

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the conclusions of the present study based on the analyses in the previous chapter. The second part puts forward some suggestions intended for further study.

5.1. Conclusion

The aims of this study are to investigate the portrayals of Joker in two *Batman* films namely *Batman* (Burton, 1989) and *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008) and to explore the signification of the portrayals in aforementioned films. Boggs and Petrie's (2008) framework of characterization in film has been used to analyze the portrayals of Joker. Some of Bordwell and Thompson's (2010) cinematic techniques (i.e., *mise-en-scene*, camera shot and angle, and sound) have been also used to strengthen Boggs and Petrie's (2008) framework. The analyses of the character portrayal provide a basis for further exploration of the signification.

In terms of appearance, the findings imply that Joker in both portrayals have strange preference and can be considered as someone who is a "freak". The dominant use of backlighting, low key illumination, and high angle shot in both of their portrayals show that both Joker is portrayed as a powerful person. However, *Batman*'s Joker seems to put more effort in his appearance by always looking flamboyant and neat, hinting his sense of vanity. His clown-like appearance is permanent as a result of his disfigurement. Meanwhile, *The Dark Knight*'s Joker's untidy and dirty appearance hint that he is a careless and reckless person. He constantly puts an emphasis on his scar, indicating that he harbors a deep traumatic experience from his scar.

In terms of the character's dialogue, *Batman*'s Joker tends to use poetic vocabularies and figurative speeches. It implies that *Batman*'s Joker has a sense of

aesthetic beauty and is greatly interested in it. His dialogues prove that Joker is a romantic. On the other hand, *The Dark Knight's* Joker's dialogues point to his dangerous witty mind. *The Dark Knight's* Joker seems to be a reckless man who just wants to see the world burnt as revealed by his dialogues, particularly the ones that he exchanges with Gotham City attorney Harvey Dent (see 4.1.2).

In terms of external action, *Batman's* Joker chooses to put irony in all his actions (e.g., using modified toys to kill people and cheerful background music in killing scenes). *Batman's* Joker also seems to focus on worldly happiness and high society status, as his first actions in the films are killing the mob leader and chasing after an extremely beautiful woman. On the other hand, *The Dark Knight's* Joker seems to give little or no attention to his worldly needs (e.g., treating Gotham City attorney Rachel Dawes in the same way as he treats any other victim). *The Dark Knight's* Joker also seems to want to make the most devastating misery he can create and enjoy it slowly, as he picks knives as his main weapon because he wants to “savor the feelings of it”.

In relation to internal action, *Batman's* Joker's sets of grin photographs imply that he puts beauty and physical appearance as one of his main goals in life. The same maniacal grins on the people's faces in the photographs reveal that Joker in *Batman* intends to make others look *like* himself. Meanwhile, *The Dark Knight's* Joker's sets of hand knives inside his jacket imply his troubled mind that his need to be extra safe by carrying so many knives. It emphasizes his sadistic nature—a need to kill using ineffective weapons anywhere, anytime.

In relation to reactions from other characters, both portrayals seem to be frightened by people around them, *Batman's* Joker more than *The Dark Knight's*. The portrayals are also deemed as freakish by other characters. However, *Batman's* Bruce Wayne is shown to understand Joker through a recorded file. Joker in *Batman* has a clear background and clear motives. It is said, through the words Bruce Wayne, that *Batman's* Joker is “highly intelligent, violent, and has mental instability”. On the other hand, *The Dark Knight's* Bruce Wayne (as said by Wayne's butler Alfred Pennyworth) does not seem to be able to understand Joker's motive and personality. *The Dark Knight's* Joker is unpredictable in nature to the point that nobody really understands him.

As of contrast and dramatic foils, both portrayals of Joker are contrasted by the portrayals of Batman in both films. Both portrayals of Joker are the opposite of the portrayals of Batman in terms of their appearance. Both portrayals of Batman imply the 'normal' preference of ordinary human being, while both portrayals of Joker imply that they are far from ordinary.

In relation to caricature and leitmotif, both *Batman's* and *The Dark Knight's* portrayals of Joker put an emphasis on their grin and laugh. In this context, the laughs and grin dramatizes their mental instability. However, *Batman's* Joker also has habitual phrases. The phrases seem to be used in order to bring the worst in their victims, indicating that *Batman's* Joker likes to make his prey miserable before killing them. Meanwhile, *The Dark Knight's* Joker's habitual phrases are about his scars, revealing a deep trauma harbored after he gained the said scar.

In terms of the choice of name, the name Joker itself can be defined as "someone who likes to joke". It indicates that both portrayals do not treat the world they are in the same way like other characters. The name also gives both portrayals a great power for joker in a deck of cards is considered as the strongest one. However, the name of *Batman's* Joker before he becomes the clown-like persona is Jack Napier, hinting that before becoming a powerful "Joker", he is a mere servant as jack is a servant of king in the deck of cards.

Analyses of the portrayal of Joker's characterizations show that Joker in *Batman* and Joker in *The Dark Knight* seem to be purposefully portrayed differently. In *Batman*, Joker is portrayed as a materialistic-oriented romantic man whose goal is to be the conqueror of Gotham, whereas *The Dark Knight's* Joker seems to pursue another ideal. In *The Dark Knight*, Joker seems to be an unpredictable sadomasochist man who has severe trauma and mental illness.

The different portrayals appear to have also been purposely constructed to make different signification. Considering his portrayal, Joker in *Batman* seems to be made to mirror human's most common desires, which are wealth, status, power, and love. Joker gives the impression that those desires can be corrupted and become an ugly, unhealthy obsession that drives the mind insane. *Batman's* Joker is the representation of 1980s issues: materialistic values, self-obsession, and criminality. However, by considering his portrayal, Joker in *The Dark Knight*

seems to be made as personification of terror and chaos in the society. Terror and chaos often treated as an outside force and a threat of the organized society. They are unpredictable. These are given by the portrayal of Joker in *The Dark Knight* to create a representation of 2000s issue: terror attacks. The character Joker is portrayed differently in two different films in order to signify different fears which are circulated in two different time periods.

Lastly, in order to be able to fully understand a film and its characters, an understanding of the context in which the film was produced is also needed. In regards to this study, a knowledge of the issues of American society in 1980s and 2000s, background information regarding the character Joker and its history is essential. To conclude, a film that seems to be mere entertainment-filled science fiction film can also be a mirror of everyday life once we understand the context which the film was produced.

5.2. Recommendation

Based on the conclusions above, there are some suggestions proposed for further studies. The next researchers can try to compare different portrayals of a character using cinematic techniques. Also, they can take several different adaptation versions of a literary work and compare many of literary elements of them.

In relation to comparative literature, the writer hopes that next researcher would attempt to compare and contrast several literary works. It may be useful to investigate how the contents are constructed. It may also reveal new issues that may have been ignored or forgotten by other researchers.

In relation to the cinematic features, such as *mise-en-scene*, camera shot and angle, and sound, next researchers should attempt to exploit them in their research, to produce a more reliable and deep analysis.

I hope that with this research, the development of research in film studies within the department would flourish. Furthermore, the students should try to use the film studies and cinematic studies to compare and contrast existing film works in specific and many literary works in general.