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## PUT ON A HAPPY FACE: BATMAN AS SCHIZOPHRENIC SAVIOR

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**B**atman, the 1989 movie, made a lot of money. *The Economist* (1989, p. 73) called it "the most financially successful film in the most successful summer in Hollywood's history." The movie recouped its \$35 million production costs in the first weekend, sold over \$100 million worth of tickets in its first ten days, and earned two spots in the *Guinness Book of Records*—for the highest one-day and opening-day grosses. Hundreds of *Batman* toys and games flooded the market, and the president of Warner Brothers' advertising and publicity called the public's response to the licensed products a "feeding frenzy" (Barol, 1989, p. 73). *Motor Trend* reviewed the Batmobile, Ralston Purina created *Batman* cereal, and one distributor described the Bat-fever as "bigger than the California Raisins" (Barol, p. 70).

The success was somewhat surprising, and not just because 30-year-old director Timothy Burton's only other commercially released movies were the quirky pair *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* and *Beetlejuice*. First, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in November, 1988, that thousands of Bat-fans were protesting the casting of Michael Keaton as *Batman*. Warner Brothers became so concerned about the film's success that they cut a trailer months ahead of schedule, hoping to drum up interest by showing it during the Christmas season (Barol, 1989). Second, the movie itself was a gloomy exception to typically sunny mid-summer box office releases. Gotham City is left the same shadowy, dingy place that it is in the opening shots; the hero is increasingly unstable; and the central romance reaches no satisfactory resolution. Further, the action sequences are sluggishly paced and the special effects are far less sophisticated than a contemporary, post-*Star Wars* audience might be expected to tolerate. Why, then, did the public respond so overwhelmingly to the most recent manifestation of this 50-year-old superhero?

Actress Kim Basinger, who plays Vicki Vale, provides a useful insight: "The film is emphasizing that wonderful psychological story of three people who, I guess, live in all of us" (de Vries, 1989, p. 11). This essay will argue that there are actually four "people" in the film who warrant examination, but the idea that much of the film's popularity stems from the projection onto the screen of the psyche of the audience is one central assertion of this analysis.

Davies, Farrell, and Matthews (1982, p. 327) argue that application of psychological theory to film analysis might not only "point to otherwise unnoticed images and structures within a film" but also "offer insight into the relationship between the film and the viewer, and can suggest the relevance of the film . . . to the society in which it arises." There is a growing body of criticism of contemporary rhetorical discourse that exploits this psychological and symptomatic connection between film and society. Many such analyses focus either on the psychic integration of the hero as a prescription for society or on the tendency of popular film to ameliorate life's unpleasantness, as in the following three examples.

Rushing and Frenz (1980) explore the changes in the psyches of the young warriors in *The Deer Hunter* and note that Michael alone of the three main characters successfully integrates into his psyche the shadows conjured by the horror of war. As a result, Michael becomes a more powerful, effective leader: "By being psychologically prepared, Michael experienced war sacredly, and in so doing, reaffirmed the mythic qualities in himself and his community" (p. 404). Martha Solomon (1983) suggests that *Chariots of Fire* presents a "soothing" conflict between two opposing myths of the American Dream in which "each myth has validity" (p. 277) and neither is vanquished by the other. The film was successful, therefore, because it "creates an optimistic, humanistic view of life" (p. 281). David Payne (1989) sees the annual spring television screening of *The Wizard of Oz* as a contemporary "media ritual" that speaks to "typical audience problems and situations" (p. 29). Specifically, Dorothy's adventure of maturation may be "therapeutic for those who continue to search and to question the basic values of self and society" (p. 37).

Other rhetorical criticisms of film chart either the disintegration of the hero or the failure of the unification of the vying mythic stances within the film. Davies et al. (1983) point out that in *The Shining*, Jack Torrance's "excessive concern over his image" produces the insanity which eventually destroys him and almost destroys his family (p. 340); thus, the film "cautioned that extensive looking outward ... brings the tumultuous consequences of a neglected *inner* life" (p. 341). Rasmussen and Downey (1989) describe "dialectical disorientation" as a set of "diametrically opposed perspectives within a *discourse*," (p. 69) which "demands its audience acknowledge life's dilemmas by proclaiming the inevitability of disquieting tension in life" (p. 67). They use this model in a criticism of *Agnes of God*, in which both a "linear" and a "holistic" orientation are presented as explanatory frameworks for the narrative. Neither framework can account for all the evidence within the film, so "choosing one explanation over the other is at best a temporary respite, at worst, impossible" (p. 81). Rasmussen and Downey (1991) extend the concept of "dialectical disorientation" in exploring the warrior myth as it is presented in a certain cluster of Vietnam films. This myth entails a tension between the devastating killer and the humane individual, between the *militaristic* and the *moralistic* (p. 180). In *The Deer Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, and *Full Metal Jacket*, they argue that the two sides of this myth are played against one another until "confrontation between militarism and moralism shatters the myth" (p. 180). These Vietnam films create "uncertainty and ambiguity because the form destroys the myth's principles and values, questions its foundations, and provides no substitution for its ruin" (p. 190).

*Batman*, like other films that chart disintegration, fails to unify a number of psychic/mythic elements. However, in *Batman* there exists a tension between an apparent movement toward integration and the actions of the hero that furiously oppose it. This tension precipitates the manifestation of a more complex psychic process of disintegration than those suggested in the above analyses. Like Jack Torrance, Wayne/Batman's psyche is progressively splintered until he is clearly insane; but instead of becoming an axe-wielding menace, Batman becomes Gotham City's savior. As in *Agnes of God*, mythic stances are not integrated; but rather than indicating a "concomitant need to accept resolution through embracing disquieting uncertainty" (Rasmussen & Downey, 1989, p. 69), *Batman* suggests that maintaining the *status quo* requires violent suppression of uncertainty and thus continued psychic

chaos. And, as in the Vietnam films, a myth is destroyed through disintegration from within; however, *Batman* not only destroys the myth of a unified savior but further suggests that such a savior is an impossibility for the contemporary psyche. Ironically, this bleak denouement is responsible for much of the film's remarkable popularity. For if Gotham City is a recognizable depiction of the unbalanced American psyche, then it may be a strangely attractive proposition that Batman, a schizophrenic savior, exists to shield us from the disturbing work of attempted psychic integration.

