

The Interpretation of the Character in the movie "Joker" from the Psychoanalytic Criticism

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Abstract: "Joker" is a comic film with a mentally ill person as the protagonist, mainly telling the story of Arthur Frank, mentally ill and engaged in clown acting work, because of the indifference of society, the betrayal of colleagues, the deception of his mother, the ridicule of his idol and various bad encounters, his spiritual world gradually collapsed, and eventually went to the road of crime. Supported by Freud's relevant theories, this paper interprets Arthur's character image from the perspective of psychoanalysis, explores the close relationship between Arthur's life experience and his own mental and psychological conditions, and analyzes the causes of his illness, the process of self-repression and the changes of personality structure.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Personality structure, Oedipus complex, *Joker*.

1. Introduction of the "Joker"

The film "Joker" is directed by the American director Todd Phillips, starring Jaquan Phoenix, with a modern critical sense of the work, the film from the character's personality changes to reflect the huge social problems that exist in the United States, the film of people's social pathology so that the hardworking Arthur suffered from bullying. The film "Joker" is different from the previous forms of expression, the opening scene gives people a sense of oppression, the whole film is full of evil, with "joker" as a special symbol, representing different social classes, revealing the class conflicts and social crime in Western society. Arthur, the main character of the movie "Joker", faces a series of problems such as unemployment and discrimination, and the blow to Arthur in society directly distorts Arthur's spiritual world. The society shown in the movie is highly consistent with the current state of American society, with increased unemployment, a shrinking middle class leading to a further increase in the gap between rich and poor, and a high crime rate due to the proliferation of guns. In the U.S., the Joker has been in the first position of the top 100 comic book villains as voted by the U.S. media for years, and the film has been highly anticipated by the audience before its release in the U.S. movie market under the name of "Joker". "Joker" to individual time narrative, different time periods of Arthur represents a different personality of the figurative model, each time the appearance of the Joker makeup represents a different meaning.

2. Theory Overview

Sigmund Freud was a famous Austrian psychologist who was also a psychiatrist. Through this, Freud had access to a large number of different types of examples, from which Freud gradually realized that most people do not appear to be abnormal on the surface, but there are repressed instincts and desires in the subconscious, which are innate things. But in the process of growing up, people receive education, moral norms and legal guidelines so that a large number of people have successfully suppressed their desires. Many people are not even aware of these desires throughout their lives, and it is these things buried deep in the inner world that constitute

the subconscious of people's spiritual world. Freud emphasized that the spirit drives behavior, and he slowly developed and perfected his psychoanalytic doctrine based on the clues of the subconscious, proposing the "subconscious", "ego", "self", "superego", and "superego". "superego", "Oedipus complex", "psychological defense mechanism" and other new concepts.

Psychological defense mechanism is a term used by the psychoanalytic school. It refers to the psychological mechanism that individuals use to avoid disturbances and maintain mental balance when they are disturbed. It was first proposed by Freud. It is often used in the unconscious state. Such as repression, suppression, denial, projection, transference, modification, dissolution, self-representation, compensatory action, etc. Self-defense mechanisms have the following characteristics: they are unconscious or at least partially unconscious; they support self-esteem or protect and defend ourselves from harm through self-glorification, and are classified as positive or negative; they seem to be self-deceptive in nature, i.e., they work by masking or disguising our true motives or denying the existence of impulses, actions, or memories that may cause anxiety to us. Defense mechanisms are not pathological per se; they can be expressed singularly or in overlapping ways.

Freud divided human consciousness into three parts: unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The "conscious", i.e., the self-conscious, is at the surface and can be controlled; the "preconscious" is the mediating mechanism that regulates the conscious and the unconscious, and serves to prevent the unconscious from entering the conscious. The "unconscious (subconscious)" is the mental activity that is repressed by the preconscious and the conscious, including the various desires associated with the instincts. This is the core of his doctrine - the theory of the unconscious. Later, Freud refined the above three levels of psychological structure and expressed them as "ego," "self," and "superego," which gave rise to The "Triple Personality Theory" was derived. In brief, the "ego" is the "subconscious", which is mainly expressed as the instinctive impulse, the most primitive and innate part of the unconscious, pursuing the principle of pleasure and disregarding any ethical and moral constraints; the "ego" supervises the activities of the "ego" under the supervision and guidance of the "superego" and regulates the contradictions between

the "ego" and the "superego" according to the real conditions. "The "superego" is an idealized ego, including self-criticism and moral control.

