

Alienated Spaces: DeathStarchitecture
in *Star Wars*, Bleached Space and Dialogue
in *The Graduate*, Showroom Space
in *Pleasantville* and *Mad Men*, and the
Dantean Homes of *Homeland*

DEATHSTARCHITECTURE: THE NON-PLACE
DESTINED TO BE BLOWN UP

The Death Star floats large in our collective imagination, an iconic presence as forceful as any produced by the dispassionate *Star Wars* franchise. But what exactly is this kind of space: are there underlying reasons why it plays such a central role in not one but three of the franchise's installments? Here we argue that yes, this realm and expression of a specifically *mechanical* and *technical* evil introduces a very persuasive form of story space and at the same time defines the film's other spaces by its oppositions to them. Once we begin to grasp the odd inhabitation and oppositions that the Death Star is composed of, we see that DeathStarchitecture is a rather pure example of what Augé calls the ideo-logic: that is, an inner logic of representation that the *Star Wars* universe uses to explain itself to itself.

The most striking aspect of these giant entities is how little effort has gone into making these spaces realistically functional in any actual sense. For example, despite their size and role, the Death Star does not feature habitation of any discernible kind: though in all three films the

agents of the Rebellion have crisscrossed this constructed landscape they have never once burst into some kind of living quarters or even passed a bathroom. Deathstarchitecture never caters to human pleasures: it offers no amenities for its thousands of troops and technicians, no shops, bars or restaurants, no leisure-quarters or gyms or recreational centers, no barracks and no schools. There are also no children, and, it seems, no women. Furthermore, most of the stormtroopers who walk in military time through its corridors actually lack faces.

This is no oversight: in fact it is central to how this space is working empathetically in this world's dispassionate universe. Deathstarchitecture is actually a planet-sized elaboration of that form of space that Augé calls non-place, the zone of malls, elevators and maintenance corridors.¹ Specific places in DeathStarchitecture are hard to remember: it is an unusually blurred space offering our memory little geographic detail or logic, exhibiting what Augé calls the oblivion and aberration of memory—akin to our blurred memories of giant, generic hotels, that lack their own architectural identities and all personal marks or decor,² instrumental places we have to get through to get somewhere else, all of which further undercut our sense of belonging. It is perhaps not surprising that the rebel intruders always need the help of androids to map, navigate or make sense of it. All of these tropes of inorganic, inhuman architecture makes DeathStarchitecture a form of alienated space, itself a trope of science fiction used by Lucas in his 1971 film *THX 1138* and which lies like a shadow behind Deathstarchitecture. That earlier SF film's trope of over-rationalized clean white sterile space and inhuman sounds feels contiguous here, thanks to the inhumanity, the synth acoustics and the overall lack of orientation, even if Deathstarchitecture clads itself inside and out with an elaborate extrusion of technical and physical infrastructure that have assumed but opaque purpose.

Note this alienated space's clear oppositional role in the Star Wars universe: with simple Manichean logic this environment helps show by direct contrasts what the Rebellion represents, why it is so important and why we ought to feel empathy only for the rebels. By contrast to Deathstarchitecture, the Rebellion's spaces are authentic, multicultural, communal, lived-in, unstandardized and largely unrationalized, have a multiplicity of histories, and carry the traces of generations. They also offer strange and exciting social spaces like anarchic dive-bars, bustling marketplaces, unregulated Casbah-like zones and many other realms where social classes mix, interact and relax. None of the production

design attributes or spatial cues of Deathstarchitecture—its slick surfaces, rational codes, restricted color palates, alienated, unmarked surfaces and modernist designs—are found in rebel zones, which are marked by aged, lived-in, rough and marked surfaces, a deeply-inscribed sense of historical place, ornament and habitation opposite to the Empire’s preferred placeless, ahistorical globalized Modernism. Consider how the appeal of the Millennial Falcon’s idiosyncratically cobbled-together, grimy interior contrasts to the Empire’s austere, well-run zone: however fallible and comically suspect, those signs of the personal history of Solo and Chewbacka make this ship homey. In short, the spaces of the Rebellion are alive in all the ways DeathStarchitecture is dead.

