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Gazing over Chaos: Panoptic Reflections of Gotham and the Failure of the Dispositive

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Abstract

What this analysis proposes is a reevaluation of the crucial, and often neglected, issues of space/place within the Batman opus, concentrating primarily on Batman's use of various spaces/places in order to enforce control and/or discipline. The study will initially be premised on the use of the Foucauldian discourse regarding the implementation of invisible control and therefore power, structuring its arguments around the theoretical concepts of the dispositive/apparatus as well as Bentham's Panopticon. The paper will develop the idea of the Batcave as the actual site of control, the starting point of the Foucauldian notion of the "gaze being alert everywhere" (Discipline and Punish 195). Symbolically made visible by the prominent brightness of the Bat-signal, but nevertheless constantly hidden from the eyes of the criminals, the Batcave assures the presence of power that "should be visible and unverifiable" (Foucault, Discipline 201), and therefore exerts discipline. The paper will also address the issue of Crime Alley as a site of inversion by using the theoretical concept of heterotopian space as proposed by Foucault, as well as Gaston Bachelard's idea of subjective/domestic spaces. Following the idea of a space recoded by tragedy, the analysis will explore the immunity of Crime Alley in relation to Batman's disciplinary praxis and the Panoptic gaze, as well as its potential to subvert Batman's "laboratory of power" (Foucault, Discipline 204).

Keywords: Panopticon, Foucault, Batman, Gotham, city, dispositive, apparatus

Entering Gotham

When addressing the issue of fantastic, imaginary, and more often than not dark cities through a variety of narrative platforms available today, the most prominent features that we encounter are not necessarily the perennial motifs and stereotypes that the viewers or readers are accustomed to. Instead of fantastic, inspiring, and out-of-this-world type of architectures, the continuously developing contemporary outlining of cityscapes became strongly rooted in the premise of their symbolically rotten core. “Dark” cities in particular, whose heritage can be traced rather clearly to gothic fiction, are particularly prone to changes, shaping into the maps that we know and are familiar with today. Instead of a clear transposition of values from a gothic castle or a haunted house, typically characterized by a rupture of intimacy and trust, more often than not functioning as a critique of the nuclear family, the viewers and readers are faced now with a different context, and a different problem altogether. Inherently void of any possible intimacy, while retaining its graphic morbidity, the contemporary (dark) city in its numerous interpretations relocates the troubled individual from an insecure, but nevertheless tangible, domestic context, into an abstract nightmarish maze. What the analysis at hand proposes is a potential theoretical reading of one such space – the city of Gotham and its intricate system(s) of surveillance imposed by its guardian the Dark Knight. More precisely, it proposes a reevaluation of the crucial, and often neglected, issues of space/place within the Batman opus, concentrating primarily on Batman’s use of various spaces/places in order to enforce control and/or discipline. Such a use of spaces leads to the creation of a potentially villainous dichotomy within which Gotham is being controlled by an obsessively and brutally disciplinarian Batman. The proposed study is therefore not focused on specific cases/comic book issues, but instead it offers a theoretical superimposition of a primarily Foucauldian discourse on power over a well-established disciplinary system developed within the various Batman narratives. What the analysis will concentrate on is the use of Foucault’s discourse regarding the implementation of invisible control and therefore power, the theoretical notions of dispositive/apparatus, as well as the various mechanisms used to create docile bodies. Further on, the analysis will develop the idea of the Batcave as the actual site of control, the starting point of the Foucauldian notion of the “gaze being alert everywhere” (Discipline and Punish 195), with the city of Gotham architecturally structured for the main purpose of drawing attention and any possible resistance away from the disciplinary activities performed by Batman.