Because much of my analysis is grounded in the psychological theories of Carl G. Jung, I will begin by outlining relevant aspects of that theory. Then I suggest that Gotham City is a dream world, a representative projection of image-centered dreams. Within the framework of Jung's model, I show the principal characters to be archetypal manifestations that erupt from Gotham's unconscious. Wayne/Batman is a splintered manifestation of a potential whole; his condition represents the schizophrenia required of a hero dedicated to the preservation of the fractured psyche of Gotham.

## THE MODEL OF THE PSYCHE

Jung describes the psyche as composed of three layers: consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. "The personal unconscious consists firstly of all those contents that became unconscious either because they lost their intensity and were forgotten or because consciousness was withdrawn from them (repression), and second of contents ... which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche" (Jung, 1971, p. 38). The contents of the collective unconscious "consist of mythological motifs or primordial images," elements which are all the more powerful and potentially dangerous because they are common to all people, elements which Jung has termed *archetypes* (1971, p. 39). These archetypes of the collective unconscious manifest themselves in dreams. Four archetypes — the *Self*, the *shadow*, the *wise old man*, and the *anima* — are manifested within the dream world of Gotham City.

Especially in his later writings, Jung "distinguished between the archetype as form and the culturally influenced archetypal images which are expressed in motifs that allude to an underlying form" (Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann, 1987, p. 36). For example, Jung writes: "The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal ... a possibility of representation which is given *a priori*" (1959a, p. 79). Wayne/Batman, Napier/Joker, Alfred the butler, and Vicki Vale are culture-specific archetypal images, but they may resonate cross-culturally as a function of underlying archetypal forms.

Jung (1971, pp.121-122) believes that the positive goal of individual self-knowledge involves an assimilation of the contents of the unconscious into consciousness, a process he calls *individuation*. The ego will necessarily resist individuation because the integration of the unconscious entails a loss of the dominion of consciousness. One manifestation of resisting the assimilation of the unconscious is excessive attention to building the *persona*, which Jung describes as the identity or mask that is presented to the world. The persona is "designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon, others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual" (Jung, 1983, p. 94). Continued repression

of the contents of the unconscious, as occurs in Gotham City, only increases the likelihood that these archetypal contents will attempt to invade consciousness.

Jung (1971, pp. 111-121) describes two possible negative outcomes of this invasion by the unconscious, "regressive restoration of the persona" and "identification with the collective psyche." Regressive restoration results in a regression to a childlike state, a retreat to an earlier stage of development to save face — to restore the persona. In identification, consciousness is overwhelmed by the contents of the unconscious, and psychosis or schizophrenia results. Jung explains (1971, p. 122): "In the former case the self retires into the background and gives place to social recognition; in the latter, to the auto suggestive meaning of a primordial image. In both cases the collective has the upper hand" and the individual is lost. *Batman* displays both these reactions to invading unconscious elements.

### THE PSYCHE OF THE CITY

Jung (1971, p. 478) believed that the cinema, because it "enables us to experience without danger to ourselves all the excitements, passions, and fantasies which have to be repressed in a humanistic age," can present cultural dreams analogous to the dreams of individuals. Thus, film provides a propitious environment for the manifestation of culturally repressed archetypes. Also, Davies et al. (1983, p. 333) suggest that because film is a subjective representation of objective reality, it "is able to create a stylized reality, a juxtaposition of the 'real' and the 'fantastic' that can reflect the conscious-unconscious interplay described by Jung." In other words, film entails real objects (consciousness) shown through a fantastic, fictionalizing lens (unconsciousness). Gotham City, because it is mostly "fantastic," is a visualization of the dark world of the unconscious: a dream.

Because dreams are products and representations of the unconscious, they are largely unaffected by the linear, ordering influence of consciousness. Jung (1959a, p. 276) notes that dreams often present themselves "in fairly chaotic and unsystematic form. Dreams ... show no apparent order and no tendency to systematization." While *Batman*'s plot may skip "from tableau to tableau [like a comic book] rather than progressing by any of the more accepted routes" (Billson, 1991, p. 32), it is the foundation of the plot, the setting, which is most oddly ambiguous. Specifically, it is impossible to place the movie in any particular time. A subtitle labels the first view as "Gotham City," but does not include the date that generations of movie audiences have been conditioned to expect. The young family mugged in the early scenes is wearing clothing of the 1930s and trying to flag down taxis that belong on a contemporary urban street; a few moments later, a police lieutenant dressed like Philip Marlowe oversees the loading of muggers into thoroughly modern ambulances. Gotham's unsettling hodgepodge of architectural styles is in the gray-scale monochromatism of a black-and-white film, but certain elements (the ambulances, the Joker, the party scene in Wayne's mansion) splash the screen with 1990s color. According to Anton Furst, who designed the production, the lack of continuity was intentional: "I took an almost Dadaist approach and augmented it as much as I possibly could, so that we have a kind of potpourri, in incredible mixture of styles ... every camera angle will confuse you. Is it now? Was it then? Or is it maybe a few years in the future?" (Nightingale, 1989, p. 16). The various destabilizing techniques

invite the audience to experience the city as a dream, as both a darkly fantastic and disturbingly realistic projection of their psyches.