Moreover, if we use another elaboration of space, Third Space theory of Ray Oldenburg (1989, 1999), we see another level to the designed alienation of Deathstarchitecture. Third Space theory argues that most spaces in contemporary life fall into Work spaces, Home spaces, and then all the common public spaces that make up the Third Space. It is not as if such categories are never observed in a spaceship: think of the chess-playing scene on the Millennium Falcon in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. As the architect Michael Silver once commented, the USS Enterprise in *Star Trek* may resemble a giant office-building flying through space and may never have any of the personalized, taped—together charm of a Millennial Falcon or a Firefly Serenity but it nevertheless has home zones, dining areas and living quarters that though they are certainly denatured (these are after all military spaces on loan to personnel) yet still have distinctly non-military design flourishes and colors, and the walls and shelves usually feature items of personalization that reveal the history and character of the inhabitant. Like the similarly divided space-station setting of the franchise’s *Deep Space Nine* (1993–1997), the *Enterprise* also features Third Space common zones like the bar and the cafeteria, where people are ‘at ease’ in both the military and the physical sense.³

As spatial theorists like Oldenburg argue, the balance between these three forms of place tell us a lot about how democratic and caring a culture is: cultures that grant a flourishing life usually offer a balance of the three distinct realms of home life, the workplace, and inclusive sociable places. Instead, the rebels who sneak onto the Death Star find themselves in a uniform work space that mixes corporate and military tropes: communicating erratically with their droids to find a

path through this maze, they seem lost in some giant office building's maintenance sector peppered with air-ducts, occasionally meeting some controlling work-desk run by a military secretary.

There is a very clear dispassionate and spectacular emotional logic behind this marriage of sterile institution, opaque rational instrumental purpose, corporate maze and pure work space: we long to destroy such places. And so a Deathstar's fiery destruction offers a perfectly calculated final spectacle for these franchise's dispassionate films.⁴ Unlike DeathStarchitecture's own vivid destruction of lived organic worlds, there is nothing, no-one, no history or social realm and no ground to empathize with when such a gigantic corporatized work-space is spectacularly blown up. Good riddance to all that alienation.

TROPES OF SPATIAL ALIENATION

The spatial alienation techniques and tropes found in DeathStarchitecture include:

1. Crafting non-place, a hard to remember place of no specificity or landmark.
2. Creating a rigidly rationalistic space of vague but dominant instrumental logic, removing all aspects of present-at-handness, so that all is a ready-to-hand tool.
3. Staging sets that use surfaces that have little or no mark of time, history, or variation of architectural vernacular. This trope of rootlessness seems to spring from Modernist architecture and design, which celebrated light, clean lines and aseptic surfaces.
4. Erasing home and the third space and making all a contiguous work space, erasing all marks of individual inhabitation, of homeyness and of community.

This spatial critique (which also shaped Lucas's *THX 1138*), descends from a broad counter-cultural critique of modernism in America that had many sources: it was informed by existential critiques of social and personal alienation inspired by European novelists and philosophers such as Camus and Sartre. It was also backed by sociological explications of alienation in modern life in the 1950s (Reisman et al.) and then in the 1960s became engaged with a Marxist and Situationist understanding of the concept of hegemony⁵ and the phantasmagorical nature of city space,

as well as new critiques from the budding New Left and others of the psychological controls of large institutions and of capitalism (Marcuse; Foucault).

In this broad post-war cultural front, authenticity was identified with rebelliousness, messiness, informality, recycling, Nature, the aging and impoverished inner city, cultural and ethnic otherness, marginal ice and the breaking of borders and other cultural markers and privileged certain forms of music marked by spontaneity and lack of polish. By contrast alienation was marked by social hierarchy, practiced precision of speech and behavior, uniforms, social scripts, the tropes of militarism, consumerism and of traditional conservative white culture, where social niceties were equated with social control, rule-following and the organized settings of American suburban homes, modernist corporate environments and white hegemony. Our earlier examples (the moments of alienation that we traced in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), *Il Posto* (1961) and *L'Éclisse* (1962)) reflected how the 1960s codified this space of inauthenticity and alienation: other examples include the film *Playtime* (1967) by Jacques Tati, but it also found spatial realization in later American films like *The Graduate* (1967) to *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) and others.