What this study will also show is the subsequent articulation of Batman's attempt to create a type of hegemonic discourse, perpetuated and finely tuned in order to develop a sustainable safe environment with the purpose of producing docile bodies.[1] Symbolically made visible by the prominent brightness of the Bat-signal, but nevertheless constantly hidden from the eyes of the criminals, the Batcave ensures the presence of power that "should be visible and unverifiable" (Discipline 201), and therefore exerts discipline. Subsequently, Gotham with its numerous locations that, although inherently dark in their nature, unavoidably retain their visibility, succumbs to "a real subjection … born mechanically from a fictitious relation." (Discipline 202). However, as it will be presented, Batman's (im)perfectly planned city is also defined by its imperfection, embodied within the space of Crime Alley. As this study will further show through the use of Gaston Bachelard's approach to spatial analysis, presented in his seminal work The Poetics of Space, Crime Alley needs to be observed as a space on its own. This need for an alternative theoretical approach to the one initially proposed is premised on the symbolic and functional role of this particular space within the Batman opus. As it will be analyzed, Crime Alley not only follows the Foucauldian idea of heterotopian spaces, but it also evolves into a space of primal importance for any and all future Batman's disciplinary actions. As such, it becomes over and over again a zone immune to the Panoptic gaze, allowing in turn a potential key for the subversion of Batman's "laboratory of power" (Discipline 204).

Mapping the City

Following the rapid development of cities in the 19th century, as well as the development of various narratives tracing the human condition and obsession with something that we could define a spatially conditioned transitory moment, we encounter the first theoretical gap marking the (de-)evolution of the urban spatial experience. What was once the experience of domestic intimacy, described in great detail by authors such as Gaston Bachelard, in his phenomenological approach to architecture (house) and the inscribed emotional aspect of the lived experience titled Poetics of Space, is now being replaced by a non-personalized, confusing, and alienating experience and context of a non-place,[2] or even placelessness. These partially perceived and alienating spaces consequently force individuals to find themselves lost within a labyrinth, as Alexandra Warwick

states, “constructed by people but yet unknowable to the individual” (288). An inquiry into a historical development of this transitional processes becomes unavoidably defined by a number of literary attempts to put these issues into perspective. These attempts to comprehend the rapidly developing urban settings, along with the accompanying consequences, led to the creation, for example, of detective fiction, with Edgar Allan Poe potentially inaugurating with his “The Man of the Crowd” the idea of urban gothic, and other authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson or Oscar Wilde, further exploring the dynamics of the city in Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and The Picture of Dorian Gray respectively. The city as a space therefore becomes the focus of attention, with various narratives slowly evolving the complexity of the portrayed spaces, while marginalizing and subduing the individual. The consequences of such trends manifested themselves over time through the creation of a very specific dystopian (perhaps even postmodern) type of cities, whose function became to contain its inhabitants, cities controlled and further developed by real or pseudo governmental structures in charge of supervising and controlling the (potentially) mindless masses, and to further perpetuate this existential simulacrum. Examples of these morbid urban realms and societies can be observed in numerous cities portrayed through films such Dark City by Alex Proyas (1998), The Matrix trilogy by the Wachowski brothers (1999), Equilibrium by Kurt Wimmer (2002), and many others. All of these narratives paint a bleak urban reality, while at the same time implying the necessity of an almost totalitarian social organization that can supposedly guarantee order.

The city of Gotham certainly follows and perfectly fits into this context. Created in 1939, initially conceived by Bob Kane and Bill Finger as New York City (just more sinister), and changing its name after the publication of Detective Comics #48, Gotham articulated the issues and the social imaginarium of the post-Depression America, becoming a narrative symbol and a comic representation of the increasing growth of corruption, crime, and slums which characterized New York at the time. In its early days, Gotham served almost exclusively as a silent background for the adventures of the Dark Knight, an approach to the city which changed very slowly as the decades went by. Outlined in the 1960s as a city of visual and narrative exaggerations, which was followed by the 1970s attempts to make it more contemporary and more (realistically) urban, Gotham remained only a setting known for the heroic deeds performed by the Caped Crusader. A turning

