dance. The soundtrack here features Gary Glitter's Rock & Roll Part 2, which contrasts with the dreary soundtrack that precedes the film. Match with the plot, it is easy to see that the music representing Arthur's mood and indicating a dramatic change in Arthur's mental state. Arthur's dance is an important symbolic representation throughout the film, a total of seven times throughout the film, representing the different stages of Arthur's life and spiritual state. The first six dances characterize the direct collapse and reconstruction of Arthur's spirit on the way to becoming the Joker, and the sixth dance happened in this scene. The first dance is Arthur dressed as a clown in the street work dance, but was attacked, feeling the malice from society; the second dance, Arthur followed the cabaret dance on television, he first developed the desire to use a gun, and the gun accidentally went off; the third dance was for the sick children in the hospital, but the gun in his pocket fell out accidentally and he lost his job because of it, at this point, he was already overwhelmed, his spirit almost collapsed; the fourth dance occurs after Arthur shoots three people, and he hides in a public restroom, involuntarily doing a weird dance, he has taken the first step to become the joker by killing for revenge; the fifth dance took place after Arthur killed his mother, at this time his fantasy has been destroyed by the reality, and after cutting off the affection, he came to the end of the pain, and the sixth dance that appears in this scene is an important turning point for Arthur to become the joker, he did not hesitate to shoot the colleague who planted the evidence on him, let his only friend go, and after that nothing in the world mattered to him anymore. In the bright sunshine, Arthur on the steps dancing recklessly body, as if all the previous pain are dissipated, and he has completely become the Joker.

2.1.3 Composition of Shooting

Finally, another representational symbol that appears several times throughout the text is not a specific thing, but a way of composition of shooting which is placing the character within a certain frame. This frame could be the window glass of a bus, the closely aligned buildings on either side of a staircase, the railings in an apartment, the framed decor of his home, the gate of Wayne Manor... Whatever it is, it frames Arthur in front of the camera and represents his inner being closed off, and then, after Arthur becomes the Joker, he is no longer tied down, as in the opening scene of the film at 01:46:39, when he is arrested by the police, the camera shoots him through the window of the police car, through the barbed wire inside the police car, and then his followers drive the ambulance, knocking the police car over and pulling him out of the broken glass. The shattering of the frame means not only that Arthur's body is free again, but also that his spirit has broken through the frame and is not enclosed.

2.2 The Clever Application of Camera Language

Besides the symbolic representation in the scenes, the director's construction of the film's camera language is also a way to externalize the character's spiritual world, so this section will list some scenes from Joker and describe and analyse the camera language in them. It is noteworthy that the Joker movie chose a story framework driven by the characters, which means that the inner world of the characters takes precedence over the outer world [4]. Therefore, the director used a large number of small scenes in the first half of the film to bring the audience closer to Arthur's physical distance, which in turn brings the audience closer to Arthur's emotional distance. However, the director tends more to show the audience the spiritual world of Arthur in the camera language, rather than let the audience sympathize with his sufferings. This can be evidenced in the film's 00:03:09-00:03:38 this scene, that is, the punks knocked Arthur to the ground and left, Arthur lying on the ground unable to move. In this scene, the director did not choose Push in the camera movement to make the audience

sympathetic to Arthur, but choose Pull out, so that the fallen Arthur on the ground gives a feeling of being abandoned by the world. The fake flower on Arthur's chest spurts out water then represents his inner tears, reinforcing his inner sorrow.