Jung's model of the psyche reflects a vertical metaphor. He describes elements moving up into consciousness, down into the personal unconscious, and down further still into the collective unconscious. Gotham City as a manifestation of this model of the psyche, enacts a corresponding vertical metaphor. Consciousness is the highest level, represented by the sky. Because Gotham City is a dream world, a mostly unconscious world, there is very little sky to be seen. The sunless streets of Gotham, crowded canyons crushed beneath buildings that cantilever out over the sidewalks, are a visual metaphor for the collective unconscious; these ornate and over-built structures are themselves representations of the city's concern for its image and seem to pin the sidewalks to the earth. It is at street-level that the criminals enjoy their greatest power, where muggers attack both the young family of the opening scene and Wayne's own parents. When Batman is on the streets, even if in his Batmobile, he is reduced to fleeing. At the level of the rooftops, between consciousness and the collective, is the personal unconscious. For reasons to be discussed, this is the level at which Batman is most effective; it is at this level that he thrashes the two muggers, and it is from this level that he drops Jack Napier into the vat of acid.

The Joker hints at another aspect of this vertically stratified dream world when he asks: "Can somebody tell me what kind of a world we live in where a man dressed up as a bat gets all of my press?" He later answers his own question when he reminds Vicki Vale "how concerned people are about appearances these days." Gotham City is a world that assures a man dressed in a funny suit plenty of press because it is a world where appearances count above all else. Psychologically, a society such as Gotham focuses only on the conscious, surface aspects of reality and ignores the unconscious. In Jungian terms, Gotham City is persona-possessed. Gotham has run out of money for the celebration of its 200th birthday, an element of the plot that at first appears to have little to do with the story. Rather than being a throwaway, or a loose end left dangling by the writers' strike that hit Hollywood as *Batman* went into production, the Mayor's obsession with the festival is the key to the psyche of the city. He tells District Attorney Harvey Dent: "We are going to have a festival if I have to get a shotgun and get people there myself." The mayor doesn't care if the people of Gotham are actually celebrative or not, as long as they *look* like they're having a good time. The scene just prior to the Mayor's threat of forced revelry opens with makeup artists improving the appearance of two newscasters who immediately report the death of two fashion models. Later, the newscasters look horrible; they have gone without their cosmetics because the Joker has tainted them with deadly Smylex. The newscasters tell the audience that "Gotham City goes on a forced fast," thus metaphorically elevating makeup to the level of a basic need, food.

Threatening to force people to party at gunpoint and equating cosmetics to nourishment are certainly indications of an excessive attention to the persona, an attempt to keep the unconscious contents from becoming conscious. When questioned by the reporter Alexander Knox about Batman, Dent tells him that "we have enough problems in this city without worrying about ghosts and goblins." This statement is ironic, since it is precisely the ghosts and goblins of Gotham's neglected unconscious to which Dent and the others should be paying attention. As Jung

points out (1983, p. 225), the archetypal contents of the collective unconscious will not tolerate repression indefinitely and will eventually force themselves into consciousness. Davies et al. (1981, p. 342) note that Jung believed “the modern world errs, and induces the psychological consequences of neuroses and compulsions, through the rational assumption that consciousness is the totality of the psyche.” Thus, Gotham is a dark reflection of this sort of American psyche, engaged in frantic persona-building despite its need to acknowledge and integrate the contents of its collective unconscious. Such a personality is unlikely to avoid the dire psychological consequences of which Jung warns and is ripe for the eruption of archetypal images.

## THE MANIFESTATION OF THE ARCHETYPES

In Jung’s model, archetypal images manifest themselves in an unbalanced psyche, like Gotham’s, because these archetypes represent aspects of the psyche that have been ignored and must be reassimilated; their function is *compensatory* (Jung, 1983, p. 184). The four most important characters in the film can be discussed in terms of four basic and powerful archetypes of the collective unconscious: the *Self*, the *shadow*, the *wise old man*, and the *anima*. Together, they represent the *quaternity* described by Jung as “the fourfold basis of wholeness” (1959b, p. 159). These four characters represent four aspects of the personality whose integration would precipitate the process of the city’s individuation, the healing of Gotham.

The first and most important of these archetypal images to emerge is, course, Wayne/Batman. The trauma of witnessing his parents’ murder, and his subsequent repression of that trauma, provokes a division in his psyche. In a flashback, the young Master Bruce and his parents are shown leaving the Monarch Theater, the butterfly a symbol of the metamorphosis that is about to occur within the boy. The family walks in step, underscoring the order and linearity of consciousness governing Wayne’s world. Silently, a 1959 “batwing” Chevy cruises past as two muggers follow the Waynes into a dark alley. The murder scene contains a slow-motion shot of Wayne’s mother’s pearls dropping to the street as the young Jack Napier kills her; it is disclosed later that the scene takes place on Pearl Street. The destruction of the ordered circle of pearls parallels the disruption of ego-consciousness caused by his parents’ murder, the tipping toward darkness that eventually results in the emergence of Batman. Thus, the manifestation of Batman separates Wayne’s personality into two, parts — one light, one dark.

Following the convention of denoting the Self archetype with a capital ‘S’ to differentiate it from the more common meaning as a synonym for ‘ego’ (Whitmont, 1969, p. 218; Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann, 1987, p. 39), I suggest that Wayne/Batman is an imperfect, or *potential*, manifestation of the Self of the city. Jung describes the Self as representing “a nuptial union of opposite halves” (1959, P. 64) and “the sum total of ... conscious and unconscious contents” (1983, p. 242). As such, the Self is both an archetype of wholeness and the driving force which guides an individual toward achieving this wholeness (Whitmont, 1969, pp. 218-219). But, Wayne/Batman does not display the unity generally associated with this archetype. As a manifestation of the Self of the city, the split in his own psyche mirrors the split in the city’s psyche; he contains opposing psychic aspects, but they are held separate within him.