point, however, occurred in 1989 with the release of Tim Burton's film Batman, a feature film that not only presented a new (darker) version of Batman, but it also for the first time presented a Gotham that actively participated in the narrative. Designed and brought to life by film designer Anton Furst,[3] Gotham became an active character within Burton's story. Capitalizing and further developing the haunting (urban) sketches of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, titled Le Carceri d'Invenzione (Imaginary Prisons), as well as Fritz Lang's Metropolis and Hugh Ferriss's The Metropolis of Tomorrow, Furst expresses through his perception of the Gotham skyline all of the morbidity, moral decay, and criminality that precisely due to its extremeness necessitates the birth not only of more and more colorful criminals, but also of a counterweight, a moral ballast to chaos, a factor that will prevent the city from finally descending into total bedlam. This would be followed by Furst's artistic (imaginary urban) contribution through a story arc titled Batman – The Destroyer, developed as a possible tie-in to Burton's film. The story followed the destruction of the old/new "contemporary" Gotham city, developed in the 1970s, which had now been replaced by a city closely resembling Furst's illustrations.[4] Burton's successful darker portrayal of Batman as well as Gotham was strongly reinforced by a series of graphic novels preceding the distribution of the movie. Frank Miller's The Dark Knight Returns in 1986, Batman: Year One in 1987, and Alan Moore's The Killing Joke in 1988 all presented an entirely redefined concept of Batman, with the more often than not campy representation of the superhero, now being transfigured into a grisly, merciless, disillusioned noirish figure, an image that Gotham unavoidably had to follow. Described by Dennis O'Neil as being akin to "Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at eleven minutes past midnight on the coldest night in November" (344), Gotham finally consolidated the notion of being a dark and inhospitable background for all the stories to come.

Theorizing Gotham

A key question, however, that needs to be answered in order to understand the role and function of the city as part of Batman's narrative, together with his progressively totalitarian approach to fighting crime and/or regulating behavior, is: what is the potential theoretical frame within which Batman operates? When considering the issue of Gotham and its progressively important role within different storylines, an obvious theoretical context would be the notion and dynamics of

space, and the subsequent process of the creation of place. The continuous "theoretical" alteration between traceable space, although still void of any meaning, and the emotionally inscribed and imbued place,[5] becomes the tool used by Batman in his monomania to project and create a specific type of setting within the city. This allows him, through these eventually constructed places of fear, to control his "subjects." Although such a premise, conforming to a sound theoretical background, does initially function, it still completely fails in the attempt to adequately trace the mechanisms and instruments necessary for the implementation and articulation of Batman's will. It is only with the introduction of the theoretical framework proposed by Michel Foucault and focused on surveillance and control, specifically, his argued concept of dispositive/apparatus, that an adequate space related analysis of Gotham can take shape.

With the introduction of the concept of dispositive and/or apparatus, it is necessary to precisely define the meaning and use of the proposed terms. This is firstly due to the habitual translation of the words appareil and dispositif as apparatus.[6] As stated by numerous authors, in light of the remarks on Foucault's lectures made by Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben, there is a clear need to distinguish between the two concepts as they both carry different meanings, particularly noticeable when attempting to apply these theoretical notions to an urban/architectural based case. Jeffrey Bussolini, for example, in his analysis of Foucalt's use of the proposed terms enforces the dispositive as a "tool for analysing or understanding a multiplicity of forces in movement and contest" as well as a "tool to think about power in the perpetually dynamic social field" (90). This is opposed, as presented by Bussolini, by apparatus, which "seems to be a smaller subset of dispositive, and one that is more specifically state-centred and instrumental." (93) In other words, as Bussolini concludes, "apparatus might be said to be the instruments or discrete set of instruments themselves – the implements or equipment. Dispositive, on the other hand, may denote more the arrangement – the strategic arrangement – or the implements in a dynamic function." (96) Subsequently to this clear distinction, as well as Foucault's arguments, what follows is the possible implementations of these theoretical notions in regard to an urban surrounding. In what way does the dispositive, and consequently the apparatus, come into play while (metaphorically) planning a city? The dispositive, in Foucault's words, "has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need" (qtd. in Colin 195). In other words,

it has “a dominant strategic function” (qtd. in Colin 195) which manifests in the Foucauldian idea of urban spaces used as instruments for the promotion and perpetuation of discipline. The key difference between the two terms can therefore be potentially observed as two stages of a single process, two segments of a strategic articulation of discipline within a specific spatial context. Following Foucault’s theory of power, the dispositive here acts as a strategic plan which precedes the actual implementation of power.

