

Navigating the Labyrinth of Chaos: Metaphor and Myth in *Joker*'s Dystopian Dream

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Abstract | Navigating the chaos of labyrinthine spaces, the film *Joker* (Phillips 2019) reverses notions of wholeness in the image of the human subject. The opening scene depicts a dual representation of Arthur and Joker as the film constructs a dystopian dream by merging the labyrinth of the city and the labyrinth of the mind. This duality extends to the smearing of Gotham City's saviour, Batman, who is the moral opponent of Joker as the villain. This is no longer the story we know. *Joker* is operating in the labyrinth as both metaphor and myth. At the climax of this journey, Arthur embraces his Joker persona as the film intersects with the standard Batman narrative. By accompanying Arthur, as he embraces his mirror image of Joker, the audience attempts to navigate chaos—a dystopian dream, mediated in the film, mirroring the life world. The film is an intense political statement about the perverse nature of neoliberal Western democracy. The formulas in the capitalist dream of “success” and “happiness,” in this society, are characterised by obscene wealth living alongside abject poverty. The labyrinth of the city space, as the epitome of civilisation, creates monsters which are of its own making. Likewise, we are navigating the labyrinthine chaos of capitalism that results in our displacement and delirium.

Keywords | Dystopia, Capitalism, Joker, Batman, Labyrinth, Chaos, Carnival, Žižek, Freud, Lacan

The film, *Joker*, treads a controversial path through civilisation: real and imaginary. It begins with a news broadcast that heightens a sense of disorder in the city as garbage is piling up on the streets hindering commerce and resulting in an infestation of rats. As Arthur (Joaquin Phoenix) sits at a make-up table, he gazes into a mirror and distorts his clown face. In this liminal space the boundaries are becoming blurred between the subject's real and imaginary worlds. The scene is metaphorically "opening the soul to an invasion of chaos" (Anderson 11). As he moves through the city's maze, he encounters barriers and missteps that ultimately lead to an oppressive climb up a high set of stairs. The audience joins this long journey home to what is considered a family centre, an apartment shared with his mother. Further in the film, this mother/child identity is shattered and ultimately what follows is Arthur's transformation because of failed attempts at stability within the socio-symbolic order. The order of the city is dominated by capitalist preoccupations in mantras of health and wealth. Arthur as Joker manifests the internal journey from passive victim to active disruptor in the realisation that he has no worth in his society; as he says to Murray (Robert De Niro), "I've got nothin' left to lose" (01:42:00). The stigma of being mentally ill and poor acts against society's self-image of health, wealth, order, and justice. As he is dislodged from all the threads that held him in a symbolic reality, he disrupts the society that casts him away.

The film is Arthur/Joker's dystopian dream where the audience does not know what is real. The audience moves through the dystopian labyrinth in Joker's delirium of human reality that explodes the Western utopian dream of capitalism. Capitalism wants to view itself as the ideal model that delivers the modern equivalent of Eden. What emerges in the departure from the original Batman/Joker story is not a split between good and evil, or hero and villain, but between rich and poor. As Slavoj Žižek describes the film, it is a "social horror" exposing the real horror of living in the twenty-first century where the burden of life is reflected in the architecture of the city which is like a prison of capitalist constructions ("More on Joker"). Sigmund Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents* reveals the trauma embedded in civilisation, mapped by the link between the city and the mind (8). Crucial to understanding the irrupting madness of the film *Joker* is the Greek myth of the Labyrinth of Crete, a prison. Analysing its relevance for psychoanalytic practice, Caroline Savitz reads this myth "as archetype and metaphor" (480). Supported by the works of Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Lacan, Steve Pile, and Mark Fisher, *Joker's* chaotic dystopia will be critically analysed as a twenty-first century filmic labyrinth.