The sets of such films are contiguous with the American examples we will be discussing in a number of ways. One is a shared reaction to the new post-war skyscraper environs and to the construction of suburban tract housing, both of which implemented the modernist, Bauhaus-inspired use of non-organic building materials and celebrated the artifice of these new materials. This then inspired a trope of their deployment that gradually came to represent the alienation of modern life, an oppressive, over-machined, mechanistic break with the personal and cultural past.

And so Deathstarchitecture and Rebel space can in this sense be seen as a minor and late expression of a widespread, codified meta-critique of space and power that was used to target many cultural antagonists. For example, the same deployment through space, surface treatments and architectural cues of spaces that abrade on our sensibility, that seem wrong and cold in ways that often express the story's antagonist and that also often pop the characters out from their lifeless background, becomes in some films (e.g. *Pleasantville*, *American Psycho*) specifically a critique of Whiteness.⁶ This wide range of use is possible because the very same techniques that in *Star Wars* function simply to heighten the difference between good and bad guys, work at entirely different levels in stories of

dramatic and Dantean characters and space. Married to a layered character, the same tactics form complex empathetic machinery to show *inner* disjunction, oppression, abrasiveness and lack: by becoming personalized, they express a specific character's situation, history and oppression. And with this distinction we begin to see not only the complex nature of *dramatic* alienation but perhaps we can begin to see how dispassionate and dramatic forms represent fundamentally different stances towards life. This is a theme we will explore further in Chaps. 10 and 11.

And so as we move from the dispassionate *Star Wars* into a range of dramatic narratives—*Playtime* (1967), *The Graduate* (1967), *Pleasantville* (1998), *One Hour Photo* (2002), *Mad Men* (Lionsgate TV, 2007–2015) and *Homeland* (HBO, 2011)—we see how they deploy such spaces to reveal an *inner* alienation of a main character with inner goals who can find no place or home in their alienated world, a dramatic inner emotional lack, emptiness and longing, an erosion, erasure or full destruction of the protagonist's inner space. One interesting psychological aspect of this dramatic alienated space is that though the *viewer* feels the alienation and connects it to what is wrong in the story, usually the story's protagonists do not notice it. Like a fish who cannot see the water it swims in, they cannot realize or understand even by the end of the drama that these spaces are antagonistic and abrasive.

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN WE ARE BEGINNING OUR DESCENT
INTO LOS ANGELES”: ALIENATED CHARACTERS, DIALOGUE
AND SPACES IN *THE GRADUATE*

The Graduate (1967) actually begins by conflating airports and homes that are all largely free of decoration and are painted an austere white. Again we find spaces with no clear sign of habitation, no clear memories, no messy record of daily events, a world where homes and hotel rooms blend into and could double for each other. We cannot easily distinguish Mrs. Robinson's house from Benjamin's own or from the hotel room where they meet for their trysts, a spatial erasure which heightens not only his sense of bewilderment and ours but heightens the feeling of Oedipal drama. The film will even play with this in a famous montage of hidden geographic edits: when the affair between Benjamin and Mrs. Robinson gets rolling, we have a series of cuts that seem to be in one place but reveal a time and space jump-cut joining room to hotel room, pool to bed and back, giving us Benjamin's sense of bored repetitive

sex over weeks as well as his feeling of being trapped in a small world of sameness and meaninglessness in this world. Only his bedroom and Elaine's have any personalized walls, any accretion of personal items, cluttered surfaces and a lived-in look, a realism that heightens their future connection with each other.

Paralleling this austere, antiseptic production design is a use of what we might call bleached dialogue: characters speak lines of dialogue that are so bereft of character, history, backstory and voice that they can be easily traded among many of the secondary characters. This alienation technique in dialogue is achieved in much the same way as the spatial alienation in the film: by purposefully emptying the characterological manifold of meaning in order to create an abrasive alienation effect, to convey that "something is very wrong here."

To appreciate this, consider that rich narrative dialogue has at least some of the following six dimensions of meaning implicit in it. In fact most dialogue in narratives has more than one layer of dramatic meaning at any one time, and as scripts, novels and plays are rewritten there is almost always a deepening and enrichment of levels of meaning in the evolving dialogue.

Being another expression of the characterological manifold, dialogue can:

1. Reveal the past.
2. Move the story in the present (usually through revealing someone's objectives).
3. Foreshadow the future.
4. Reveal character.
5. Reveal relationships.
6. Entertain or engage us.