The implementation of this theoretical instrument as proposed by Foucault within an analysis of the city of Gotham and Batman’s activities is entirely based on the unique relationship forged between the character and the city he defends. Starting with the origins of Batman himself, the genesis of the hero begins on the very streets of the city. As recounted by the writer Jeph Loeb in his masterful contribution to the canon titled Hush, the birth of Batman takes place in Crime Alley, the location where his parents were murdered. “That very night,” the storyline states, “on the streets stained with his mother and father’s blood, he would make a vow to rid the city of the evil that had taken their lives.” (Loeb 2) From this point on, the young Bruce Wayne starts his educational journey to become Batman, but what is even more important, this process of growing and developing allows him not only to become the much-needed protector of the crime infested city, but also to replace his father in his multigenerational struggle to create and develop a city according to the designs of the Wayne family. As described in the various narrations of the origins of the city, such as Batman: Gates of Gotham (written by Scott Snyder and Kyle Higgins, illustrated by Trevor McCarthy), or Batman: Dark Knight, Dark City (written by Peter Milligan and illustrated by Kieron Dwyer), the Wayne family is one of the three founding families of the city. Alan Wayne together with the Cobblepot and the Elliot family ensured the necessary impetus/wealth needed for a rapid urban growth and dictated in different ways its future development. Although through later narratives and different story arcs more details about the city are revealed and further developed, the idea of the Wayne family having intimate and strong ties with the city remains a constant. This is emphasized even more through the activities of Thomas Wayne, Bruce’s father, whose actions as a philanthropist directly influenced the politics as well as architecture of the city itself,[7] a role that will be taken over by Bruce later on. However, Bruce’s contribution cannot simply be observed through the limited scope of philanthropic activities due to the lasting trauma forced upon him on

the very streets of the city. Instead, an articulation of a split personality occurs with the public face of Bruce Wayne now being counterbalanced (or supplemented) by the alter ego of the Caped Crusader.

The connection between Batman and his city nevertheless was not something that occurred immediately. The connection between the city and its hero occurs in the 1980s with the previously mentioned reimagining of Gotham's hero. More precisely, it was only with the publishing of Frank Miller's The Dark Knight Returns (1986) that a change took place, which would affect both the representation of the city and its bond to Batman. As Allan Moore states in the introduction to the graphic novel – Gotham is a "dark and unfriendly city in decay, populated by rabid and sociopathic street gangs" (qtd. in Miller). What followed was the introduction of a new cynical Batman, a character no longer bound by the colorful and sometimes educational undertones of the golden age of comics. Instead, the hero of Gotham now became a disillusioned vigilante, aware of what Jimmy Stamp calls Gotham – "a city of graveyards and gargoyles; alleys and asylums. Gotham is a nightmare, a distorted metropolis that corrupts the souls of good men." Stamp continues by emphasizing the close, even mythic, connection and identification that develops between the city and its hero, a connection forged on the very streets of Gotham.

This bond between space and man, made in blood, will rapidly spiral out of control with Batman now not limiting himself to stopping the occasional crime or criminals, but instead taking the final step in the process of identifying completely with Gotham. As described by Grant Morrison in his Batman Gothic, Batman states "Gotham City is Hell. We are all in Hell. And I am the King of Hell." (22-23) Scott Snyder further explores this idea of identification in his piece The Court of Owls by stating that "Gotham is damned, cursed, bedlam, murderous… but also Gotham is Batman, Gotham is Batman's city, Gotham is the Bat." (1-2) All of this was obviously, in a more straightforward way, expressed in the earlier mentioned Miller's The Dark Knight Returns, when one of the members of The Sons of Batman gang simply states "Gotham City belongs to the Batman", followed by Batman himself declaring, while addressing the gang and the imminent crisis – "Tonight we are the law, tonight I am the law." (173)