The labyrinth of Crete was built to hide the embodied fruits of illicit desires. When Minos received the Kingship of the island of Crete by the design of the gods, he was to sacrifice the white bull, which was a gift from Poseidon as part of his agreement but did not. Consequently, the angered Poseidon aroused unnatural desire for the bull in

Pasiphae, the wife of King Minos, which resulted in a “monstrous offspring, the Minotaur” (*Metamorphosis* 8.156). Minos asked Daedalus to construct a prison to hide the fruits of this transgressive desire. This prison was called the labyrinth and a yearly tribute of Athenian youths was sent to Crete. One of these youths was Theseus, the son of the King of Athens, Aegeus. The myth relates that the labyrinth was an architectural structure of disorientating paths, a doubling “filled with ambiguity” (Savitz 466). Ovid claims that “inside the twistings and turns of a dark, inextricable maze” Minos hid his disgrace (8.158). In Virgil’s *The Aeneid*, Aeneas is faced with a representation of the labyrinth on the doors of Apollo’s temple, described as “the inextricable labyrinth, the house of toil” (6.38–39). Theseus escaped the labyrinth through a thread given to him by Ariadne (*Metamorphosis* 8.172). This is considered the thread of love because she was in love with him (Apollodorus Epit. 1.9). Like the twists and turns of the Labyrinth of Crete, *Joker* too “pairs love and abandonment” and structures of confinement (Savitz 466). Savitz considers that engaging with “[t]he labyrinth is a more paradoxical image because it must allow for confusion, disorientation, and potential for entrapment; the centre contains devouring chaos instead of a deity” (478). After Theseus killed the Minotaur, he escaped with Ariadne. On the way home to Athens, at Delos, a dance was performed by Theseus and his companions “in honour of the victory in the labyrinth” (Savitz 465). G. S. Kirk notes that “monster slaying is a typical heroic activity” and heroes like Theseus and Bellerophon are supplied with “suitably horrible and anti-social routine victims” (204). Different ancient sources of the Cretan Labyrinth alter the roles of the gods, heroes, and mortals by changing their interactions. In Apollodorus, Theseus is a hero who has Ariadne stolen from him by Dionysus. In Catullus and Ovid, Theseus abandons Ariadne and is faithless, she is instead rescued by Bacchus (Dionysus). The forming and reforming of the myth is like the twists and turns of the structure itself and the illicit desires of the characters that alter the story.

In the film *Joker*, the same myth comes into play in the retelling of the story. The City of Gotham harbours the same layered structures in its architecture and the society has a labyrinthine form. For Arthur, the city harbours a dystopic core because “Over time, civilisation marks in the development of rules which organise relationships between individuals, families and the state” (Pile 107). Freud contends that the entry into civilisation requires that citizens sacrifice their instincts: “what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery” (23). Seen in the filmic image is Arthur’s daily struggle in finding a path through this maze, trapped by mental illness and poverty. In a departure from the standard Batman story, the film asserts that Batman is a mythical resonance who is born from Joker’s “internal labyrinth” (Savitz 462). This is clearly demonstrated when Joker is arrested for killing Murray, live on television. A group of rioters in clown masks plough into the police car. Joker is pulled from the car unconscious and placed on the bonnet. While he is in this unconscious state, the audience enters Joker’s dystopian dream where the labyrinth of the city and the labyrinth of his mind are entwined. The audience sees Thomas Wayne (Brett Cullen), his wife, Martha (Carrie Louise Putrello), and their son, Bruce (Dante Pereira-Olson), flee the theatre due to the rioting. As they escape down an alley a man in a clown mask follows them. The masked man murders Bruce’s parents leaving him alone in the alley standing with their bodies as an orphan, and then Joker wakes up. Joker’s cognitive map takes control of the world and makes it anew (Pile 247). The scene is shot in such a way that Batman emerges from the

unconscious mind of Joker. Concurring Penny Fleck's illusion that Arthur's father was Thomas Wayne, the film fabricates the illusion that Batman and Joker are in fact "dark brothers" (Hampden-Turner 46).

Batman and Joker endure embedded traumas that trap them in labyrinths. But as each scene unfolds, does the audience know whether they are in the labyrinth of the city or the labyrinth of Arthur's mind? Freud debates whether the "past of a city and the past of a mind" could be compared (8). The film takes this comparison further. The city becomes a metaphoric labyrinth that Arthur constructs for the projection of his dystopian dreams of violence and vengeance. During the riots, at the end of the film, he is the hero. However, in the beginning of the film, the social barriers he experiences in Gotham City become like the labyrinth of Crete, an inextricable maze in which he is trapped. An example of this state occurs early in the film in the difficulty experienced by Arthur as he ascends the stairs on his way home from work. The apartment building that he and his mother share is neglected, and things continually break down, like Arthur's mental state and the state apparatus. This scene metaphorically translates the social barriers into an architectural space of hardship and toil. Arthur's abject poverty situates him within the space allowed to him by the city. Pile proposes that the subject is provided with an image within a group and "marked as belonging to a particular place in society" (249). In setting aside public housing, the city creates a space to hide its illicit desires to be rid of what Thomas Wayne calls "those people." *Joker* navigates these spaces as a metaphoric transmission of the treading of the labyrinth, revealing the secret centre of the fruits of illicit desire. Arthur, for example, had been violently abused by Penny Fleck's boyfriend when he was young, causing mental trauma, brutally damaging the pathways in the labyrinth of his mind.