Consider the many amusingly-empty lines in *The Graduate*, such as the voluminous advice Benjamin gets, all the empty gushing praise that he flees from in the opening party, and the famous line where Mr. Maguire asks Benjamin to "think about one thing: Plastics." This iconic line also powerfully expresses the film's deep antagonist of emptiness by expressing nearly none of the work of our six dramatic dimensions, ironically bringing up the film's theme of the fake and synthetic. In that way it resembles the social script of the pilot that opens the film: "Ladies and Gentlemen we are beginning our descent into Los Angeles," like the

canned recordings then playing at the airport about the airport's white zones, like the many clichés mouthed by Benjamin's parents. At his most nervous Benjamin too hollowly echoes such lines with unpracticed adolescent clumsiness. Like a room decorated to impress visitors but which expresses nothing about one's history or tendencies, this regulated and socially-required dialogue is empty dialogue lacking clues to character.⁷

In fact, the first real person to say anything real and intimate in the film comes at minute 11 when Mrs. Robinson confesses to Benjamin that she is an alcoholic. Like her realistic acting, this reveal comes as a shock that Benjamin cannot handle: he has, after all, been barely able to master the pleasant scripts that have been parroted by everyone else for the last ten minutes, bleached dialogue that has had between none and two dimensions of meaning. By contrast Mrs. Robinson's admission embodies the first five dimensions of meaning and so lands with real force on him. The line is worth noticing and absorbing, as are her reasons for this revelation, triggering his comic recoil from her opened circle of intimacy even as it anchors her as a real character with real intentions and a real past. Moreover, as Benjamin notes, by admitting such a vulnerability she is not only the first person in the film to show a glimpse of interiority but is inviting him into an inner circle of intimacy, a prelude to seduction. Thankfully her strategic admission does not mark the end of the film's amusing bleached dialogue: just a few minutes later her husband will give Benjamin more heaps of generic advice, even sincerely confiding that "I've watched you grow up and sometimes I think of you as my own son," only to rather hilariously forget Benjamin's name just seconds later.

Because others are speaking with bleached dialogue where lines lack all the standard meanings of dramatic speech, and because the spaces are similarly marked by an absence of levels of meaning as well as exhibiting the tropes of alienation, Mrs. Robinson stands out because in many ways she alone is real. Against their sunny empty singsongy affects, hers is black and brooding, her demeanor bored and sophisticated, her voice low and suggestive. And yet this voice carries direct action and force, backed by commands, because her confidence is assured and total. All this dramatic power both lures and intimidates the uncertain, virginal Benjamin, who is himself searching for a center, for a compass, for a gyroscope that can guide him forwards into his future. In the view of Benjamin, hungrily searching for authenticity and the real in this empty LA suburb, only this older woman who says and does the unexpected can mentor him.

For her part Mrs. Robinson is something of a master psychologist. She seems to sense that for Benjamin his virginity is not innocence but ignorance: unsure of himself, trying to hide his inexperience, he is sure that all these older suburban adults have some access to certainties and clarities that he lacks, and she takes full advantage of this. For forty-five minutes of the film she is the cat and he the mouse: her objectives drive every single scene. Finally his own sense of purposelessness and alienation reaches a height in the aural and physical alienation of the pool scene when he is forced to don a scuba suit and float in humiliation in the pool. It is only after this apogee of sensory alienation and social powerlessness that Mrs. Robinson can finally puppet him into bed. And then it is only after Benjamin can finally peek behind the curtain, or rather under the sheets, and sees no real answers there, no purpose or happiness, that he can at last take some power back in their relationship: the moment comes in the film's center-piece "Let's have a conversation" scene when she begins to reveal her own weaknesses and intimacies. Now he yanks the sheet off the bed, revealing her nakedness and forcing her to apologize. Now he has power in the relationship, but that just means that he too will now be inducted into the bitterness of suburban American life.

BITTERNESS EXAMINED

And why else does Mrs. Robinson seem so grounded, so real? Because she is so obviously bitter.