The dualistic nature of Wayne/Batman is highlighted throughout the film. Vicki

Vale points out that he gives money for humanitarian aid (as Bruce Wayne) but collects the costumes of war (costumes similar to the Batsuit). She also elicits his comment about his house that "some of it is very much me, some of it isn't." In Vale's apartment when he is attempting to tell her he is Batman, Wayne explains that "people have different sides to their personality." This is an understatement in Wayne's case, for he and Batman are a study in contrasts. Batman is first shown as a confident figure, making all the right moves as he subdues two muggers on the dark rooftops of Gotham. Holding one thief out over the edge of the building, he identifies himself, somewhat redundantly: "I'm Batman." He wants the mugger to tell all his friends that Batman is *there*. The first appearance of Wayne's name, on the other hand, is to indicate he is *absent* from Harvey Dent's inaugural news conference. The darker identity has more presence, establishing a pattern continued when Wayne seems lost and unsure of himself even though he is the host of the well-lit party; he asks his guests how much more champagne to open, and needs Alfred's help in finding the door. It is clear that Wayne/Batman represents an unintegrated, split psyche, and that the darker part, Batman, is more powerful than the light half, Wayne. As is true in Gotham's psyche, continued repression is forcing dark unconsciousness to usurp the whole.

Wayne/Batman's relationship to the city is more intricate than a mirroring of psychological splits. According to Jung, manifestations of the Self, because they represent a unity of opposites, the totality of human experience, are often perceived as saviors. For example, Jung sees Christ as a flawed savior because he contains only the light, or conscious, side of the Self archetype (1959b, p. 44). Gotham City is in need of a savior. The cathedral in which Batman and the Joker stage their final showdown is, as designer Furst notes, "closed and allowed to rot because God left the city long ago and no one goes to church anymore" (Nightingale, 1989, p. 16). Just as Jung suggests that cultures do when they are severely unbalanced and need a new savior (1959c), Gotham learns to produce its Batman. After Vicki Vale has discovered his identity, she asks Wayne why he does "all this," presumably meaning dressing like a bat and picking fist fights with bad guys. Wayne's answer: "Because nobody else can." Only the city's savior can protect it from the manifestation of its shadow.

When Wayne witnesses his parents' murder he is confronted with the shadow archetype, but he is not overwhelmed by this element of the collective unconscious. This is evidenced by his ability to enter and leave the Batcave at will; the position of the Batcave within the vertical metaphor of Gotham City and its identification as the place where Wayne becomes Batman reflect its function as a point of contact with the collective unconscious, but Wayne is not trapped by this contact. Therefore, Wayne's reaction to his confrontation with the shadow archetype was a *partial* "identification with the collective" (Jung, 1971, p. 111) in which part of his psyche—the dark part that would someday emerge as Batman became "the fortunate possessor of *the* great truth which was only waiting to be discovered, of the eschatological knowledge which spells the healing of the nations" (Jung, .1971, p. 118). As will be shown, though, Batman is an ironic savior who labors not to heal Gotham but rather to preserve Gotham's psychosis.

Batman and the Joker have a complex and curiously dichotic relationship: they are essentially similar yet almost completely opposite. The Joker is a manifestation of

the *shadow* archetype, displaying the characteristics of this archetype as described by Edward C. Whitmont:

The shadow is projected in two forms: individually, in the shape of the people to whom we ascribe all the evil; and collectively, in its most general form, as the Enemy, the personification of evil. Its mythological representations are the devil, archenemy, tempter, fiend or double; or the dark or evil one of a pair of brothers or sisters. (1969, p. 163)

The joker, as a particularly potent manifestation of the shadow, embodies both its individual and collective forms. As Batman's individual shadow, the Joker must function as *doppelganger*, or dark double. The similarities of the two characters are emphasized throughout the film and symbolized in the Bat-logo, which the camera explores behind the opening credits as if it were a landscape. So much of Warner's advertising focused on this symbol that the *New York Times* (1989) ran a brief editorial complaining that "it's impossible to go anywhere without seeing the logo," even though "some people misread it, seeing a mouthful of gold teeth rather than a bat against a gold field." The logo is simultaneously an image of Batman and the garish smile of the Joker, and seeing only one or the other is an illusion. Like Batman and the Joker, the black bat and the golden grin are opposing parts of the same whole.

An indication of their essential similarity is the "psychological profile" of Napier that Wayne reads: "violent mood swings, highly intelligent, emotionally unstable; aptitudes include science, chemistry, and art." This same profile could be used to describe Wayne/Batman. His mood swings are controlled, but are evident in the transformation from the mild-mannered Wayne into the vigilante Batman. His ability to decode the Joker's chemical tampering with Gotham's cosmetics shows that he, too, must have an aptitude for science and chemistry and, of course, the decor of his home indicates he values art. In characteristically opposite fashion, the Joker's mood swings are uncontrolled, he uses his scientific aptitude for destruction, and he literally devalues the art in the museum.

The two figures are similarly attracted to Vicki Vale, who elicits statements that reveal both characters to share equally idealistic but opposite goals. Vale notes that Wayne/Batman seeks a perfect world, a world without evil, and that he is willing to sacrifice himself to that end. By keeping his identity a secret, he cannot take credit for his good deeds. The Joker, on the other hand, seeks a perfectly corrupt world and hopes to advance his own interests in doing so. When Vale asks him what he wants, he tells her: "My face on the one-dollar bill."

The confrontation between Batman and the Joker in the final scenes of the film further highlights this reflective relationship. When Batman tells the Joker, "I'm going to kill you," the Joker replies, "You idiot, you made me!" Batman returns: "You killed my parents. I made you — you made me first." These two characters are responsible for each other's existence, and it is logical that one of them must be responsible for the other's destruction. The Joker is eventually destroyed, but their battle first stalls in a near draw with Batman clinging to the same ledge that is crumbling under the joker's feet. Batman gains the decisive advantage only by roping the Joker's leg to the heavy, bat-winged gargoyle that pull shim to his death. Thus, the similarity of these two characters extends even to their potency. Their mirror-image opposition is reinforced when Batman is *saved* from falling to his death by hooking a rope into another gargoyle.