Analyse the camera language in Joker based on the above tendencies, take the film's Open scene (00:00:00- 00:01:30) for example, which mainly serves to define the whole film, including hinting at the background of the story and rendering a certain atmosphere for the whole film. This scene takes place in a dilapidated attic, where Arthur and several other clowns are putting on makeup and preparing to head to town. It starts with a voiceover from the Morning news in Gotham City, then shows the surroundings inside the attic through a establish shooting, which aims to introduce the spatial position of the characters, and show Arthur's working environment. In the foreground is a dwarf, in the middle is two people putting on makeup, and in the back is a cityscape with viaduct support columns visible. The room is also divided into a brighter left area and a darker right area depending on the light, and Arthur is on the right. Even so, Arthur's dressing table is decorated with warm lamps, this contrasts with the other two in the left-hand area, which can highlight Arthur. It shows that Arthur is out of step with others and is in a relatively gloomy state of life, but even so, he still believes in hope, echoing later episodes in which he imagines his own dreams coming true. Immediately after, the camera slowly pushes in to Arthur, creating depth, in the film space while drawing the viewer's attention to Arthur. People can see Arthur looking at himself in the mirror, applying his make-up, where the sound of the cardboard next to him is enhanced, highlighting Arthur's isolation and alienation from those around him. As the director said, there was the sound of four or five people playing cards over here, and Arthur was clearly not part of that group [5]. Then gradually push to medium shot and cut to close-up, which close the distance between the audience and Arthur, and thus allow the audience to peek inside Arthur's mind. Arthur's heavily painted pale white face gives an eerie appearance, and the yellow tones that dominate the shot at this point bring a sense of urgency and oppression. Simultaneously with this, the news is being broadcast in the background, which correlates with the close-ups of Arthur, alluding to him as an underclass minor character. The camera starts to shake, showing Arthur's inner turmoil. He faces himself in the mirror and forces a smile, in which he is a smiling comedian, while in reality a tear, blackened by make-up, escapes from his eye. The contrast between mirror and reality, makes Arthur seem tragic, his heart was bitter and conflicted.

The director used the above means in the process of externalizing Arthur's spiritual world, making the birth of the Joker more convincing and infectious, and accurately shaping the self-destructive journey of a society's marginalized people. It is inseparable from the darkness of Gotham City in the film, so the next part of this article will focus on analysing the madness of Gotham City and its revelations to the real world.

3. The Reflection and Revelation of the Real Society based on the Depiction of Extreme Society in the Film

As analyzed above, the means by which the director externalizes the spiritual world of the characters accurately portrays Arthur's gradual spiritual degradation. Building on this, this section will analyze the culmination of Arthur's emotional outburst, the riot that occurs at the end of the film, and its effect on the viewer's consciousness. To make the analysis clear, this section will be divided into three parts: "3.1.1 Joker is Not As Anti-Social and Inflammatory As the Media Make Them Out To Be", "3.1.2 Madness and Indulgence under Absolute Freedom" and "3.1.3 Film is Above Reality But Not Reality". 3.1.1 is a repudiation of the media's misinterpretation of the implied meaning of the riots in the film, 3.1.2 focuses on the presentation of the dark side of society and human nature as pointed out by the ending of the riots, 3.1.3 returns from the film to reality and analyses its awakening to the real world.

3.1 Joker is Not as Anti-social and Inflammatory as the Media Make Them Out To Be

Unlike the apparent darkness and radicalism, the main theme of Joker is to show the madness and indulgence under the absolute freedom through the form of artistic treatment. Joker has always been a controversial film, because it has many elements of social unrest, and even has a tendency to promote violence. While Joker shapes Arthur's pursuit of his dreams and search for a sense of belonging as worthy of sympathy, his subsequent killing is portrayed as something that should be affirmed [6]. Although this argument just seems convincing, and it may be true on the face of it, Joker is not actually advocating anything radical. As mentioned above, almost any scene in the film is the externalization of Arthur's inner world, and any behaviours he does in the film may be his own imagination. In addition to the hint of the colour of the scene, the evidence of this conjecture can also be found at the end of the film. At the end of the story, Arthur dressed as a clown standing on the roof of the car, dancing in the boiling crowd, like a spiritual leader outside of society, but the next shot, he appeared in the mental hospital. It forces us to confront the possibility that Arthur does during the film's climax don't actually happen [7]. Combined with the director's creative tendency to portray a mentally abnormal person on the margins of society, this speculation becomes more reliable. However, whether the ending comes from Arthur's imagination or not, it points to a social problem that the madness and indulgence under absolute freedom.