In fact, this film is a study of bitterness: Mrs. Robinson's bitterness seems to grant her both reality and wisdom in this empty world of platitudes. Sadly for Benjamin, he cannot see the sources of this bitterness in her: when she half-confesses it he lacks the experience to hear her tragedy and her truth and so to have an actual intimate relationship with her, to have conversations of care and complicity that might reflect balance and shared fears and consoling.

We have discussed guilt in Part I and will discuss innocence in Part III: here bitterness serves us well as a bridge. After all, bitterness is, like guilt, a cognitive emotional state that comes from certain forms of experience and reveals character and history. The sunny positive attitude of Benjamin's parents' friends is a socially-dictated affectation that reveals nothing about a person's past or real emotions. By contrast, bitterness in a person usually implies two quite different things about that person's

past. First, this bitter person once had hopes and perhaps even ideals: she once saw the world as a positive place that offered some long-term worthwhile pursuits. Second, this person then experienced a betrayal of some kind that she has not gotten over, a moment when the world—perhaps in the form of parents, a jilting lover, a failed social movement, a hypocritical political or religious leader, an oppressing ruling class or a surprisingly indifferent God—betrayed her trust in those ideals. The person, though unable to forget the old promise, then gave up on those pursuits and now is left with a dead version of that idealism and hope, left with a mouth sucked tight by the dusty taste of some poor substitute that cannot sustain her hope.

We are given a window onto this side of Mrs. Robinson: while turned away from him in the “conversation” scene, she admits to her dead idealism, though Benjamin tragically misses this real opening. In a moment where her normal hard mask drops, she reveals that her bitterness springs from the scarring experience of getting pregnant with Elaine, being forced to drop out of college and then finding herself in a loveless marriage and an undemanding, flat life. By her own admission she became a neurotic: she turned herself into a blighted survivor of sorts, her eyes now open, her wits about her, her hopes deemed illusions and jettisoned as such. And as if we were viewing a character in *The Divine Comedy* we now see the condition of the embittered: in the embittering there is often a feeling that the ‘scales have fallen from your eyes’ so that the old dreams suddenly look childish, quaint and embarrassing, and with this comes the seemingly wiser embittered sight. Having lost the open eyes of the innocent, the embittered now gains a sharp tongue, sharp eyes and sharpened features. And usually the bitter gain a sharp impatience for the innocent.

For Benjamin’s part, just as he realizes that his parents and all their friends from Tarzana are too fake for him, he realizes that Mrs. Robinson is too real. But Benjamin doesn’t simply give up: still lacking any direction or plan, he now stumbles comically into a relationship with Mrs. Robinson’s daughter Elaine: it seems that Elaine, the dreamy innocent, promises the very hope and dream and worth that Mrs. Robinson has lost. And now Mrs. Robinson becomes rather like a starter-girlfriend, or like the sex doll in *Lars and the Real Girl*: she has been turned into a practice run for the protagonist, preparing him for his first real relationship. And after being ordered around by her mother for half the film, Benjamin finds Elaine responsive and reassuringly uncertain, granting him the power of deciding what to do.



Fig. 8.1 *Pleasantville* (1998)

When Benjamin leaves LA to find Elaine at college in Berkeley, California, the nature of the spaces changes. They begin meeting in his Berkeley room, a bedraggled, grungy, real place completely different from the alienated Los Angeles milieu, and for the next twenty minutes as Benjamin pursues Elaine he himself, his clothes and his shiny red sports car will all get grungier and more bedraggled, growing ‘more real’ in the production design logic of the film. Only at the end, in their iconic moments of being lost on the bus, do we see their dawning realization that neither has the answer for the other. In the end Benjamin himself does not really come to grips with the alienation that surrounds them all.

This is true for most characters that we find in alienated spaces. The reason is simple: born of the state of alienation itself, usually an intangible and undetectable state, alienated space is far easier to observe in others than in yourself. Only rarely, for example in the film *Pleasantville*, do characters actually escape or overcome an alienated space, and there they can do this because, as the proverbial fish out of water, they are tossed into it from another, entirely different space (Fig. 8.1).

Pleasantville

The protagonists of *Pleasantville* are the twins David and Jennifer, two high school students who live in a newly divorced family in a 1990s’ version of America where sexual disease and climate change are only two

of many frightening signs of change and freedom. While Jennifer revels in the popularity that her extroverted sexuality grants her at school, David longs for safety and security, which he finds by escaping into the solid homilies of an old 50s' television show called *Pleasantville* that is based around a typical clichéed 1950s wasp family.