The Oedipus complex is also known as the Oedipus complex. It is a term that Freud borrowed from the ancient Greek mythological story "Oedipus the King" and made up his own concept. The story tells of Oedipus unknowingly committing the two great sins of killing his father and marrying his mother, which Freud believed reflected the instinctive desire of boys to love their mothers and hate their fathers, while girls, on the contrary. This instinctive desire cannot be solved by external forces, it will always lurk in the depths of people's hearts, maintaining the basic activity, with sexual instincts as the core, with strong emotional overtones, in order to cause people always have a sense of betrayal of virtue.

3. Interpretation of characters in the perspective of psychoanalytic criticism

3.1. Psychological defense mechanism

The "*Joker*" is a film full of depression and chaos, in which the protagonist Arthur suffers from multiple blows from his relatives, colleagues and society, making his mental illness more and more serious until the final psychological world completely collapses. Throughout the whole process, is Arthur's maniacal laughter. This is a psychological disorder, epileptic laughter, also known as expression inversion, arises from a psychological defense mechanism. Freud introduced this concept in his book "Introduction to Psychoanalysis". He pointed out that psychological defense mechanism is a psychological defense function of each person's own face of pain and anxiety, Arthur's epileptic laughter is a reverse formation in the process of rationalizing his own tragic encounter.

Arthur is aware of his disease, he will regularly go to the psychiatrist to get medication or treatment. There are many times in the film when Arthur's condition, the kind of feeling like the internal organs to laugh out all very well, obviously laughing, but full of pain and helplessness, the disease is also spoken through the mouth of the psychiatrist. In the first half of the movie, Arthur is still in self-control, he will carry a card with him, there is a description of his condition. In one episode, Arthur was on the bus, making faces to amuse the child, but drew the child's mother's complaints and discontent, and Arthur suddenly at this time onset, on the bus more than laughing, making the mother angrier, so Arthur took out this disease description card, hoping that the next person can understand. Or Arthur wanted to perform a monologue in a bar, he also burst out laughing maniacally, attracting the audience's disbelief, ridicule, contempt and even abuse. This epileptic smile is actually a reflection of the defense mechanism, Arthur thought that a smile can make his mother happy and satisfied, in a long time growing up and education, Arthur received are to keep "smile", not that there is anything wrong with keeping a smile, but Arthur received "smile" "The process of education is not right.

Arthur grew up in a single-parent family, his mother adopted him when he was three years old, but not good for him, Arthur suffered long-term abuse from the family, physical and psychological sense of the double abuse. Arthur's mother's ex-boyfriend often tied Arthur to the

radiator, burning him to cry, while Arthur's mother turned a blind eye to these, but think Arthur is a happy and to bring joy to others children, to Arthur named a nickname "Happy", in Arthur's suffering and then deepen his pain. These to Arthur caused a very deep psychological shadow, long-term, Arthur also became a mental illness. In the film, there are many images of Arthur's naked body, thin and bony, look at people's hearts. Arthur's childhood physical and mental suffering, but his mother did not give him a little love in such an environment, but only to teach him to keep "smile", so Arthur's laughter became a kind of self-protection, isolating him from the outside world, so that he can hide in their own inner abyss, briefly numb to seek a little comfort.

Parents are usually the first way a child perceives the world. Arthur's upbringing was full of pain and repression, and when he was tortured, he couldn't stand it so he hid in his own inner world. For a long time, Arthur's spirit formed a kind of split, one side is harmony and peace, the other side is deception and violence, he couldn't tell what is the real world, immersed in his own fantasy can't extricate himself. After growing up, Arthur became a professional "clown", painted clown makeup for a long time, doing the work of bringing joy and laughter to others, this work in line with Arthur's mother has always been his expectations and education, but Arthur has been suffering inside.