As a manifestation of the collective shadow of Gotham City, the Joker displays the 'negative' side of the [collective] personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide" (Jung, 1983, p. 87). Gotham is attempting to hide its crime problem by focusing on the creation of a socially acceptable persona; thus, crime becomes associated with the city's shadow. Jack Napier's first act as the Joker is to take control of Gotham's organized crime by killing the current boss, Grissom. When Grissom warns Napier that killing him would make his life worthless, Napier explains that he has been dead once already and "found it liberating." Carnavalesque music plays as the Joker, liberated as he is from the constraints of anything resembling an acceptable persona, laughs and cavorts and empties his gun into Grissom. The Joker soon kills all remaining Gotham crime bosses and usurps leadership; he becomes a super-criminal, the symbol and incarnation of the city's crime problem and therefore an "adverse representative of the dark chthonic [under-] world" of the city, its collective shadow (Jung, 1959b, p. 34).

Like the city that spawned him, the Joker is concerned primarily with appearances. Even as Jack Napier, he is first seen in a room decorated with oversized fashion prints and in the company of Alicia, whose face graces the cover of a *Vogue* magazine on the table. As he is gazing at himself in a mirror, Alicia assures him: "You look fine." Napier tells her he didn't ask. When he and Batman initially meet face to face, Napier's first comment is "Nice suit." Then, Batman drops him into the vat of acid, symbolically down to the street-level of the collective unconscious. In fact, the Joker has plunged even below the street, down through the sewers and into Gotham's polluted river; he has drowned in the collective. These sewers are actually at the level of the Batcave, that point of contact with the collective so important to Batman. Unlike Wayne/Batman, however, Napier does not retain the ability to exit this level of Gotham's vertical metaphor. "Beautiful Dreamer" becomes the Joker's theme song, signifying his unconsciousness.

The acid strips off the persona that Napier has admired so much and replaces it with the death-grin of the shadow — another archetypal image is born in Gotham. A neon sign flashes "SHOW" outside the basement where the plastic surgeon slowly removes the bandages around Napier's head. Napier, eager to be shown his new self, struggles out of the remaining bandages and demands a mirror; he shatters it when he sees his now-hideous image. He laughs wildly, breaks a light bulb, and climbs the stairs out of the darkened basement. In Jungian terms, the Joker has contacted the collective and has been overwhelmed by the shadow archetype. His reaction to this experience is a "regressive restoration of the persona" (Jung, 1971, p. 111). The regressed, childlike state symptomatic of this condition is evidenced here by the Joker's hysterical laughter; later he kills a man with a high-voltage joy-buzzer, and still later he wonders where Batman gets "all those wonderful toys." That he requests and then shatters the mirror indicates that Napier, now the Joker, is still fixated on the persona but now on destroying instead of maintaining it. His Smylex poison not only kills but also transforms its victims, replacing their persona with a copy of the Joker's own grin, and the first two victims are models: image symbols. The Joker also destroys Alicia's face and squirts acid from his lapel flower in an attempt to do the same to Vicki Vale. The Joker first sees Vale in a photograph; while cutting up a huge pile of photos, and the first thing he does after commenting on Vale's beauty is to cut up her picture; too. In the museum (where

one goes to look at things), after he and his men have defaced the canon of Western art, the Joker describes himself as "the world's first, fully-functioning homicidal artist." Art is traditionally an act of creation, but the Joker is enjoying an art of destruction; he is destroying Gotham's persona.

As noted earlier, excessive attention to the persona is one defense against the unconscious becoming conscious. With the city's persona, its device of repression, replaced by the Joker's own grin — and the Mayor's persona festival replaced with a celebration of the shadow — the Joker could invade the consciousness of the city more easily. Indeed, the parade balloons filled with Smylex gas are an attempt to destroy the persona of the entire population. Significantly, the Joker enacts the "tempter" aspect of the collective shadow by luring the Gothamites to their death with the promise of "free money."

So, the Joker functions as shadow at two levels, both as Batman's personal shadow and as Gotham City's collective shadow. Jung points out that a personality might survive an encounter with the shadow of the personal unconscious, but the archetypal shadow of the collective is infinitely more powerful (Jung, 1959b, p. 10). When the Joker is destroyed, a mechanical device in his pocket allows him the last laugh; as the eerie nighttime press conference indicates, Gotham remains a dark, shadowy place. Batman has prevented the shadow from flying his helicopter into consciousness, but the sky is none the brighter. The collective shadow, a force that Batman cannot vanquish, still controls the city.

These two archetypal images, the Self and the shadow, constitute two poles of the four-sided quaternity described by Jung. Their appearance is a symptom of Gotham City's fixation with persona and inattention to the contents of the unconscious. The two other archetypes that round out the quaternity are drawn to this polarization of opposites and represent additional aspects of the psyche that must be integrated for individuation to occur. The first of these other two archetypes to appear is Alfred, the *wise old man*. He has been with Wayne since "young Master Bruce" was a child, apparently taking the role of guardian upon the murder of Wayne's parents. Jung (1983, p. 126) suggests that the wise old man archetype "always appears in a situation where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning, etc., are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own resources." Bruce Wayne's troubled mind cannot be expected to muster consistently good judgment, and Alfred provides this judgment for him. For example, Alfred perceives the importance of Vicki Vale as the necessary catalyst to help Wayne begin the healing of his psyche. Alfred advises Wayne accordingly several times, each time more vehemently. At first he points out that "there's a certain weight [repression] that lifts when she's here." He next offers the insight that Wayne's "present course of action [not returning her calls] will only strengthen her resolve" and suggests that she is "special" enough for Wayne to tell her the truth about Batman. Wayne fails to do this, and Alfred further urges him to begin the process of integration by informing him, tersely, that he has no wish to fill my few remaining years grieving for the loss of old friends — or their son." When Wayne still seems unable to confront Vale directly, Alfred simply brings her to him in the Batcave. The final scenes of the movie show Alfred again bringing Vale to Wayne.