When the twins are magically transported from the present, which is seen in color, into the black-and-white town of Pleasantville, they first try to fit in and adapt. But soon the free-spirited, sexualized Jennifer brings elements of desire, rebellion and social flourishing to Pleasantville's constricted world. As she inspires its denizens, pushing different characters such as the show's mother to take risks and come to a sense of self—revelation, they move from safe repression to the riskier freedoms of intimacy. But as a character becomes more authentic and more emotionally connected to other people, the change presents itself for everyone to see as they turn selectively into color. This marker of change provokes outrage and punishment in the conservative town which soon demonstrates violently against the liberated 'coloreds.' In one ironic inversion, typical of the film, David helps the family's mother cover up her inner changes by using her makeup to make her look properly self-alienated (Fig. 8.2).

And so into this visually alienated world of black and white, the new opposites of authenticity, spontaneity and beauty all erupt into the space in a very clear way. The spatial alienation of *Pleasantville* follows all the same spatial tropes of inauthenticity as *The Graduate*, which are here made particularly manifest in *Pleasantville*'s period—reference use of cinematography and balanced frames, of cleanly-ordered households and diners filled with non-personal items and shiny unmarked surfaces to capture an imprisoning world of repressive 1950s WASP Americana. It also uses *The Graduate*'s trick of splitting its characters into those who speak denatured, bleached dialogue (social scripts, advice and clichés) and those who speak real dialogue with dimensions of meaning: here too alienated dialogue and alienated space characterize the film's antagonists.

Pleasantville also dramatizes another aspect of both emotion and its spatial realizations: the film shows how contagious the inner conflicts of its characters are. Its shared narrative space illustrates the phenomenon of *emotional contagion*, a real-world phenomenon in which one's mood or affect is communicated to others through social interactions and bonds. Through the device of the TV show it proposes first that neurosis, the impulse to escape alienation and to tightly circumscribe the circle of intimacy are not simple choices limited to the inner self but are in



Fig. 8.2 Staged publicity still for *Homeland* that references Carrie's evidence wall (*Homeland* 2011–)

fact spread and inculcated through media representation, gendered hierarchical structures and social bonds. And then by staging its visual conflict as a duel between two competing cinema spaces, the film then shows how this shared, jointly-internalized space can become more empathetic and rich through social interaction and intervention and by overt social and civic agreement and conflict. This theme, of how the rules of intimacy and of dramatic space are also public and shared projections and how they might be consciously changed to include a richer social and moral vocabulary and more complex and empathetic social bonds, is the subject of our final two chapters in Part III.

SHOWROOM SPACES

These narratives also take a further step beyond DeathStarchitecture by erecting what we will call showroom space for their home—or work-spaces. The specific codification and cues of showroom space are a lack of signs of use of a place's surfaces and objects, their geometric and non-organic arrangement of sight-line and set, and their emphasis on displaying shiny

and fresh-minted 'unconsumed' consumer goods. In all of these examples this Showroom space, denatured as it is of human use and personalities, adds to the purposive sense of violation—whether of home and work spaces, of spatial gender assignments, and/or of a character who has become cut off from a personal past and community. Such alienated Showroom spaces can be read as expressions of tight control of the environment by the protagonist (*HomeLand*, *Pleasantville*, *One Hour Photo*), as sought out by the protagonists as a kind of compensation for loneliness and betrayal (*HomeLand*, *One Hour Photo*, *Mad Men*), as an expression of a strong sense of in-out group identity (*Pleasantville*, *Mad Men*), or as a space the protagonist is unwillingly born into and seeks to escape (*The Graduate*, *Playtime*). Moreover, a single Showroom space can indicate numerous internal disjunctions: in *Mad Men* Don Draper is ensconced in Showroom space in part because he lives a false identity, cannot have authentic intimacy with women, is constantly betraying those who love him, is guilty over the abandonment and suicide of his innocent younger brother whom he abandoned, and is anxiously fleeing his lower-class status.⁸

In all of these cases one common thread appears, a thread so pronounced that we can identify Showroom space as a codified body of cinematic signifiers: characters that are found in Showroom spaces lack strong social bonds and, as they slowly come to realize this, the space becomes a fundamental expression of their inner goal, conflict and crisis, their lack of intimacy, of real friends, of authentic social bonds, which are all problems that contribute to their lack of direction and purpose. In *Mad Men* they are both simultaneously quite alluring and yet shout "go live and work anywhere but here!". Through these techniques, Showroom space is thus both a cause and an emblem of a character's moral confusion, and so these Showroom spaces become in their own way a dramatized antagonist in the story, a problem that usually powers the main character to seek out a life and a place of meaning elsewhere, among others who do not seem as shiny and closed and dead as these spaces.