3.2. Three personality structures

Arthur went to the street to play clown to earn a meager salary, but was insulted and beaten by a group of children, but did not fight back; in the car to play his humor to make a crying child happy, but the other mother's blank stare; after being rejected by the other black mother he could not stop laughing maniacally (according to his own words this is a maniacal laughter disease); after that out of "good intentions" Randall gave him a pistol for self-defense, accidentally dropped the gun in the orphanage, but was framed by Randall Arthur lost his valuable job in his intention to buy a gun; the day he lost his job and was bullied by three white collar workers of Wayne Company (a rich company) in the subway, Arthur shot them after work before they took off their clown makeup. These clips, presented in the third person, objectively and realistically show the dilemma Arthur is in and the journey of his changing personality. The initial construction of the "clown" image discourse. Arthur was initially bullied by children, trying to please others with good intentions, full trust in colleagues, he released his good intentions in the society, but received a malicious response. All kinds of misfortunes accumulate in Arthur's heart, especially after losing his job as a living under the trap of others, impulse and desire swell Arthur's subconscious, paralyzing Arthur's ability to think normally. Under the malicious acts of children, black mothers, and co-workers, Arthur's ego impulses were bullied by three white collar workers at Wayne's company when it exploded, and shot them dead under the makeup of a clown. This is the first appearance of the film "*Joker*", but also implies the first crack in Arthur's character psychology. Arthur's happiness is derived from the joy of the inner "ego joker", he completed the heart of the original desire, the first time to enjoy the thrill of breaking through the self, to get a spiritual release, but Arthur's impulsive behavior can't be repressed, the impulsive desire of the ego began to occupy Arthur's consciousness.

In psychology: "The ego is gradually differentiated from the ego and is located in the middle layer of the personality

structure. Its role is mainly to regulate the contradiction between the ego and the superego; it regulates the ego on the one hand and is subject to the superego on the other. It follows the principle of reality and meets the demands of the ego in a rational way". After Arthur's first murder, the "clown" consciousness gradually spread in Arthur's heart, the lowest level of restlessness constantly impacted Arthur's "ego" gate. But Arthur did not fall completely, the "ego" has been restrained by the "ego" impulse, he still wants to become a famous theater actor, he tried to study, participate in various competitions. When Arthur and his mother watch Murray's show, he fantasizes about being praised by Murray and invites Arthur on stage to have an intimate interaction, he also fantasizes about having a beautiful love story with his female neighbor, why Arthur is fantasy? In the middle and late stages of the film, it is mentioned that Arthur's mother has delusional disorder and narcissistic personality disorder, while Arthur also suffers from delusional disorder. The plot also explains that when Murray saw Arthur did not know him, when Arthur tried to find comfort in the female neighbor's house, the female neighbor was also surprised, all these phenomena show that the above are Arthur's id fantasy only, and did not really happen. This is a "dream" of Arthur, according to Freud's book "there is such a phenomenon of migration of thought, he is very close to telepathy and is considered to be telepathy is not presumptuous", the dream is not the formation of an accidental association, or because Arthur in Love and work were frustrated and generated, but the repressed desire, in reality can not get all, so Arthur he can only live in his own dreams, in their own dreams to find the pleasure of not having been obtained to balance the misery of life.

In "*Joker*", the director uses the "symbolic" technique very cleverly when turning to the psychological activities of the characters' appearances, in which Arthur's uncontrollable maniacal laughter symbolizes discontent; the pistol symbolizes violence; the counselor symbolizes Arthur's sense of self; mother, father, and idol symbolize goodwill; and the Joker symbolizes a new identity. From home, society, work anywhere can't find a little goodwill for him, the image of his mother, father, idol one by one was subverted, the shattered sense of self, Arthur passive by the general environment shaped into a complete and utter disappointment in the world, he can only use laughter to vent his dissatisfaction, violence to change the society, with the clown makeup to recast their own personality. The "clown", a non-permitted existence in the real society, forms an antithesis to the morality of the society. The same is true for the existence of the "ego" and the "superego". The superego is the highest stage of social morality, and Arthur's "ego" clown is completely incorrect in the eyes of the "superego". Arthur's "ego" clowning is completely incorrect behavior in the eyes of the "superego". So how does Arthur's Joker consciousness become almost the collective unconscious of Gotham City, something that should not reasonably exist in society? In fact, after Arthur's "Joker" consciousness self-realization, in Arthur's body still remains the expectation of social identity and the desire for fatherly love. Arthur believed his delusional mother's words and went to Wayne to ask for proof, but was beaten, and Wayne told Arthur something about his mother's past. Arthur deliberately went to the mental hospital to check his mother's previous data, and found the truth that his world collapsed, it can be said that the existence of a positive image of his mother is to maintain Arthur's normal mental pillar. If Arthur did not know that before the childhood abuse by his mother, but also believe

that the world is only a little bit of goodwill is from the mother, then at this moment, the only candle in Arthur's heart was extinguished by the people close to him. The beginning of the collapse of Arthur's worldview is also the beginning of his new worldview reconstruction, he did not hesitate to kill his mother in the hospital, the female neighbors with whom he had only met killed, the idol who mocked him in the show violently killed. He purposely painted on the Joker's makeup before going on the show. This is the third appearance of the Joker, and it is also Arthur's initiative to bring the Joker's makeup, this time Arthur's ego "Joker" is completely integrated with his ego, "Joker" is Arthur, Arthur is "Joker". Arthur's encounter is like the epitome of many people in Gotham City, his resistance also led to a large area of riots, he became the idol of many people's hearts. Freud said: "The change of goal and object has a more socially meaningful value, we can call it 'sublimation'".