Wayne is attracted to Vale but is also hesitant in his relationship with her. At the benefit party where they first meet she asks him "which one of these guys is Bruce

Wayne?" "I'm not sure," he answers, but later introduces himself in the war-costume room. "Are you sure?" she asks. "Yeah, this time." Bruce Wayne actively pursues her but fails to reveal Batman, while Batman both saves her from the clutches of the Joker and works to keep Bruce Wayne hidden. The simultaneous attraction and uneasiness with which Wayne/Batman reacts to Vale is indicative of a male's confrontation with the *anima* archetype: a female figure, a guide to the unconscious (Jung, 1983, p. 103). "In Jung's descriptions, the anima image exerts a powerful and ambivalent pull on men" (Wehr, 1987, p. 55); "'she' is the psychic entity that seduces, lures, attracts, and even imperils a man" (p. 66). Because the anima will lead the man to the contents of his unconscious, she represents both the source of his sanity and the dissolution of his present state of mind.

Vale's name, as a homonym of "veil," describes her relationship to Wayne/ Batman in at least three ways. She is capable of removing the veil from Wayne's eyes, exposing him to information essential to his integration; her true importance is hidden from Wayne behind the veil of his preoccupation with the Joker; and the veil is removed from her own eyes when Alfred brings her to Wayne in the Batcave. That her name describes Vicki Vale only in terms of her relationship to Wayne/Batman is telling, for her character is defined only through that relationship. She is introduced as an object when the reporter Knox first greets her: "Hello, legs." When asked why she is in Gotham — asked to justify her existence in the narrative — her answer is simply, "I like bats." She is there because Batman is there; if he did not exist then neither would she.

Vale's character is simple, but her relationship to Wayne/Batman is well- developed. Jung (1983, p. 106) further describes the anima figure as "a source of information about things for which a man has no eyes," so it is significant that Vale is a photographer of whom Wayne says "you have a good eye." Knox first recognizes her as a fashion photographer from "*Vogue* and *Cosmo*," but she points out to him that her most recent subjects are corpses, victims of some sort of civil strife on the fictional island of Corto Maltese. This shift toward darkness and away from the persona-world of high fashion indicates that she is a guide qualified to lead Wayne/Batman toward the darkness of his unconscious.

The Joker is also attracted to Vicki Vale, so three of the four elements of the archetypal quaternity are involved in a rather bizarre love-triangle. This tension fuels much of the plot and is parallel to Jung's formulation that the anima should be a solitary element within the male psyche as opposed to the multiple male *animus*-images within the female psyche (Wehr, 1987, p. 67). It is tempting, then, to suggest that Wayne/Batman and the Joker represent Vale's multiple animus images, the keys to her psychological growth. However, Vale shows no inclination toward such growth. Thus, Vale is not complex enough to support analysis under any of the several extended theoretical frameworks being developed by feminist Jungian scholars (Lauter, 1984; Wehr, 1987; Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann, 1987). Vale's characterization is limited by her perfunctory role in the narrative as a traditional Jungian anima figure who leads the male personality toward the necessary unconscious elements.

Vale's entire presence within the psyche of Gotham is as an object toward which the principal combatants are drawn. For instance, it is in pursuit of her that the savior and the shadow meet in a pivotal scene in her apartment. The black-and-

white, circle-and-square motifs on Vale's apartment door suggest a *mandala*, an archetypal which Jung says emerges "in conditions of psychic dissociation or disorientation" (1983, p. 236). The shape of the mandala, generally a "*squaring of the circle*, taking the form of a circle in a square or vice versa" (1959a, p. 361) not only calls attention to a splintered psyche, but the combination of opposing colors and shapes in a single figure symbolizes the integration of opposites required to mend it. Vale's entire apartment, with its stark black-and-white color scheme and rounded windows enclosing the exaggerated linearity of the furniture, represents a 'walk-in' mandala. Wayne and the Joker respond similarly to this room, both voicing the same line when they enter: "Nice place; lots of space." Wayne has come with the intention of telling Vale about Batman, but can't seem to say the words. The Joker presumably has come to take Vicki Vale away, but, as Pauline Kael notes, he "trots off without his prize" (1989, p. 83). Wayne threatens the Joker with a fireplace poker and the Joker fires a shot at Wayne, but neither is hurt. This mandala-room in which neither can injure the other, and in which each is in the presence of anima-image Vale, would seem to encourage integration. The conflict is unresolved because, as I will suggest, the very existence of Batman would be imperiled by its resolution.

The archetypes these four characters represent — the *Self*, the *shadow*, the *wise old man*, and the *anima* — must become one if Wayne/Batman's splintered psyche is to heal. Because Wayne/Batman and the joker represent the city's collective Self and collective shadow respectively, the healing of the city also depends on the integration of these divided elements. In the collective psyche represented by Gotham City, however, neither problem can be solved.

#### THE FAILURE OF THE INTEGRATION

The logo Batman wears on his chest is the round shape of a mandala, but because it is dominated by a split between two opposing shapes, one light and one dark, it is what Jung describes as "neurotically disturbed" (1959a, p. 379). This logo symbolizes extreme psychic unbalance, but instead of working toward the integration necessary if Wayne/Batman (and Gotham) is to achieve wholeness and sanity, this schizophrenic savior prevents it.

Jung (1959b, p. 22) points out that "the integration of the shadow, or the realization of the personal unconscious, marks the first stage in the analytic process." Wayne appears to realize this when he tells Alfred that he "can't go on with [my relationship to Vale] right now" and instead focuses all his attention on the Joker. However, Batman wants to destroy, not assimilate, the shadow. Similarly, Wayne's attraction to Vale indicates that he recognizes her as an anima figure, but he resists her attempts at integration. "I just got to know," she asks Batman near the end of the film, "are we going to try to love each other?" His reply: "I'd like to, but he's out there right now and I've got to go to work." To become whole, Wayne would have to integrate his shadow and accept Vale's advances. By refusing to do either, Wayne dooms his psyche to an eternal split.

