The Joker City, or the Mysteries and Miseries of Gotham

Jesús Jiménez-Varea

Alberto Hermida

Víctor Hernández-Santaolalla

(Universidad de Sevilla, Spain)

Corresponding Author E-Mail: jjvarea@us.es

The city mysteries were a nineteenth-century bestselling transnational literary phenomenon that combined radical politics and sensational fiction, adapting historical events along with devices from already existing popular narratives. Born as answers to the new megalopolis, these mysteries were supposed to work as calls to political action by exposing the vices, crimes, and corruption of the city's wealthy elites, in contrast to the miserable conditions of honest, victimized workers and middle-class families. However, the ideological coherence of city mysteries was often compromised by their voyeuristic emphasis on the most sensational and lurid aspects of the same social evils they aimed to eradicate in the first place. This article is built upon the hypothesis that, in a very different context, *Joker* (2019) has filtered staples of the city-mystery genre through the aesthetics of contemporary popular culture, in order to produce a politically mystifying but unequivocally provocative film.

"The same instinctive pleasure that other men may feel in acts of benevolence, of compassion or love, warmed the breast of Devil-Bug, when enjoyed in any deed marked by a special cruelty. […] The murder which had dyed his hands with human blood for the first time […] opened wide his soul, the pathway of crime, which was his doom and his delight to tread"

(Lippard 1845, 91–92).

Thus described George Lippard the central character of his novel *The Quaker City, or, The Monks of Monk-Hall*, one of America's first bestsellers as well as a scandal to many readers and

critics. Nevertheless, the same paragraph may express the concept of Todd Phillips's *Joker* (2019), as it provides the eponymous villain with a possible background that explains how he reached his usual state of murderous nihilism. In Lippard's novel, Devil-Bug is the effective master of Monk-Hall, a den of iniquity that reunites all the evils that afflict Philadelphia, so the character somehow works as a personification of his city's monstrosity. In the case of the fictional Gotham, the city has been typically equated to the grim, albeit ultimately heroic, figure of its protector (Brooker 2001, 49; Bukatman 2003, 184; Uricchio 2010, 119); but, in Phillips's film, Batman does not even exist as such and instead the focus is on his archenemy, who is not quite himself yet.

Phillips has referred to his *Joker* as a character study inspired by the kind of films he used to enjoy as he grew up in New York City, in particular Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *The King of Comedy* (1982). As for the connection to the Batman franchise, this filmmaker reasoned that "the movie business is so comic-book-oriented" that the most viable way to "do a character study [is] if you do it about a comic-book character" (in Godfrey 2019, 55). Ostensibly, Phillips aspired to reconcile "auteur-associated freedom" with the "contemporary franchise blockbuster strategy" like Christopher Nolan did with his own Batman trilogy (King 2016, 103). As for why he chose the Joker, Phillips adduced his own soft spot for the type of troublemaking characters he calls "disruptors" in general and for this villain in particular. Admittedly, he knew quite well the groundbreaking graphic novels *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and *The Killing Joke* (1988), but he was reluctant to follow "anything from the comic books" (in Godfrey 2019, 55). In that sense, the Joker's backstory seemed to be an excellent blank slate upon which he could develop a character study because, despite the fact that it has been explored on several occasions, any aspiration to be the canonical version becomes invalidated by the fact that the villain prefers his past to be "multiple choice" (Moore and Bolland 1988). Further on, that impossibility to fix the past of the Joker was translated to the character itself as a way to rationalize into continuity his oscillations between "a comic trickster, a master criminal, and a psychopathic killer" (Carter 2015, 49). Interestingly enough for the purpose of the present paper, *Arkham Asylum* – a graphic novel that "particularly grabbed" a teenage Joaquin Phoenix (Godfrey 2019, 56) – hypothesizes that the Joker's inherent mutability is a form of "super-sanity […]. A brilliant new modification of human perception. More suited to urban life at the end of twentieth century" (Morrison and McKean 1989). Like an echo of this fictional diagnosis, production designer Mark Friedberg, the person directly responsible for the rendition of the urban environment in Phillips's *Joker*, summed up the arc of the protagonist: "Ultimately, our decaying Gotham City, the character, and Arthur

Fleck, the character, merge. When the social compact finally gives way, Joker is born" (2019, 35). In fact, along decades, Gotham has become as ductile as Batman or the Joker, transcending the condition of passive setting to adopt an active role in the generation of the narrative, especially concerning "poverty, poor living conditions, inadequate education, corruption, and the absence of opportunity" (Uricchio 2010, 120).