It is through this prism of almost absolute identification between the character and the city that we can observe the emergence of the Foucauldian dispositive/apparatus concept, outlining its

presence through the various architectural structures that defined Gotham over the years. Observing the ever-modifying Gotham's horizon, a meaningful pattern emerges out of a number of buildings which through the decades have remained sites of interest for a number of different storylines. These buildings, although all crucial to the understanding of the mechanics of the city, greatly differ in their prominence and accessibility, and it is this (in)visibility that assures the proper articulation of the dispositive/apparatus. The "visible" ones such as the prominent Wayne Tower (both the old and the new one), usually located in the center of the City, Wayne manor located somewhat on the outskirts, and Arkham Asylum (which changed its location many times over the years), all function as topographic sites of reference, both on a symbolic and practical level. They are accompanied by other structures/architectural entities such as the Gotham City Police Department, the Mayor's office, as well as the office of the District Attorney. All of these locations contribute to the articulation of a visible axis of political and institutionalized power, whose purpose is to clearly define the disciplinary paradigm within the city. However, there are two additional locations, metaphorically or completely hidden from view, that are truly defining and enforcing the initially established disciplinary paradigm, or completely subverting it. The first one is the Bat Cave, the mythologized guard post of the Dark Knight, and the starting point of all of Batman's disciplinary activities, while the second one – public, but nevertheless hidden or at least narratively obfuscated space, is Crime Alley, the location where Bruce Wayne's parents were murdered. The first set of locations, the visible ones, conform to the traditional representation of power – "what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested" – while finding "the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force." (Foucault, Discipline 187). As Foucault continues, the subjects on whom the force is exercised remain in the shade, only to be occasionally and briefly exposed when such a thing is required (Discipline 187). Gotham's visible architecture, therefore, by having a prominent and highly visible position within the city's landscape, simulates a point of reference regarding power and social order, while simultaneously completely failing in its (apparent) attempt to articulate and implement Foucault's system of disciplinary power. Furthermore, its visibility inevitably leads to the strengthening of the concept of the Foucauldian modern state, by imposing the notion of various types of power[8] converging or supplementing the architecture of the city. In other words, the visibility of the power structures, as well as the accompanying support, ensures the seemingly proper functioning of the state/city by creating a

false appearance. Following Foucault's idea of the sovereign power[9] as well as pastoral power,[10] an apparent ruling body and structure is established and perpetuated, which subsequently serves as the object toward which any form of resistance could be directed. This creation of an easy focal point for any and all forms of resistance plays a key part in Foucault's equation of transforming the economy of visibility into an exercise of power (Discipline 187). Disciplinary power, as stated by Foucault, exercised through its invisibility, imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility, which in turn assures the hold of power that is exercised over them. In other words, the visible architecture and social symbols of power/governmentality in Gotham contribute to a successful implementation of disciplinary power, enforcing Batman's hold over Gotham, and allowing for the continuation of the process of creating docile bodies.

It could be stated therefore that, by following the previously elaborated possible differentiation between the dispositive and the apparatus, the visible power related architectural segments of Gotham represent apparatus, the physical mechanisms of power. What is therefore needed is a dispositive, the strategic intention, which in architectural terms becomes articulated through an invisible locus of power – the Batcave![11] As Foucault explains:

I said that the dispositive is by nature essentially strategic, which indicates that it deals with a certain manipulation of forces, or a rational and concerted intervention in the relations of forces, to orient them in a certain direction, to block them, or to fix and utilize them. The dispositive is always inscribed in a game of power and, at the same time, always tied to the limits of knowledge, which derive from it and, in the same measure, condition it. The dispositive is precisely this: an ensemble (set) of strategies of relations of force which condition certain types of knowledge and is conditioned by them. (qtd. in Bussolini 91-92)

Deriving from this somewhat lengthy description, it can be concluded that the Batcave operates as the necessary starting point for all of Batman's disciplinary activities. By focusing on the "manipulation of forces," by developing the strategic nature of the dispositive through a continuous process of knowledge accumulation, and consequently, by using this knowledge to further perfect the previously established, and now perpetuated, system of power, Batman succeeds in creating a surveillance and control system premised on the docility of the citizens of Gotham, as well as its specific architecture.