In the film, at first, Arthur's "ego" is hidden deep inside him, and his "superego" dominates. Arthur keeps all his pain in his heart, forcing a smile on his face, being a filial son and an obedient employee, always keeping a smile on his face. When Arthur encountered contempt, insults and even beatings he would begin to laugh, which is his "ego" gradually occupy his mental world, trying to control his body. Arthur has tried to control himself, there is an episode, Arthur was climbing a very high stairs, the stairs appeared twice, after he killed the first person, never climbed the top of the stairs, the top of the stairs symbolizes his "ego". Also, before Arthur killed his mother, he said, "You once told me that my uncontrolled laughter was a disease, but it's not, that's my true self." Arthur killed not only his mother, but also his "superego", the original self with a smile to hide everything. After that, the uncontrollable laughter never appeared in Arthur. Another episode of the film is Arthur painted clown makeup, wearing a red suit, dancing freely on the stairs, at this time, Arthur's "ego" has completely suppressed the "superego", there is no one or something can be bound to him.

Throughout the film, Arthur's character image has a clear transformation process. He played a clown on the street to complete his work, but was beaten by a group of teenagers, trying to make a child happy on the bus but was disliked by the child's mother, a new colleague was betrayed and lost his job, in the subway to see the three white-collar bullying girls and was abused and bullied. Whether in the family or in society, Arthur can not get any little warmth and a sense of identity, all this backlog together, finally led to the outbreak of Arthur, he shot the three white collars. This is the first time Arthur killed, his reaction at this time is panic and extreme fear. Later, Arthur killed more people, psychiatrists, mothers, colleagues Randall, idol Murray, etc. He has become a complete new "clown" in the killing again and again. When the "ego" is completely released, Arthur acts very happy, the whole person is in a state of extreme relaxation, which is actually his spirit and the physical body occurred a kind of split, Arthur can not get pleasure and identity in the real world, can only be immersed in fantasy, in an attempt to seek the good he is seeking. Many times, Arthur could not smile naturally, but could only use his hands to open his mouth at the right angle to show a smile, the uncontrolled smile is the result of his "ego" to regulate, as the "ego" and "superego" "The conflict between the more intense, Arthur gradually can no longer control the balance, there is a state of loss of control. This is the pre-Arthur numbness, weakness, while the late Arthur became confident and aggressive reasons. In this

process of transformation, there is a pattern, Arthur is mostly in a closed space to complete the psychological transformation, such as the bathroom and counseling room, the closed environment gives Arthur a sense of security, allowing him to release the "ego", the devil should be suppressed, Arthur's instinctive impulse desire can no longer be suppressed, his consciousness His consciousness was gradually taken over.

"The superego is located at the highest level of the personality structure, the moralized self, internalized by social norms, ethics, and values, and its formation is the result of socialization." The superego follows moral principles and has three functions: first, to suppress the impulses of the id, second, to monitor the self, and third, to pursue the realm of perfection. Arthur's psychological transformation is presented through several clues, one of which is his counselor. In the film, Arthur and the counselor meet three times, the counseling room is very dark, the environment is very bad, only a faint light, which is actually a reflection of Arthur's inner. In the first exchange, Arthur just completed the first killings and was widely known in the city, Arthur confided in the counselor that he had gained a little recognition, although it was in the identity of the "clown". And in the last exchange, the counselor told Arthur not to come back, because the government abolished such welfare counseling institutions, and then gave the shot is Arthur from the counseling room, with a long series of bloody footprints under his feet. The counselor was completely obliterated, which is also Arthur's "self" completely victory. In addition, Arthur's clown makeup also recorded his change. The first time was an impulsive killing, killing three white collar workers, Arthur appeared for the second time with clown makeup, killing his colleague Randal, who had betrayed him before, but not much midget Gary, Arthur let him go, because Gary was the only person who was kinder to him, the third time was the initiative to kill, deliberately with clown makeup. The third time, Arthur's id has become one with the "Joker", and, this "Joker" has become the idol of many people in Gotham City, because they are in a similar situation, but only Arthur, the Joker, was the first to come forward, and this brought about a riot in Gotham City. When Arthur danced on the roof of the car with his clown makeup, he was completely controlled by his "ego" and his "superego" consciousness was gone.