Coming full circle to the beginning of this introduction, the narrative equation between the ominous big city and an unbalanced personality preceded either Scorsese's loners or Batman and the Joker, dating back to a common cultural ancestor, the city mysteries, of which Lippard's *The Quaker City* was the first American example. The next sections are dedicated to putting together a succinct profile of this mid-nineteenth-century genre, as well as its influence on later developments; and then to highlighting how some defining thematic features of the city mysteries that flourished during a bygone era of periodical print culture persist in a product of contemporary transmedia and convergence culture like *Joker*.

Mysterymania

A combination of economic, political, and technological factors at the beginning of the nineteenth century provoked an unprecedented growth of some cities in different parts of the world during the following decades, thus opening the door to the new era of the megalopolis. As the industrial revolution materialized the principles of capitalism, the social hierarchy experienced an accelerated reconfiguration with the ascension of a bourgeois elite that accumulated wealth and power in the city as a result of their mercantile endeavors, gradually displacing aristocracy in some European countries. In contrast, the lower classes, whose numbers continually increased due to the migration from the rural zones to the big cities, found themselves in appalling conditions in terms of housing, nutrition, sanitation, and practically every material aspect of life, while the lack of social belonging among the urban masses only made things even worse. In Mumford's words, the situation was so terrible that the fact that "in this depauperate and devitalized environment [t]he working classes could raise families and keep their children from utter physical and moral debasement was a tribute to their heroic fiber" (1938, 173).

This contrasted social tableau was to be the setting of the immensely popular genre of the city mysteries, which started in France with Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, a *roman feuilleton* serialized between June 1842 and October 1843 in the *Journal des débats*. Being a vocational storyteller and a reformist, Sue conveyed his calls to action in favor of the less favored classes

via the nascent mass culture of print media, turning what otherwise might have been an arid political manifesto into a discourse more palatable to both publishers and popular readers by wrapping it up in the manners of previous narratives that had succeeded in engaging wide audiences. Namely, the most immediate model after which Sue patterned his *Mystères* was Victor Hugo's phenomenally successful *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), regarded by some scholars as the first city-mystery novel (Maxwell 1992, 24), whereas others consider it a prototype that lacks the essential feature of contemporaneity insofar as Hugo set it in 1482 (Knight 2012, 10). Instead, Sue updated the actions of his novel to the Paris of his time, with the intention of exposing its miseries, crimes, and corruption through an intricate web of storylines enacted by numerous characters that traversed the metropolis both physically and socially.

At the center of them all, somehow working as the organizing principle of the multiple narratives, Sue situated the impossibly heroic figure of Rodolphe von Gérolstein: a German prince, rich beyond imagination, unparalleled boxer and swordsman, who puts all these assets at the service of the oppressed classes of Paris; to that end, he leads a double life, acting publicly as an idle aristocrat among the elites of the city, while secretly roaming its *bas-fonds* in the company of his mentor. Not surprisingly, this character has been described as a "Batman in breeches," i.e. a prototype in the evolution from costumed avengers to modern superheroes (Nevins 2017, 104). Furthermore, Rodolphe's crusade in favor of those in need puts him on a collision course with numerous criminal specimens that may well have been part of the rogue gallery of a contemporary superhero, with their picturesque appearances and nicknames.

On the side of the victims, the most pathetic figure in Sue's novel is the abused Fleur-de-Marie, whose storyline deserves particular attention here because of its relevance to the subject of the present article, and also for its influence on the subsequent genre of city mysteries. Actually, her misadventures configure the axial narrative in *Les Mystères* as this young prostitute turns out to be the long-lost child that was born of the short-lived marriage between a young Rodolphe and a malicious commoner who told him the baby had died. Of course, this "lost child" story is a favorite ingredient of narratives from Oedipus or King Arthur to Quasimodo in Hugo's *Notre-Dame*; and this same author would return to that trope in his *L´homme qui rit* (1869), namely in the person of another deformed lost child, Gwynplaine, whose visual characterization in Paul Leni's film *The Man Who Laughs* (1928) allegedly influenced the creation of the Joker (Kane and Andrae 1989, 105). In fact, the "lost child" story still plays a significant role in the generic realm of superheroes, where it may appeal to teenage fantasies about transcending the mediocrity of daily life; so much so that the trope is

associated with the orphan status of some superheroes, especially with relation to Batman (Fingeroth 2004, 67).