INTIMACY RECONSIDERED

As emblematic of a lack of social connection, social trust and self-awareness, such spaces all indicate a real lack of intimacy in and among characters. Why is there an impulse to withdraw into such closed spaces? What is the impulse to be impervious to vulnerability, to hide one's intimacies, to be alienated in these ways? Why seek out the dull company of the non-intimate?

Because intimacy is dangerous. We have excellent reasons to fear intimacy and to share intimacies only with a very selective, proven, trustworthy few, and only when we are feeling a certain safety with them. You must have reason to feel that they will not use this information against you, as a piece of hurtful gossip at the office, as a weapon in a furious verbal fight, as a bomb that can explode your confidence and reputation. This is the reason for the alienated production design of Benjamin's and Mrs. Robinson's house, which by showing no sign of the past or of individuality also show a refusal to allow intimacy in conversation as well as a neurotic impulse to control the world and evade the chaos of one's personal emotions. This is also why Benjamin in *The Graduate* has to choose between scripts that lack all intimacy and the messy, unbordered, real talks he has and wants to have with Mrs. Robinson, practice-runs of intimacy that then prepare him for the more relaxed and spontaneous intimate talks he can have with her daughter Elaine. At one point when he tries to talk with her, Mrs. Robinson scathingly asks if he is going to share his "college experiences" with her. He hears this fierce rejection as a put-down, not realizing it is a jealous, bitter jibe from someone who never completed college. Elaine, herself in college and not embittered, will not attack him if he talks about his anxieties and worries: Elaine won't laugh at him, and that, as much as anything, makes her his next romantic interest.

Intimacy usually involves risk because it is a revealing of something that a person normally keeps hidden from strangers and acquaintances. It can be small details about the past but it can also be what you reveal by telling those details: chatting about such apparently unimportant details can reveal your sensibility, your own form of noticing, your spirit of living. In an earlier chapter we spoke of how intimacy grows stronger as a bond grows tighter, progressing through a series of concentric circles of trust. We grant more intimacy to a person as he changes from being a stranger to become a neighbor, and then after some caution and coffee together he becomes a friend, and then slowly over months becomes a close friend, and then after a series of awkward and then fun dates he becomes a lover, and then after two years of living together he becomes a partner to the grave. Each step in this relationship allows for the shared facing of tests in life, which if passed then tend to provoke yet more intimate revelations and bonds, each layer of growing intimacy being roughly appropriate to each shrinking circle, each step ideally requiring a greater level of reciprocal risk and so of trust, as each year he becomes a wider and deeper well of your foibles and mistakes and desires and hopes and defeats.

And this is why so much of drama is connected to intimacy: at the center of so many main characters is a cluster of desires, fears and needs alongside a strong impulse to hide it from others. Benjamin's affair is a real and increasingly-problematic secret that increasingly cuts him off from his parents. In *Aliens* Ripley never reveals to anyone her fears about her own body. In *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and our other examples, the dead shades are held so dear by the living because they are the close-held, secret memories that cannot even be revealed to intimates.

And so, while psychologists like Meanes (2000) are right to point out that in life one's trauma often closes off avenues of intimacy with others, that trauma often thrusts one into a lonely world of fear and self-isolation, a very different mechanism happens in the *dramatization* of trauma. Now its aesthetic representation in Dantean space, the space of trauma, is actually experienced as *very* intimate for the viewer or reader, essentially because it takes us straight into the most protected and often secret space of the character, a space we might never have access to even in an intimate relationship with this person. In life Ugolino would likely not tell anyone that he has eaten his own children. Francesca would not talk with a neighbor about her affair, Farinata would not speak about his suicidal impulses to a casual friend. But thanks to this form of mimesis (i.e. the dramatization of trauma), we can go inside and into this secret space of the soul, a space where no-one else in the character's life, including she herself, can go. From this perch we watch or read Madame Bovary's inner thoughts without having a risky affair, taking notes on characterological tendencies and their outcomes without needing to battle through the actual dramas of a friendship or marriage.