Wayne tells Vale that "Alfred is my family" and that "I couldn't find my socks without him," and Wayne does *attempt* to follow Alfred's advice to "tell her [Vale] truth." If the qualities of the wise old man were fully integrated into Wayne's psyche, then of course there would no longer be a need for their manifestation as Alfred. However, Wayne's willingness to accept some of Alfred's advice (even if he cannot

act on it) suggests that the archetype indicated by Alfred is at least on the path toward integration. This is in contrast to Wayne/Batman's contact with Vale, which leaves him unchanged.

Wayne sleeps with Vale, but he refuses to allow this sexual encounter to make any changes in his psyche. As the evening progresses, the two move from opposite ends of an absurdly long table to a cozy kitchen where they sit close together, and they then make a romantic ascent up a long flight of stairs to Wayne's bedroom. Both the symbolic coming together of the Self and the anima and the exploitation of Gotham City's vertical metaphor suggest that this scene is ripe for integration and attainment of a higher level of consciousness. Instead, Wayne is troubled and gets out of bed to hang upside down from his exercise equipment, like a bat. The experience has affected him, but has not altered him. Vale is an unsuccessful anima figure, then, because Wayne is successful at avoiding integration and maintaining his splintered personality. He is also preventing the individuation of Gotham City and therefore maintaining its persona-possessed psychosis.

"There's a 'Rosebud' to [Wayne's] character," explains Sam Hamm, the movie's principal scriptwriter, "and it erupts as 'Batman.' That is the psychological thrust of the plot" (de Vries, 1989, p. 19). Hamm's use of the verb "erupt" suggests Jung's belief that if the contents of the unconscious are actively ignored they will eventually rupture into consciousness. As discussed earlier, there are several possible results of this invasion of the contents of the unconscious into consciousness, one of which is schizophrenia. Jung defines the simplest form of schizophrenia, paranoia, as a "simple doubling of the personality" (1983, p. 40). A schizophrenic may seem normal at one moment, displaying a socially acceptable persona, but may careen into insanity a moment later:

The patient strikes us at first as completely normal; he may hold office, be in a lucrative position, we suspect nothing. We converse normally with him, and at some point we let fall the word "Freemason." Suddenly the jovial face before us changes, a piercing look full of abysmal mistrust and inhuman fanaticism meets us from his eye. (Jung, 1983, p. 41)

For Wayne, the word probably would be "Joker," and not "Freemason," but otherwise the characterization seems consonant. Wayne is indeed "in a lucrative position," apparently holding untold wealth. Confronting the Joker in Vale's apartment he exhibits a particularly violent mood swing. He is reciting a short history of Jack Napier's life, his voice a studied calm. Suddenly, he explodes into a rage, smashes a vase, shouts "Let's get nuts," and brandishes a fireplace poker. Wayne/Batman represents the splintered Self of the schizophrenic. One of Wayne's two sides is socially acceptable and one is not; all of the most important people of Gotham attend Wayne's benefit party, but the *Gotham Globe* refers to Batman as a "winged freak." He actively cultivates this split between the accepted and the rejected aspects of his personality.

Bruce Wayne dons the Batsuit, always at night, to find his way (like a bat) through the dark; crime-ridden world of the repressed unconscious of Gotham City. In putting on the mask and cape, Wayne assumes the identity of an archetype — specifically, the shadow. This he must do, for to battle the Joker he must trod Joker's turf. However, Batman's costume only empowers him as far down as the rooftops of the personal unconscious; he cannot plumb the depths of the collective

because Batman is a denizen of Wayne's personal unconscious, not of the collective unconscious of Gotham. Before Batman fights Napier, Napier must climb up the stairs of the Axis chemical plant; before Batman fights the Joker, the Joker must climb the long flight of stairs inside the cathedral. Vale's penthouse apartment renders Wayne and the Joker equipotent to the extent that neither harms the other and equally impotent in that neither achieves his goal. But at the top of the cathedral, dressed in the Batsuit, Batman does gain the upper hand. He cannot fight the Joker at street level (when they meet in the street-level museum, Batman flees), but he can meet him on the rooftops and stop the Joker from ascending any higher. This is why Batman is unable to hit the Joker, standing in the middle of the street, with the laser-guided fire-power of his Batwing.

The Joker's culturally acceptable mask has been burned off and the archetypal grin of the *shadow* permanently etched into his face. Several times in the movie the Joker covers his white skin with flesh-tone makeup, but he cannot cover the grin. Unlike Batman, the Joker cannot re-enter the conscious realm simply by removing his mask. His bid to rise into consciousness, which began as he climbed up the stairs out of that darkened basement operating room, is doomed to failure. Batman *can* remove his mask, become Wayne again, and re-enter the conscious world. He assumes the identity of the archetype but does not fully *identify* with it; if he did he would be consumed (as the Joker was) and lose touch with consciousness.

Batman remains insane and disintegrated at the end. The Joker has been cast back into the collective unconscious with such force that he is actually embedded into the pavement. No hope for integration there. The final scenes show Alfred and Vale both separated from Batman, and both at the level of the street, while Batman gazes upward at the Batsignal from the rooftops of Gotham. He has successfully defended the high ground of consciousness but has sacrificed his psyche. Similarly, he has successfully saved the city from the Joker but has thwarted any chance of communal integration.

## IMPLICATIONS

The fissured world of Gotham City requires a madman to keep the repressed contents of the collective unconscious from erupting into consciousness, and Wayne/ Batman must protect his splintered psyche to maintain the psychosis of the city. He spurns the opportunity for integration presented by Vale, Alfred, and the Joker, and thus he retains his ability to become temporarily engulfed by the personal unconscious. He can meet the shadow halfway, and when the Joker attempts to erupt into consciousness, Batman can successfully drop him from the rooftops. It is ironic that the relationship between Batman and Gotham is such that the sanity of its savior would result in the destruction of the city and that the psychological growth of the city would mean the destruction of its hero. The Batsignal only works at night, and only against a cloudy sky; if Gotham's skies were to become clear and bright, not only would the city not *need* to invoke its savior, it *couldn't*. The film seems to imply, then, that a city like Gotham, which is unwilling to do the hard work of confronting the shadow that lurks in its darkest alleys, can maintain order only through the efforts of a lunatic.