The reception of Sue's *Mystères* was nothing short of a sensation in the cultural landscape of France, and it quickly spread to other countries in the form of translated editions that led, in turn, to a sprouting of epigones adapted to different cities during the following decades. This phenomenon, known as "mysterymania" (Chevasco 2004, 137), produced "perhaps the first transnational and multilingual genre of popular serial fiction" (Stein and Wiele 2019, 2015). Amongst the many examples of this genre, crime fiction scholar Stephen Knight selected a canon that begins with Sue's *feuilleton* and ends with Donald Cameron's stand-alone novel *The Mysteries of Melbourne* (1874), which he considers "the last to re-create the full form of the Mysteries of the Cities" (2012, 5). Between these extremes, Knight included George Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* (1846), Paul Féval's *Les Mystères de Londres* (1844), George Lippard's *The Quaker City* (1844), and E.Z.C. Judson's *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1848). All of them played with variations around Sue's seminal formula, sometimes to the extent of turning it on its head, as best exemplified by Lippard, who assigned the role of focalizing all the complex narratives in his novel to the morally and physically monstrous Devil-Bug, "who is in every way Rodolphe's opposite" (Knight 2012, 134). Whereas the impeccable German prince in Sue's novel represents hope for Paris, Lippard denies his Philadelphia any possibility of redemption and even allows readers to contemplate the fiery destruction of the whole city through the delirious imagination of a delighted Devil-Bug, who cannot stop laughing at the sight of the apocalyptic spectacle.

So dismal was Lippard's perspective of the city and its human embodiment that many later developments in the field of American popular narratives preferred to skip its influence and built their own creations upon Sue's notion of a metropolis that, however upsetting, may still be rescued by a mythic, benign Hidden Ruler (Nevins 2017, 319). This is the path that would lead to the costumed-avenger paradigm of superheroes to which Batman belongs; but, before that, Sue's Rodolphe also proved instrumental in the consecration of the literary Great Detective – epitomized by Sherlock Holmes – as the victorious solver of the previously unfathomable riddles of the city (Knight 2012, 30; Nevins 2017, 317–318).

Phillips's *Joker* as a City Mystery

Apparently thanks to its insertion in the title of Sue's hugely popular novel, the word "mystery" was emancipated from the realm of religiosity to which it was hitherto associated, hence the

term's first secular meaning would have been a reference to the inscrutability of the big cities (Knight 2012, 29). In the genre of city mysteries, Sue and his imitators were the first to commit themselves to a thorough exploration of the modern urban phenomenon, treating the cities as the protagonists in their respective narratives and somewhat substituting cartography for conventional characterization. Ranging from the mimetic quality of Judson's "daguerreotype" of New York to the allegorical topography of Lippard's Philadelphia, these cityscapes accumulated layers of physical and social, historical and fictional meanings beneath which awaited their revelations about the true sense of city life. However, as the typical "Mysteries of…" title of these novels suggests, reaching that nuclear truth is always a difficult – perhaps impossible – challenge, due to the intrinsic contradiction between the tendency toward uncovering (related to their political agendas) and the necessity of continuing postponement (because of their serial format) (Looby 2015, 34; Stein 2017, 62).

Likewise, *Joker*'s premise is the development of a past for this villain, but Phillips has remarked that it is just one of many possible origins (White 2019, 50). After all, though it was designed to be a stand-alone film (versus the typical installment in a superhero-franchise saga), it cannot subtract itself completely from the Batman mythos from which it borrows several iconic elements. In that sense, *Joker* is not a serial like the nineteenth-century mysteries of the cities were in their original appearance, but the film does share a certain degree of seriality because the Joker is a typical "serial figure" as a result of numerous iterations across texts and media (Denson 2014, 336). Phillips knows that he cannot prevent his character study from being a variation within a vast narrative of proliferation (Kelleter 2017, 20–21), so he toys with that condition, denying viewers any certainty about his own version even as he is telling it, what additionally is very much in consonance with the Joker's inherent mutability. Therefore, Phillips's film reinforces the "neutrosemy" of the Joker as a serial character, a term coined by Cornell Sandvoss to label "the semiotic condition in which a text allows for so many divergent readings that, intersubjectively, it does not have any meaning at all" (2005, 126). To exemplify neutrosemy, Sandvoss chose none other than Batman, whose "many lives" have multiplied in recent decades to such extent that it has become "a complex dialogical network […] rather than a single figure" (Pearson, Uricchio, and Brooker 2018, 4), with the Joker, commonly perceived as Batman's reverse (e.g. Bukatman 2003, 206; Coogan 2006, 72), being a particularly cryptic node in that matrix of meanings.