3.2 Madness and Indulgence under Absolute Freedom

The seemingly incendiary ending in Joker, in which a group of Joker-idolizing people put Arthur on a pedestal, while Arthur dances around in a state of chaos with glee. Contrary to what it looks like, this is the most ironic scene of all. Arthur repeatedly insisted that he had no political affiliations, which meant that he was no one's spiritual leader, but just his bloody hands were starting the riots, he was just the trigger. Likewise, the fanatics were not his disciples, for they were part of Arthur's drive to the crazy. They didn't care what Arthur was going through, they didn't care if it had anything to do with them, they just wanted to vent their feelings. As soon as Arthur is shot down, these men will take off their clown masks and run, pretending nothing ever happened, so, it's not incitement, it's a demonstration of how ignorant and violent humans would be if they weren't constrained. The modern "scapegoat" is humiliated and undermined as a sacrificial lamb for the interests of certain groups [8]. Arthur, as the scapegoat of Gotham, carries the darkness of the masses, and his destruction is supposed to symbolize the dissolution of evil, but this does not seem to be the case, as Gotham does not change for the better as a result. As a city full of decadence and decay, "Gotham City" is often considered the "movie card" of the city of New York, and therefore makes Joker and the real world have a connection, and bring some revelation to the real world.

3.3 Film is Above Reality but Not Reality

Although there are many dark elements in Joker that reflect the coldness of humanity and the fragmentation of social rules, that is not the director's goal. With Joker as a comic book adaptation, darkness becomes an option rather than an uncomfortable idea to explore [9]. It could be argued that the entirety of the Joker film is about Arthur's personal destruction rather than Joker's story. The "social cluster" is the real meaningful "existence", and it is this "social existence" that forms the basis of knowledge existence [10]. Therefore, the birth of the Joker is not the intention of Arthur's personal mind, but the intention of the group above it, which is the repression and madness of society. The director used the darkness of Gotham City and the fate of Arthur, a minor character at the bottom, to show how close human beings can become to beasts in a cold, heartless, decaying city. Fortunately, Arthur's story only happens in the movies, and the real world is not as cold and heartless as Gotham City, there is always a human kindness somewhere, so people should be aware of this fact and always remain humane.

Over more, Arthur in the film's various mental abnormalities in the performance, but also a real show of brain damage, and suffering from mental disorders of patients in society how difficult the situation. He shows the tendency of narcissistic personality disorder, and the symptoms of

pseudobulbar affect due to traumatic brain injury [11]. The film uses Arthur's childhood trauma and his suffering and inner perseverance in spite of his mental disorder as a means to gain audience support and call for more care and understanding for real-life patients.

4. Conclusion

Joker's director takes the perspective of Arthur by externalizing his spiritual world, which let the audience be able to understand the process of its alienation through sight and sound. This film not only reflects the numb and decadent life and mental state of the underclass in an extreme society, but also through the riots to reflects the fact that under absolute freedom, people come together in groups and take the opportunity to give vent to their repressed violence, which ends in nothing but endless hatred, intimidation and violence. Thankfully, though, these only happen in the extreme society constructed by the film as a warning, and in reality, humans have always possessed certain good qualities, they are not beasts. This paper analyses how the film externalises and presents the spiritual world of the characters through the creation of representational symbols, the using of camera movements and sets, to presents the audience with the destructive journey of Arthur's heart. On a deeper level, the paper analyses the social riots that take place in the film, which show how crazy and violent the population can become when given absolute freedom in an extremely gloomy society, but instead of inciting tendencies, this serves as a warning that the real world is not always full of gloom and misery. However, this paper lacks some qualitative research and interviews to focus on the impact of audio-visual language on viewers' perceptions and the feedback of films on the real world. Therefore, future film researchers who wish to do research on this film, can focus on the feedback from the public and analyse where and how the film achieves the director's intentions or fails to do so.

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