'Joker' review, are you kidding me

Since its debut a few weeks ago at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the top prize, Todd Phillips' "Joker" has stirred up quite a *tempest*. And what I have to say is: Are you kidding me?

Venice　威尼斯　　　　　　　　　　　　tempest　骚动；暴风雨

Phillips, who wrote the script with Scott Silver, takes us back to the bad old days of Gotham City, when work was *scarce*, rats were *rampant*, and a garbage strike *fouled* the streets. Arthur Fleck is *bullied* by thieving poor kids and drunken rich guys, *goaded* to the point of murder by the *meanness* of the world.

scarce　稀缺的　　　　　　　　　　　　rampant　猖獗的；蔓延的

fouled　污染的；粪污的　　　　　　　　bully　霸凌

goad　刺激　　　　　　　　　　　　　　meanness　卑鄙；吝啬

There's nothing wrong with any of these plot points or with the details that knit "Joker" into the familiar Batman world. The problems arise when the film revs its *allegorical* engine and Joaquin Phoenix tries to assemble a character from the tics and *tropes* he has been given.

allegorical　讽喻的；寓言的　　　　　　trope　比喻；修辞

Skinny, *twitchy* and at times *startlingly* graceful — Phoenix is one of the modern screen's underrated dancers — Arthur has a physical and psychological resemblance to Freddie Quell, the misfit *drifter* Phoenix played in "The Master." But he also carries the burden of being a victimized Everyman in a *parable* that can't get its story straight.

twitchy　焦急的；神经的　　　　　　　startlingly　惊人地

drifter　流浪汉　　　　　　　　　　　parable　寓言

Arthur's uncontrollable laughter arises from a medical condition that is possibly the result of childhood abuse. His profound alienation also arises from social inequality, the decline of civility, and *a slew of* other causes. Rich people are awful. Poor people are awful. Joker's embrace of *radical* evil becomes a kind of integrity.

a slew of　大量的　　　　　　　　　　　　radical　激进的；根本的

It's hard to say if the *muddle* "Joker" makes of itself arises from confusion, but the result is less a depiction of *nihilism* than a story about nothing. It isn't any fun, and it can't be taken seriously. Is that the joke?

muddle　糊涂；混乱　　　　　　　　　　nihilism　虚无主义