In the face of the difficulties with interpreting the hidden meaning of the urban mysteries, Richard Maxwell proposed a quartet of interlocked allegorical figures that characterize these novels insofar as they are essential to their portrayal of the city: the labyrinth, the crowd, the

panorama, and the paper (1992, 15–20). In turn, each figure entails different levels of meaning, from the predominantly referential to the highly symbolic, in true allegorical fashion; and it can involve both form and content of the narrative. For the exploratory purposes of this article and given its necessary brevity, it seems appropriate to verify whether Maxwell's allegorical figures present themselves within *Joker*, in order to substantiate the legitimacy of likening this film to the city mysteries in terms of content, despite their obviously dissimilar industrial, media, and sociohistorical contexts.

Either Sue's Paris or Lippard's Philadelphia, to name two paradigmatic examples, are depicted as mazes or include labyrinthine constructions, like the Monk-Hall in the latter novel, with its numberless corridors and trapdoors. In turn, these physical mazes symbolize "hidden but real connections" that often involve criminal acts (Maxwell 1992, 16). At the level of narrative structure, the labyrinthine quality of city life manifests – also due to the serial format – as the entanglement of many storylines, which the authors organized for the readers by means of a focal character and an embracing arc. In the case of Phillips's film, the strategy is inverse as it begins with the goal of elaborating a character study through a city endowed with a strong presence, à la Scorsese, and that character happens to be the Joker for the reasons mentioned above. However, the figure of the labyrinth is fully present in the film both physically and figuratively. In the former sense, *Joker*'s production designer Mark Friedberg has referred to the soon-to-be Joker, Arthur Fleck, as "a mere speck of dust in a labyrinth of urban transit arteries" (2019, 34); while, on the symbolic aspect, the city as a maze represents the tortuous psychology of the protagonist, as well as the convoluted, and ultimately futile, search for his origins. As for the narrative structure, it is necessary to note that Phillips, in contrast to the classic authors of city mysteries, did not have to handle many different and intertwining storylines nor a numerous dramatis personae of his own creation. But he did have to cope with the weight of two different legacies: his admired New York-based filmic character studies, and especially eighty years of Batman lore across different media. Naturally, he decided to focus on Arthur Fleck, but curiously he coincided with Sue and Lippard in choosing the specific "lost child" trope in order to deploy the axial plotline of the film. In proposing the possibility that Arthur might be Thomas Wayne's bastard son, Phillips did not just introduce a hidden inter-class connection with hints of men's abuse of women, but he also added one further turn of the screw to the intimate – albeit inimical – relationship between Batman and the Joker (Coogan 2006, 98), incidentally with the hero-villain duality between two estranged brothers being another typical melodramatic trope of urban mysteries, like Reynolds's bestselling novel about London.

A second allegorical figure is that of the crowds, likened to "phantasmagorias" because of the "pedestrian's isolation" in the midst of the multitude (Maxwell 1992, 98). With regard to this apparent paradox, Georg Simmel attributed the contradiction between physical proximity and social distance to the "*blasé* attitude," a kind of indolence caused by saturation of the senses in an urban environment ([1903] 2004, 15); Walter Benjamin personified this detachment in the figure of the aimless stroller, the *flâneur* ([1939] 2006, 188). In *Joker*, it is established from the beginning that Arthur suffers the indifference of the crowds when nobody tries to help him while he runs after the kids who have stolen his spinner sign. Later, he complains to his social worker that, "For my whole life, I didn't know if I even really existed"; so, unsurprisingly, given his mental disorders, he hallucinates about a romance with the first friendly woman who crosses his path. Ironically, Arthur's relationship with the crowd gradually inverts itself over the course of the film: the more he disconnects from reality, the more attention he receives from the masses, until they literally adore him at film's end. Paraphrasing Benjamin's commentary on the evil embodiment of the city in Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd" (1840), Arthur "is no *flâneur*. In him, composure has given way to manic behavior" ([1939] 2006, 188) or maybe "super-sanity," so that the Joker somehow becomes a hyperbolic version of the "dandy," another more audacious and exuberant urban species (Bukatman 2003, 216).