With the continuation of the analysis of Gotham's spatial paradigm through the prism of Foucault's space/power discourse, one key prominent concept appears, and that is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Developed as a plan for a modern prison, the Panopticon functions on the principle of guaranteeing the constant visibility of the subjects, or, in other words, it functions as a machine for sustaining power relations. As a system, the Panopticon ensures that inmates are segregated, distributed in a circle around a central tower from which a monitor can look into any cell at any given time. The concept is premised on the possibility of observation and not necessarily the fact of being observed, as well as on the idea that the inmates have no way of knowing if they are being observed. As Foucault states, the aim of such a system is "to induce in the inmates a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power." (Discipline 201) In that sense, the Batcave functions as a Panopticon, the invisible locus of power through which Batman (possibly) monitors the citizens/criminals of Gotham, while at the same time using the Bat-signal as the metaphoric projection of the ever-present guard tower. In that way, the Batcave combined with the Bat-signal simultaneously acts as Foucault's dispositive and apparatus or, in other words, acts as a metaphoric bridge between the initial strategy and its later implementation. The direct consequence of such a system is the active production of docile bodies, achieved through what Foucault defines as three different mechanisms/activities – hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and finally, examination. Following Foucault's explanation, the hierarchical observation is a "mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible." (Discipline 170-71) It is this mechanism that coerces Gotham City to become knowable, familiar, and most of all visible with all its inhabitants to Batman. The second step in the implementation of disciplinary power, once again executed from the Batcave (using the (in)famous Bat-computer)[12] is the mechanism of normalizing judgment – a process that states the acceptable norms of behavior while at the same time defining what is potentially abnormal. "The power of normalization imposes homogeneity," allowing to "measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another." (Foucault, Discipline 184) Homogeneity therefore becomes the "law of the land," with Batman deciding who or what falls into

which category. The third mechanism – examination – functions as a combination of hierarchical observation and normative judgment. The function of examination is to assess the position of the individual within the modern state/city. Once again, as Foucault explains, “It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them.” (Discipline 184) The results of the assessments obtained through this mechanism are recorded (once again in the Bat-computer), and the accumulated knowledge is used to create a more functional power system/structure.[13]

Deconstructing the Panoptic Gaze

A chaotic, but nevertheless well-mapped and sternly scrutinized Gotham subjects itself to the ever-persisting invisible gaze of the Batcave. However, by trailing Gotham’s visible and invisible architecture, one particular space remains undefined – Crime Alley. Described through various narratives as the location where Bruce Wayne’s parents were murdered, as well as the space where the symbolic birth of Batman occurred, Crime Alley remains the only segment of the city that forces Batman to withdraw only to be replaced by Bruce Wayne. To better understand the characteristic of the space at hand, it is necessary to replace the reading of space as proposed by Foucault with a more intimate, even though somewhat more chaotic, approach to reading Gotham. As opposed to what Foucault proposes when debating spaces in relation to disciplinary practices, and the construction of rather clear supervising architectural grids, whose purpose is the production and perpetuation of the discourses of power, the spatial construct of Crime Alley necessitates a different theoretical approach precisely due to its function and symbolic value within the Batman opus narratives. The Batcave, together with Crime Alley, represents the true axis of Batman’s disciplinary power. However, the key distinguishing point between the two spaces lies in the fact that while the Batcave functions as the invisible locus of power, and therefore the starting point for all Batman’s disciplinary activities, Crime Alley articulates a clearly subversive discourse. Consequently, the strict space/power paradigm relating to the concept of the modern state cannot be applied to a space such as Crime Alley since it defies a rigid spatial structure as well as a conclusive symbolic meaning. Therefore, while retaining its relevance in the process of

constructing the system by acting as the initial driving force and impetus, it does not have an integral role in perpetuating discipline. Quite the opposite; it functions as a site of inversion, a space which was transfigured into a tragic place. A possible way to address this theoretical oddity could be to extend Foucault's theory about space to another one of his concepts, and that is the idea of heterotopian spaces. Only partially elaborated by Foucault, but simultaneously largely debated, the heterotopian spaces appear when the issue of (spatial) otherness is being questioned. Following a somewhat uneven description of the concept given in the Preface to The Order of Things (1966) and the later transcript of a lecture that Foucault gave in 1967,[14] the heterotopian spaces were described by the author as spaces that "secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance" (xix). Such spaces therefore have the ability to "regardless of their real or imagined location … bear a potential to cause confusion and distress upon the otherwise neatly organized and well-managed world – to contaminate it, in a way, with their incongruity and disorder' (Parezanović and Lukić 111). According to various translations of "Of Other Spaces" (1998), heterotopian spaces are defined as real sites which co-exist with other sites, while simultaneously retaining certain prohibitive, sacred, symbolic or other features that sets these spaces apart. As Foucault states, heterotopian spaces "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" ("Of Other Spaces" 24).