Mark Fisher considered that in the film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Weir 1975), a calm delirium was required to navigate the labyrinthine geographical spaces of the Australian bush (123). *Joker* is a stark contrast to such calm delirium. Set in the labyrinthine spaces of Gotham City, a chaotic violent delirium erupts through Arthur's persona as the rampaging clown. In *The Shining* (Kubrick 1980), the labyrinth and the maze are structures that amplify the filial transgressions of Jack Torrance and he is trapped as a monster at the centre. Jack views the model of the maze on display in the hotel, looking at the entire structure in miniature. But upon entering the full-scale maze, it becomes more like the Cretan labyrinth, he is disorientated by its blind turns, dead ends, and the desire to kill. Savitz considers that:

The labyrinth itself provides us with a paradoxical image: it holds a tension between order and chaos, pattern and disarray, clarity and confusion, depending on the perspective of the viewer; how we experience the maze depends upon where we stand.

From inside the maze, disorientation reigns [...] the labyrinth can be viewed from within or without [...]. (462)

The City of Gotham is like a labyrinth which is full of tension and challenge. When Arthur climbs the stairs in the beginning of the film, they are an added burden in his life's journey of toil. When he fully transforms into Joker, he dances down the same stairs imitating a victory dance that is reminiscent of the labyrinthine crane dance. This victory

dance performed by Arthur/Joker is the illusion of lucidity in his madness. The celebration is marred by his violent actions. Like the distortions in the mirror in the opening sequence, Joker displaces Arthur as he completely gives in to the twists and turns of his labyrinthine mind.

Unlike the human child that looks at itself in the mirror, recognising and identifying with its image as a subject, Arthur distorts his image revealing the double—Joker. In *Ecrits*, Jacques Lacan considers that “the mirror-image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world [...] if we observe the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearance of the double, in which psychical realities [...] are manifested” (5). It can be argued that from the outset the audience can perceive the double, seeing Joker not as the reflection of Arthur in the looking glass, but his double. It disturbs the psychoanalytic model of the mirror stage¹ as the illusion of wholeness; instead it represents a type of exchange in the image of the subject, and in the filmic image. This asks the audience to question what really happened to Arthur and what he imagines or hallucinates in the film. The object of the mirror is a slip into a metaphoric transmission between his mind and the city, the chaos that the audience attempts to navigate. Arthur as Joker inspires a sense of abandonment of social rules and norms through murder without remorse and exposing Thomas Wayne’s disdain for the poor of Gotham. This causes some citizens to riot, murder, and set fire to the city and take over the streets while wearing clown masks. The only way to survive in the city and be able to walk its streets is to take on his image and become a copy of Arthur’s aggressive mirror image as Joker, a clown. There is nothing ambiguous about the comparison between Arthur’s mind and the City of Gotham. The film begins in the mirror stage of Arthur’s life, his illusion of knowing who his mother is and why he has a mental illness. While the audience gazes at Arthur as he transforms into a clown, the news broadcast reports tensions in the city along with its simultaneous degradation as the streets are piled with garbage and infested with rats. The opening scene is overlaying these two disparate mediums of the mirror image and voice over the radio as separate narratives that will coalesce. The vermin that infest the streets, as reported on the radio broadcast, will be replaced by clowns who drive the tension into an erupting chaos. The news broadcast is mirrored by Arthur’s mind that is full of the garbage of the state lie (that governments care and provide for all their citizens) and the mother lie (Penny is his biological mother and that his illness is genetic).