The panorama of the metropolis as an expanse impossible to comprehend by any single person is a third recurrent figure of urban mysteries. Neither protagonists nor peripheral characters can hope to succeed in that task, however hard they try, because the "view demands a centrality no one possesses, while eliciting a sort of detective work all too closely related to paranoia" (Maxwell 1992, 19). Indeed, that is very much the mental state in which Arthur traverses the city in search for an answer to the mystery of his origins. In order to inject each district with a distinctiveness of its own, *Joker*'s design team went to great lengths, even "mapping the entirety of Gotham, by area and by street" (Friedberg 2019, 34). Additionally, the notion of panorama can be understood in a temporal sense since what Arthur believes to be bona fide revelations about his past give him a new perspective on his existence, as he tells his mother right before killing her: "I haven't been happy one minute of my entire fucking life. You know what's funny? […] I used to think that my life was a tragedy. But now I realize, it's a fucking comedy".

The allegorical figure of paper in relation to the city is perhaps the most versatile of the four. First of all, it can refer plainly to actual pieces of paper, transformed into "documents of terror" within the context of city mysteries: "What incriminating secrets might this or that scrap of paper contain!" (Maxwell 1992, 19). Thus, in *Joker*, the comic-book villain's classic

card becomes Arthur's pathetic plea for empathy, while the whole storyline of his mysterious origins develops mainly through a succession of documents either private or confidential to which the protagonist somehow gains access, each of them overturning the version in the previous one: Penny's letter to Thomas Wayne imploring him for help; her psychiatric file violently stolen from Arkham Hospital; and the dedication with the initials "T.W." on the back of an old photograph.

Secondly, the figure of paper can represent the print media as a modern form of "power typically available within cities" (Maxwell 1992, 19) in the mid-nineteenth century, and also in 1981, the temporal setting of *Joker*. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to extrapolate from paper as a symbol of communication to include television, as this medium plays an instrumental role in Phillips's film, showing clearly the influence of *The King of Comedy* on the cinematic side, but also of Frank Miller's graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns*. From the latter, Phillips has borrowed the narrative use of television within the story, plus the disapproval of its ostensible vacuity. Just as Arthur's search for his past happens by means of private documents, it is the information provided by media that contributes to shaping his transformation into the Joker and its consequences for Gotham: from newspaper headlines to news bulletins to, above all, Murray Franklin's talk show, where the protagonist literally has his baptism of fire, witnessed by thousands of viewers. Thus the treatment of mass media in *Joker* mirrors their importance in the Batman universe, insofar as they monopolize the shaping of public opinion in Gotham, in contrast to real-world declining trust in media messages during the last decades (Russo 2019, 178).

Finally, in urban mysteries, the allegory of paper can stand for "the notion that city life constitutes a 'close and blotted' text" (Maxwell 1992, 19), an image that immediately evokes the window to Arthur's mind that is his indecipherable notebook, consequently casting an ultimate shadow of doubt over the whole story. Interestingly enough, Gotham has been described as a text that only Batman can decipher, so it remains illegible in his absence (Bukatman 2003, 205). Likewise, Phillips's intentions are hard to nail down, ranging from a subversion of superhero genre conventions and criticism of the impossibility to go on practicing his brand of politically incorrect comedies in an age of "woke culture" to an exposé of how the lack of social justice results in the most vulnerable citizens falling through cracks in the system (Hagan 2019, 90). Whatever Philips's purpose, reactions to *Joker* started even before its premiere and were far from moderate, targeting a range of professed offenses including the sympathetic portrayal of a murderous villain, the defense of incel violence, and the combination of misogyny and racism (Lee 2019). In the end, whether deliberate or not,

Joker seems to put together so many plot elements and allusions to real and fictional events that it may be read either to support or to challenge such claims. So much so that some critics have accused the film of amounting only to an exercise in technical virtuosity, devoid of any message at all about the themes it is supposed to address (Lane 2019).