The inability to achieve an effective spatial contextualization of Crime Alley starts almost immediately by listing the known facts about it. Although canonized through countless narratives on numerous different platforms, the core facts about it remain quite scarce. Initially known as Park Row, it changed from being a ghettoized location to a place of glamour, only to be later on once again defined by poverty, earning the unfortunate nickname of Crime Alley. The Wayne family, the details of whose assault vary according to different narratives,[15] was mugged in close proximity of a movie theatre (Finger et al.), where they were seen for the last time before being killed. The act of killing marks the moment of the birth of Batman, but even more, it marks the emotional trauma to which young Bruce Wayne is exposed.[16] The extent of the emotional trauma occurring within this space is so severe and extensive that it transcends the topographic connotations of the map of

Gotham, and instead inscribes itself into Bruce's subconscious. As such, it becomes articulated as a space that bears the dual markings of being a "real space" within Gotham's landscape, but also a myth rooted in memory. The now existing dual markings, as well as the actual duality of the space itself, reflect directly on the protagonist, with Batman understanding Gotham and its space, and relying on the dispositive and the subsequent apparatus to control it, while Bruce's traumatized and internalized perception of this "initial" space permanently denies him any type of control. Instead of control, he becomes entangled in what Foucault, while elaborating on Gaston Bachelard's work on internalized individual spaces and their subjective/philosophical perception through memories, defines as a potentially "thoroughly fantasmatic" ("Of Other Spaces" 23) type of space. What follows is yet another spatial segmentation of Gotham, and the emergence of a "sacred" space opposing the mundane and profane ones. Crime Alley therefore conforms to Bachelard's internalized individual spaces, largely resembling – while being a public space – the theoretical notion of home or, as Bachelard defines it, "our first universe" (4), the space that will define our future perception of all other spaces. Still in line with Bachelard's readings of home, it is possible to observe a strong connection between the idea of a domestic space and Bruce's perception and understanding of Crime Alley. By constantly reliving the trauma of his parents' death, Bruce remains trapped within the perpetuating past and the memory of both the last moments of happiness with his family and the incomprehensible tragedy that followed. As Bachelard states, "[w]e comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection … [while] the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace." (6) He then continues: "it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time." (6) Crime Alley therefore becomes the last existing image of Bruce's home, spatial alveoli containing compressed time (Bachelard 8), which will simultaneously define the almost totalitarian future of Gotham, while retaining the quality of the "first universe," a heterotopian sacred space lived by Bruce Wayne and unscrutinized by Batman.

What can be concluded from this incursion into Gotham and the complex relationship that this city has with its protector cannot necessarily be summarized in a simple sentence. By applying the theoretical notions regarding power, as proposed by Foucault, the idea of a stable, controlled, and

predictable city vanishes almost immediately. The thought-out dispositive and Batman's attempt to articulate an adequate apparatus, becomes a futile theoretical exercise, conditioned to fail by the very spaces it was supposed to protect. The domestic, intimate, and subjective nature of Crime Alley subjugates the power system constructed by Batman by remaining outside of the power relations projected by Gotham's (in)visible architecture, remaining in such a way a space that cannot be supervised and therefore controlled. Conclusively, Foucault's own statement about the perfect disciplinary system, which would allow for "a single gaze to see everything constantly … a locus of convergence for everything that must be known … a perfect eye that nothing would escape" (Discipline 173), flawlessly reflects Batman's discourse on power. However, simultaneously it neglects the enduring flaw within the constructed spatial paradigm, allowing for a continuously faltering panoptic gaze.

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[1] As described by Foucault in Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison (1991), from the classical age on there has been an increased interest in the human body as the target of power. By observing various disciplinary procedures developed over the centuries, additional (more meaningful) control and power over subjects could be attained.

[2] The concept of a non-place was developed and proposed by Marc Augé in his introduction to the notion of supermodernity, titled Non-Places, and it referred to transitory spaces which are only partially and incoherently perceived.