Within the maze of the mental institution at Arkham Hospital is revealed the secret origin of Arthur’s mental illness. Penny, like Pasiphae, harbours illicit desires. Her drug abuse and lust for violent bestial partners resulted in Arthur’s abuse and brain damage. There is a shared responsibility for this neglect between his adoptive mother and the state. The state should not have allowed her to adopt Arthur, as Penny lives in illusions. As Arthur retraces the steps of his life the apartment that was once seen as the centre of something normal is revealed to be monstrous. Penny lives under the delusion that Thomas Wayne is the father of her child (the film suggests that there could have been a sexual relationship between them) and that because she used to work for him, he will look after them. This fits Wayne’s political narrative of the caring and benevolent company and the CEO as the father figure. These lies have a direct correlation with the

¹Lacan’s mirror stage is the point at which the infant recognises itself in a mirror, seeing itself as an object that can be viewed outside of the self (Lacan 94).

neoliberal lies that showcase an aggressive focus on individual responsibility for poverty and mental illness, and the role of the company as provident provider. Arthur, in the early part of the film, is shown to be caught in the labyrinthine structure of government health funding that involves the twists and turns of the state apparatus. Opportunities and access have been denied to him because of his social status, mental state, and poverty.

We are complicit in a society that aggressively pursues “health” through neoliberal formulas that include, diet, exercise, getting a job, and taking your pills. This compliance is considered a resolution for everything, including those with a mental disability. Relevance, deference, and prestige is given to “the beautiful,” “the healthy,” and “the wealthy.” Arthur should not have been placed in his adopted mother’s care, and the state (the Other) is unfit and neglectful while expecting compliance, obedience, and deference to its political and social agenda. The duality of the Other/Mother shares the same function and failure in the narrative, the inability to nurture. The film uses Arthur/Joker’s mental injury as a mirror for the psychological health of the state, and his mother as a metaphor for the state apparatus. The audience is confronted by a mirror that is held up to Western society’s ideological lie of equality, justice, fairness, compassion, and caring. For instance, Arthur is treated like some kind of monster exemplified in the scene on the train. Three men in business suits (who Arthur in his interview sarcastically calls “Wall Street Guys”) harass a female occupant. Arthur begins to laugh, as a stress response, and when the woman escapes, he becomes the target of their bullying. His abnormal responses in social settings, continually locate him in the gap within the symbolic order (the accepted social norms). This interrupts his, and its’, perfect functioning. The normal functioning of the ‘Big Other’ of the state is constituted in the capitalist model of health and wealth. Falling outside of these norms, Arthur completely indulges in his “clown” status and highlights the tensions between rich and poor, healthy and unhealthy. The film engages in a social experiment as rats roaming on the streets are exchanged for clowns;² but is this all an illusion in Arthur’s mind? This creates the instability in distinctions between the real and imagined. The garbage strike resulted in super rats, vermin that disrupt social order and society’s functioning, but we never see them. We do, however, see a growing number of individuals in clown masks as the film progresses. This is how the film depicts the marginalised in Gotham City identifying with Arthur/Joker’s experience—they swarm the streets. This leads some members of the audience to a sympathetic reading of the film as a dual recognition in a horrifying encounter with “an unbearable truth” (Žižek, *How to Read* 3).

When the illusions of wholeness in family life are broken down, through the revelations of Penny’s neglect and her boyfriend’s physical abuse, Arthur breaks away from the symbolic order established by the society. He descends into the chaos of his mental state. With the thread of love cut and the symbolic support of his life broken down Arthur changes into the image glimpsed in the opening scene. Arthur’s reflection in the mirror as Joker comes to represent Lacan’s constructions of the mirror stage. It signifies “a permanent structure of subjectivity [...] in which the subject is permanently caught and captivated by its own image” (Evans 115). As Joker he makes Gotham City the mirror image of his psychological state. The social pathology of the city is likewise transformed.

²Just as the film invites comparisons between the mind and the city (Freud 8), a comparison can be drawn between the clowns and the rats.

The city streets as a labyrinthine map of Joker's mind correspondingly descend into madness and rage. Reflected in the mirror is capitalism's chaos in the duality of "the realist depiction of social misery and fantasized horror" (Žižek, "More on Joker"). This horror is extended to the creation of Batman as a monster, a half-human half-beast dwelling in the dark night/Knight, performing violence. The film returns to the scene of Bruce Wayne's birth as Batman, the dark avenger. This scene is shot in the familiar rendition of the alley outside the theatre in Gotham City. This is an eternal theme in remakes, reboots, and adaptations because it is the hero's story of an embedded trauma. In *Joker*, however, Arthur/Joker and Bruce/Batman both emerge from a dystopian dark fantasy world of Gotham City and its violent society, as mirror opposites of obscene wealth and abject poverty, both trapped in its labyrinth. In Gotham City, Joker and Batman are the twin realities that drive the capitalistic matrix of poverty and wealth. The trickle-down violence of the economy that transgresses human dignity is reversed, and sent upward as a message, as violence is enacted upon the city.