3.3. Oedipus complex

According to Freud's theory, we can find that Arthur has a very obvious Oedipal complex.

First of all, Arthur's mother, due to his mother's mental problems, Arthur grew up without any maternal love, but Arthur has been very good to his mother, put up with her bad temper, take care of her body and even help her bathe, complete her request to keep smiling, believe her fantasy, thinking that Wayne is his father. Arthur, thirsty for love, went to make a plea and was rewarded with a severe beating and his mother's psychotic past. Later, Arthur makes a special trip to the psychiatric hospital to check his mother's profile and confirms that she is indeed delusional and learns of the abuse he suffered as a child. Previously, the image of his mother was the only positive source to help Arthur control his "self", and only then, knowing the truth, Arthur realized that he had never been loved, the heart of that little support for their own self-righteous glow of maternal love completely extinguished.

Then Arthur's female neighbors, Arthur has not been a mother's love, he gradually in the psychological imbalance of

emotional transference, the feelings of the mother of his female neighbors. Arthur is very fond of this female neighbor, will help her and her daughter to press the elevator button, because he envies the female neighbor's daughter has a loving mother, envies her to have a mother's love that she does not have, so Arthur began to pursue the female neighbor, they go shopping together, together to see talk shows, together to complete a variety of couple activities, the female neighbor loves him, and can even understand Arthur, agree with him, praise "Joker", Arthur more and more think that the female neighbor understand him. But when Arthur learned that his mother was delusional, he went to the female neighbor's house to get a little comfort, the female neighbor was very frightened also asked a question: "Are you my neighbor Arthur?" After Arthur made their previous gesture of shooting, the neighbor was more afraid, at this time flash back to some of their previous images together, it is clear that everything before is just Arthur's fantasy, the thirst for mother's love made him hallucinate, in a thorough understanding of their own never had a mother's love, Arthur finally sobered up from the fantasy.

Finally, it is "patricide". In the film, Arthur does not have a father, but from his mother's letter, Arthur one of his own father is Wayne, which is the embodiment of the mother's "words", that is, if the mother recognized the father's position in the family, even if he died, his influence on the family and children will be replaced by the mother's words, so the father in the family triangle The father's place in the family triangle structure remains, but it is conveyed to the whole family through the mother's words. Arthur believes his mother and goes to find the "father" she says he is, only to be told that she has made it all up. Wayne is the "father" recognized by his mother, and Wayne's influence on Arthur is also realized through his mother's words, so, at the end of the film, Arthur kills his mother, which is, in a sense, an act of "patricide". In addition, Arthur's father is Murray, a famous talk show host, is his idol, Arthur's heart has a dream of becoming a good talk show performer, so Murray played a one-way guide in this regard, which is exactly the role of Murray's heart father played. However, when Arthur went on stage to speak comedy, Murray ridiculed him and invited the performer of this clown act on his show, hoping to bring himself greater influence and benefit. At this point, Murray's image in Arthur's heart completely collapsed, Arthur no longer "father", and in the show, Arthur also decided to shoot Murray, killing his "father", which is the sinful embodiment of the Oedipus complex.

4. Conclusion

The film "*Joker*" uses a three-dimensional narrative to shape rounded characters and face images to drive the changes of the whole story, making the characters serve the plot, strengthening the real feeling brought by the character narrative, making the audience temporarily ignore the guided thinking from the director's perspective, leaving more space for the audience to think independently, and deepening the discussion of the film ontology from the aspect of the other.

The film "*Joker*" is a three-dimensional way of telling to show the character image, Arthur is the main body, others are to reveal the branches of the transformation process of Arthur's spiritual world, from the personality, psychology, image and other aspects of deep to tell Arthur's story. Arthur from an ordinary man into a criminal, every person around him has more or less influenced him. From the perspective of psychoanalytic criticism, Arthur's changes are multiple and

complex, as he is psychologically defensive due to childhood injuries, his innate desires and his never-loved heart make him reveal his Oedipus complex, and his various tragic experiences in life make his "ego" unbalanced and his "self" unregulated. "The "ego" is completely released and the "superego" is gone. In the process, the complexity of human nature is reflected.

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