Reading the cultural psyche from this dark and brooding film is tempting, and I will to some degree succumb to the temptation. Such a reading is not without risk,

however, precisely because of the prodigious hype that presaged *Batman's* release. Time-Warner, as Eileen Meehan (1991) points out, is "the predominant media conglomerate in the world" and was in a unique position both to orchestrate and profit from a *Batman* fad: its holdings include DC Comics, where Batman was born in 1939, and the Warner Brothers film unit (p. 49). Meehan concedes, however, that "where people are the prime purchasers, revenues can not be completely shielded from the direct responses of consumers" (p. 60). Therefore, after the initial premiere, "the summer-long success of *Batman* at the box office would depend on the film itself, its ability to resonate with our experiences and visions, and to tap into the conflicting ideologies through which we make sense of social life" (p. 61). That *Batman* did remain successful for the remainder of the summer, eventually earned a total box office of nearly \$300 million, and became one of the top five highest-grossing films of all time indicates that audiences were responding to more than Time-Warner's advertising campaign. As Jim Collins (1991) and John Parsons (1991) suggest, the film must connect with audiences at a deeper level than the political economist's thesis will allow.

As I stated earlier, there exists a growing body of rhetorical criticism that explores the psychological connection between film and society. These studies delineate a variety of ways in which contemporary film acquires rhetorical potency. Rushing & Frenz (1980) ascribe the rhetorical force of *The Deer Hunter* to its "aestheticizing of war as a universal ritual" (p. 405). By inviting the audience to perceive the Vietnam war as the arena for a generalized initiation rite, the politics of this specific war are mostly ignored and war itself may be valorized as a site of potential personal maturation. Solomon (1983) argues "that the rhetorical force of 'Chariots [of Fire]' derives from its manipulation and reaffirmation of both myths of the American Dream" (p. 275). These two myths, according to Fisher (1973), are rhetorically robust because they cohabit and define the American psyche. *The Wizard of Oz* (Payne, 1989) attains its rhetorical force through the enactment of a mythic maturation: "a rhetoric that orients and exhorts the audience toward particular values and behaviors" (p. 33). The rhetorical potency of *Batman*, I believe, emanates from a more subtle and intimate connection between artifact and audience.

I have suggested that "dialectical disorientation" which describes certain Vietnam films fracturing the warrior myth from within (Rasmussen & Downey, 1991), bears some resemblance to the destruction of the myth of the unified savior in *Batman*. The mechanism that amplifies the rhetorical impact of this film, however, is the scenic representation of the psyche itself. Davies et al. (1982) describe the Overlook Hotel as a representation of the psyche in their discussion of *The Shining*, but do not pursue the rhetorical implications: the projection onto the screen of the psyche of the audience provides a particularly potent opportunity for identification with the text. With Gotham City as psychic-scenic "container" and the archetypal images of Batman, Joker, Alfred, and Vale as mythic agents "contained," the audience is invited to experience the narrative as unfolding within the confines of their own heads. Rather than merely identifying with a character in the story and thereby projecting themselves into the film, the audience members may experience the film as a projection of themselves. Burke (1945, p. 7) reminds us that "there is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it," and that scene and agent enjoy a similarly "synecdochic relation." Because

Gotham City is a projection of the psyche of the audience, the audience is disposed to experience Gotham's inhabitants as manifestations within that psyche. The rhetorical power of archetypal images is therefore enhanced in films like *Batman* that invite the audience to identify psyche as scene.

But Gotham City is persona-possessed, and the overwhelming enthusiasm with which audiences reacted not only to the movie but also to all the post-release Bat-products suggests that audiences had little difficulty accepting such a persona-possessed world as a projection of their own psyches. This portrayal of the audience as psychotic would seem more likely to distress and alienate the masses than to enthrall them. After all, when the Joker urges Gotham to "Put on a happy face!" he is referring to the terrifying effects of paying too much attention to consciousness and not enough to the unconscious. Unless the encroaching collective shadow is confronted and accepted, the persona that has been the subject of so much care will be destroyed. Precisely because it does not allow competing myths to coexist, this stance is far more bleak than Rasmussen and Downey's "dialectical disorientation." And, replacing the unified savior with a schizophrenic vigilante may be more disturbing than failing to replace it at all. Rather than to account for the film's success, then, this reading of *Batman* seems to outline a formula for box-office failure.

*Batman* was a success because there is a comforting difference between Gotham City and the psyche it represents: Gotham has its Batman. At the end of the movie, during that peculiar nighttime news conference, Harvey Dent reads a letter from Gotham's newborn savior. In it, Batman promises that "if the forces of evil should rise again to cast a shadow on the heart of the city," the people of Gotham need merely shine the golden Bat-mandala into the night sky and he will duly knock the shadows back into the abyss. Gotham will never have to change, never have to give up the persona it has been frantically working to build, never have to do the hard work of facing the contents of its unconscious, as long as Batman is only a light-switch away. But within those of us on this side of the screen, there is no Batman. There is no one to save us from the shadows that are threatening to erupt into our consciousness at every turn. The many woes of the postmodern age threaten to overflow the distant landfills of our collective unconscious and overwhelm us, disintegrating the image we have so carefully crafted. This is a frightening thing indeed — frightening, at least, until we experience Gotham's psyche as a projection of our own and thus Batman as within ourselves. Perhaps the movie was so popular because it offers an attractive, if Faustian, bargain: if we accept ourselves as terminally unbalanced, psychologically disintegrated individuals, then we can happily and indefinitely continue to build our personas, repress our shadows, and avoid the hard work that psychic maturity demands. We, like the citizens of Gotham, can comfortably drift off into an empty, dreamless sleep.

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