Gotham City's social divide is made palpable through the connection between Arthur and Bruce as dark "brothers." This link is explored through Penny Fleck's insistence that Thomas Wayne is Arthur's father. Arthur opens a letter intended for Thomas Wayne containing Penny's claims regarding her son, and he then goes in search of him. At the Wayne Mansion, Arthur meets Bruce who is in a decorative gazebo, a cage-like structure on the grounds of the mansion. Bruce is behind a large electric gate as Arthur performs a clown show. The fence is another capitalist barrier of wealth and security, set up to keep him out, but it also keeps Bruce in. Arthur does not believe in the information he is given by Alfred—that Thomas Wayne is not his father—and continues his search. Arthur winds his way through some protestors in clown masks and sneaks into a benefit where the wealthy ironically watch a screening of Charlie Chaplin in the film *Modern Times* (1936). For Arthur there is no way to breach these walls; as more barriers appear to prevent his passage through life, he finds his own way out of the labour of the maze of state and social compliance, and into another one (Savitz 467). Arthur's life is a monstrous chaos created when a normal life is denied to him through neo-capitalist structures which fail to create equality and instead create a divide that he cannot navigate.

Arthur is appointed a health care worker who follows the ideologies of the state demanding compliance in the "pursuit of healthiness" (Ayo 100). He cannot breach "the wall of language" (Žižek, *How to Read* 40). He thinks that she does not listen to what he is trying to communicate. Both suffer from the state's focus on funding cuts as a path to economic morality, creating another dead end for Arthur. This further distances him from a society that does not care about him; his social worker states "They don't give a shit about you Arthur" (00:41:42). The medications come to represent what has been denied to him to function as a human being. His eventual rejection of the medications is a metaphoric rejection of the state apparatus of control (the symbolic order). Once he stops taking them, he feels much better. This re-forms his identity, as what was once disability is now a celebration of what he can do. Dragged from a police car during the riots, the scene is reminiscent of "Carnival". The celebration suspends all everyday rules and norms of the community, offering temporary permission to engage in an irrupting madness. This break from society's rules and norms is the continuation of resistance

against the symbolic order, represented by the police, Thomas Wayne, and Murray who can no longer contain him. Arthur as Joker mirrors Western society's fixation on the injunction to "enjoy" (Healy 184–185). When Arthur/Joker is arrested, he is freed by the mob of clowns; he is the centre and the cause of chaos, and freely enjoys the irrupting madness. As the true clown he is the centre of the carnival. Carnival had also been Arthur's clown name before Murray had sarcastically called him "Joker."

Žižek claims that Arthur/Joker's laughter is "maternal superego" ("More on Joker"); he explains, the command to smile and put on a happy face (Penny calls him happy (00:10:41)) came from his mother ("More on Joker"). This association is strengthened by Arthur's performance of a routine at the comedy club. He does an impersonation of his mother that sounds like the mother in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). In Penny's function as a metaphor for the state, his laughter becomes ambiguous. In Arthur/Joker's attempts to be accepted by society, could his laughter be an externalisation of his vain attempts to at first suppress dissent? What triggers his laughter to the point of gagging could also be considered as his attempts to stifle his own aggressive instincts (Freud 48–49). Arthur fails to be integrated into the symbolic order of his community because of misunderstanding and that no one is listening to him. The clowns, the interview with the clown boss, the mother on the bus, the three men on the train—all trigger his laughter response. On the train Arthur/Joker murders three men who he later refers to as "Those Wall Street Guys" (01:41:30). When he sees, on television and in newspapers, mediated reports of the event, they are capitalist constructions of respectability. It is reported in the media that the men on the train are outstanding citizens because they work for Thomas Wayne, they have respectability and standing in the community. Arthur/Joker's laughter, in these social situations, is confused with neoliberal injunctions to enjoy. The men on the train think they are being laughed at, which causes conflict. However, in the course of the film, Joker's laughter develops into, and begins to function as, the symptom of an enjoyment of his illicit desires through murder and the silencing of voices.