[3] Furst was awarded an Oscar for his work on Batman.

[4] Actual sketches made by Furst were used for the covers as well as within the storyline, with the presented architecture being accredited to a certain Cyrus Pinkney, whose intention was to design/build Gotham in such a way that it would trap and possibly control/subdue evil. Later on, even this remodeled Gotham would be destroyed in an earthquake and replaced once again with a more contemporary type of architecture.

[5] Such a reading of space and its relation to place was extensively analyzed by Yi Fu Tuan in his texts such as Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience or Landscapes of Fear, by Tim Cresswell in Place: An Introduction, to a degree in the works by Michel de Certeau, etc.

[6] Although a number of authors debating the concept appareil/dispositif conform to the initial translating practice of traducing the concept as simply apparatus, recent re-evaluations, as stated by authors such as Jeffrey Bussolini, observe the readings of Foucault’s lectures as presented by Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben and the proposed different “philosophical trajectories” (Bussolini 85) of the two terms/concepts. The theoretical framework used in this analysis conforms to the proposed distinction between the two concepts.

[7] A very interesting architectural based connection between the Wayne family (mostly Thomas Wayne) and Gotham City can be seen in Batman: Death by Design by Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor.

[8] The idea refers to Foucault's listing of possible models of power present within democratic societies, which he divides into sovereign power, pastoral power, disciplinary power, and power-

knowledge. Each of these models can be evidenced, although within different contexts, when analyzing the power relations between Batman and Gotham.

[9] Form of power which is defined by the obedience to a central authority figure or entity. As described by Lilja and Vinthagen “it is the kind of power that does not accept any public dissent, or any show of loyalty to any other commanding centre. It is the form of power that, if people accept it, will make sovereignty possible by claiming a monopoly of rule.” (112)

[10] As described by Foucault, “[i]t was no longer a question of leading people to their salvation in the next world, but rather ensuring it in this world. And in this context, the word salvation takes on different meanings: health, well-being (that is sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents… Sometimes the power was exercised by private ventures, welfare societies, benefactors and generally by philanthropists. But ancient institutions, for example the family, were also mobilized ... to take on pastoral fractions.” (Afterword 215) or, as it is summarized by Patricia Stamp in her discussion on modern states and pastoral power, “itresides in the state and other modem institutions, and like the ecclesiastical power that it has replaced, is salvation-oriented” (566).

[11] As with other aspects of the Batman opus, the descriptions and related details varied according to different authors and storylines. However, starting with Detective Comics #83, the Batcave becomes the headquarters for all of Batman’s crime fighting activities.

[12] Regardless of its campy name, later strongly reinforced by the television show, since its first appearance in Batman #189, the Bat-computer serves as an unavoidable crime fighting instrument. Initially used as a tool for the retrieval of basic information, it soon became a data analysis instrument with increased functionalities. A turning point occurs with Detective Comics #594, with Batman instructing Alfred to illegally break into the “Social Security computer” and retrieve information about a suspect. From this point on, the use of the computer varies, mostly in non-comic book interpretations of Batman, while retaining progressively surveillance and control based qualities.

[13] Examples of this three-stage process within the Batman opus are numerous, and they vary from narrative to narrative. However, one particular example can be pointed out, and that is the

second installment of Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy – The Dark Knight, where the issue of the moral and ethical implications of a highly elaborate electronic surveillance system which monitors everybody is debated by the characters/"good guys" themselves.

[14] Published in 1984 under the title "Des espaces autres."

[15] Although Issue 33 of Detective Comics simply states that the Wayne family was attacked while walking home from a movie, later narratives offered a more detailed, and varied, interpretation of the occurred events. Through the years, the location – Park Row – once geographically defined in Detective Comics #457, remains the same, with different storylines adding or changing details relating to the attacker/killer, the reason for the murder, the surrounding locations, etc.

[16] The previously mentioned Detective Comics #457 adequately frames the tragedy endured by young Bruce Wayne through a flashback with Batman reliving the death of his parents. Although this series of events will be reinterpreted on numerous occasions, the image of a traumatized, broken child will become a staple for future explanations of both the importance of Crime Alley, and Batman's monomania.

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