Coda

With its unclear agenda along with a strategy of psychological examination that identifies a dismal urban environment with the inner journey of a character, *Joker* is an attempt at auteurism within a superhero franchise that sets itself at a thematic crossroad already inhabited by the city mysteries. As a privileged example of an era of periodical print culture, this genre enjoyed enormous success across nations in the mid-nineteenth century thanks to a provocative mixture of exploitation and denunciation of the social evils caused by the then new phenomenon of the megalopolis. Even though the actual goal of those tales was the exploration of complex interactions in big cities, they usually structured their multiple narrative threads around the personal arc of a focal character, thus transiting the same path as Phillips's film, albeit in the opposite direction. Thus, even though they are products of radically different industrial, media, and sociohistorical contexts, this article reasonably confirms that, at the level of content, the city mysteries and *Joker* share substantial affinities that deserve further, closer examination. At the end of the day, neither Batman nor Rodolphe is anywhere to be seen in this Gotham, and a reborn Arthur Fleck rejoices, like Devil-Bug did, at the sight of his corrupt city burning.

References

Benjamin, W. [1939] 2006. 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire.' In *The Writer of Modern Life*, edited by M.W. Jennings, 170–210. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Brooker, W. 2001. *Batman Unmasked*. London: Continuum.

Bukatman, S. 2003. *Matters of Gravity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Carter, D.R. 2015. 'Episodes of Madness.' In *The Joker*, edited by R.M. Peaslee and R.G. Weiner, 49–62. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Chevasco, B.P. 2003. *Mysterymania*. New York: Peter Lang.

Coogan, P. 2006. *Superhero*. Austin: MonkeyBrain.

Denson, S. 2014. *Postnaturalism*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Fingeroth, D. 2004. *Superman on the Couch.* London: Continuum.

Friedberg, M. 2019. 'Making a World of Difference.' *MovieMaker*, Fall: 32–35.

Godfrey, A. 2019. 'Turn that Clown Upside Down.' *Empire*, August: 52–59.

Hagan, J. 2019. 'Fame & Phoenix.' *Vanity Fair*, November: 84–95.

Kane, B, and T. Andrae. 1989. *Batman and Me*. Forestville: Eclipse.

Kelleter, F. 2017. 'Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality.' In *Media of Serial Narrative*, edited by F. Kelleter, 7–34. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

King, G. 2016. *Quality Hollywood*. London: I.B: Tauris.

Knight, S. 2012. *The Mysteries of the Cities*. Jefferson: McFarland.

Lane, A. 2019. 'No Laughing Matter: Joker.' *The New Yorker*, October 3: 65–67.

Lee, C. 2019. 'How Joker Became the Most Hated, Loved, Obsessed-Over Movie of 2019.' *Vulture*, October 7. https://www.vulture.com/2019/10/all-the-joker-controversy-and-threats-explained.html.

Lippard, G. 1845. *The Quaker City*. 27th ed. Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson.

Looby, C. 2015. 'Lippard in Part(s).' *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 70 (1): 1–35.

Maxwell, R. 1992. *The Mysteries of Paris and London*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Moore, A. and B. Bolland. 1988. *Batman: The Killing Joke*. New York: DC.

Morrison, G. and D. McKean. 1989. *Arkham Asylum*. New York: DC.

Mumford, L. 1938. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Nevins, J. 2017. *The Evolution of the Costumed Avenger*. Santa Barbara: Praeger.

Pearson, R., W. Uricchio, and W. Brooker. 2018. 'Revisiting the Batman.' In *Many More Lives of the Batman*, edited by R. Pearson, W. Uricchio, and W. Brooker, 1–9. London: BFI.

Russo, S.J. 2019. '#FAKENEWS in Gotham City.' In *Politics in Gotham*, edited by D.K. Picarello, 177–193. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sandvoss, C. 2005. *Fans*. Malden: Polity.

Simmel, G. [1903] 2004. 'The Metropolis and Mental Life.' In *The City Cultures Reader*, edited by M. Miles, T. Hall, and I. Borden, 19–20. London: Routledge.

Stein, D. 2017. 'Serial Politics in Antebellum America.' In *Media of Serial Narrative*, edited by F. Kelleter, 53–73. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Stein, D. and L. Wiele. 2019. 'Introducing Popular Culture—Serial Culture.' In *Nineteenth-Century Serial Narrative in Transnational Perspective, 1830s–1860s*, edited by Daniel Stein and Lisanna Wiele, 1–15. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Uricchio, W. 2010. 'The Batman's Gotham City™.' In *Comics and the City*, edited by J. Ahrens and A. Meteling, 119–132. London: Continuum.

White, J. 2019. 'Fears of a Clown.' *SFX Magazine*, October: 48–51.