Thomas Wayne asserts that the city is full of clowns and "those people" deserve their lowly status because he has worked hard, making something of himself, and they allegedly had not. He represents the hedonistic consciousness in "the thrall of the discourse of capitalism" (Healy 185). Wayne promises to do something for the people if he is elected as Mayor. But he is portrayed as a shallow political figure reflecting the empty promises of the capitalist ideology in its narrative of prosperity, selling the "rags to riches" dreams of the West. Joker is the symbolic representative that holds a mirror up to capitalism's ideological lie that has a focus on aggressive and violent health requirements of the state. Joker transforms the hedonistic consciousness from the models of capitalist success, measured as wealth and 'happiness,' into an excess of total enjoyment. He suspends all of society's rules in an irruption of chaos. This dark labyrinth of Gotham City confronts the audience with what Žižek considers as "the zero point of a minimal frame of protest [...] the self-destructive abyss" ("More on Joker"). The momentary sense of transcendence through the labyrinth of the city, such as the clowns running amok or Joker's momentary victory or escape from the police, "gives way to loss and suffering" (Savitz 476). In *The Shining*, Dany exchanges his place as the intended victim by retracing his footsteps in the snow to trap his father, Jack Torrance, in the maze.

At the end of *Joker*, this strange ritual is performed again, now trapping Bruce in the centre. This duality of suffering experienced by both Arthur and Bruce is central to our understanding the revelation of Batman. He is constructed by Joker's dystopian dreams of chaos.

The film ushers audiences into the mind of Joker through his looking glass portraying his misery while navigating his labyrinth of chaos. His desperate misery and the embedded trauma are mapped onto the city of Gotham, as his cognitive map overlays the structure of the city. As Arthur unlocks the lies that collapse his symbolic identity, he unlocks the secrets of the labyrinth in the state lie and the mother lie. Once the thread of love is cut, for Arthur and Bruce, the irrupting chaos traps them in labyrinths transforming them into monstrous figures. However, it is Bruce Wayne who becomes most like the minotaur. Like the Cretan labyrinth, the City of Gotham harbours the secret identity of Batman. In Joker's labyrinth of the mind and the city, Batman is forever trapped as "a fake-moral opponent" (Žižek, "More on Joker"). They are both trapped in the dystopian capitalism through their respective realities of obscene wealth and abject poverty. Pile suggests that, "[t]he streets become a map of visible and invisible relations of meaning, identity and power into which the subject is placed and has to find their way around – and possibly, one day to escape" (245).

In *Joker*, "the past of a city and the past of a mind" are visually interpreted onscreen and represented simultaneously (Freud 8). Right from the opening scene the film suggests that we are in a dual realm signified by the mirror. It gives the audience some clues to this in-between-ness through the character of Sophie (Zazie Beetz). In flashback, the audience sees that she is not at the comedy club when Arthur does his routine, she does not walk down the street with him to the newspaper stand, and she is not at the hospital with him when he visits his mother. In this question of real and imaginary, in an interesting turn Arthur/Joker calls the men he murdered on the train, "Wall Street guys." This is a direct reference to our reality. As for the rest of the film, we will have to retrace our steps and make our way through the filmic labyrinth as a dystopian dream.

At the conclusion of the film, Arthur/Joker returns to Arkham State hospital (did he ever leave?), an asylum representing an institutional maze. After his interview with his therapist, he murders her off-screen and then walks down a white hallway (like the white of snow in *The Shining*) leaving bloody footprints. The asylum is an attempt by the capitalist authority to hide and contain Joker by labelling him as a monster while it attempts to re-establish order following the eruption of chaos. In the labyrinth of Crete, Theseus retraces his steps using the thread of love and leaves the maze (*Metamorphosis* 8:167). But Joker continually retraces his steps into a torturous maze—a returning chaos that cuts the ties to state order that requires reformation and rehabilitation as conditions for release. He is retracing his steps by murdering his therapist and walking through another torturous, inextricable labyrinth, in the mental asylum. If he escapes Arkham Hospital "one labyrinth opens into another" (Savitz 476). He will be back in the city's labyrinth. What this scene clearly shows, as it flashes Bruce standing in the alleyway beside his dead parents, is that the archetype of the labyrinth is inextricable and harbours monsters. While Joker is in the maze of the asylum, Batman is left as the by-product of

the dystopian dream of Joker that undercuts capitalism in Gotham City's labyrinth. Batman is its monster, rather than its hero.



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