THE STRESS OF THE JOB OF THE SEX: GENDER AND THE PURGATORIAL HOMES OF *HOMELAND*

While some Dantean spaces are stronger than the characters they hold, this is not always true. Benjamin never escapes his alienated condition, but Jennifer forever changes Pleasantville. Some characters strive to destroy their Dantean space, while others bravely enter their Dantean space and enact a physical version of their internal struggle before they can heal and finally leave their pasts behind. This is powerfully illustrated in the first season of the television show *Homeland* (HBO, 2011). In the penultimate scenes of the two protagonists, each struggles in and with a Dantean space to break free of their flaws, choices, guilt and mistakes.

And each separately culminates their first season story-arc's trajectory and gender conflict in a dramatically powerful Dantean space. The results in both cases are arguably the most empathy-producing and affecting scenes in the series.

For Carrie this happens at the dramatic end of Episode 11 when her paradoxical efforts to construct a home composed of work comes crashing down as her living-room's large wall of 'borrowed' classified documents is ripped apart and she is fired from the CIA. To unpack the power of this scene, we should first describe the alienated space that is Carrie's home. Throughout the season we see that Carrie's house is not a home but is really more of a workspace for her. Whenever Carrie needs the comforts of home—after for example a long day staring obsessively at Brody's family in his suburban home—she flees to her sister's. By contrast to the 'homey' home of her married sister which is a conventional, child-filled, bustling house where the walls have grown covered with child drawings, where the surfaces are scuffed and marked by a history of use, where objects are placed with the slight randomness of actual home-use, in Carrie's house the glass surfaces tend to be sharply clean and freshly washed, the objects on every table and counter pristine and carefully placed as in a showroom, while the walls are similarly unmarked by scratches or stains. Once again we have Work-house space, a place with no personal history, where Oldenberg's distinction of Work and Home spaces is being combined, a violation which then mirrors a disjunction and an alienation within our protagonist.

So how does the characterological manifold fit the spatial allegiances of these home spaces? Home spaces can:

1. Reveal the past.
2. Advance the story in the present (usually through revealing someone's objectives).
3. Foreshadow the future.
4. Reveal character.
5. Reveal social bonds.
6. Entertain or engage us.

When we revisit the film *Amélie* we see how all of these elements are operating in Amélie's home. But in *Homeland* only Carrie's sister's home is imbued with this 'homeyness': which is to say it is a space with an emotionally supportive environment matched with the

physical representations of a rich past that includes social bonds. In Carrie's house, however, none of our six levels of meaning seem to be operating. No wonder she tries to fill her home up with work: it is all the excitement, the social relations and the life she has.

Carrie's need for homeyness is a need to escape the paranoia and distrust generated by her self-assumed work in field counterintelligence. Her lack of homeyness seems to originate in the psychotic break she suffered from in college, which is continually returning and which is represented at the start of every episode in the fearful maze of the show's opening credits. Carrie, we gradually learn, suffered from her big break in her first term at college in the fall of 2001, which the credits reference by news footage of the 9/11 attacks that she somehow feels she might have stopped.

The sense that 9/11 was a Dantean moment for her is deepened by the specific acting techniques of Clare Danes, the actor who plays Carrie. Danes brings a quality of being frozen in an adolescent or pre-adolescent curiosity, vulnerability, innocence and optimism, revealing by turns both an underlying hopefulness that keeps her in the fight through experiences that would embitter others, and also a repeated sudden loss of confidence and urge to cry that attracts our empathy. This quality is often present in a wide-eyed slack-jawed affect as she takes in something without defenses but also lies in her voice's frequent small sudden high-pitched breaks, so well-opposed to the low, husky, knowing sultriness of Brody's sexualized wife even as they hint at both instability and adolescence. In fact Carrie is refreshingly under-sexualized for a romantic lead: while not exactly androgynous she brings a slim, tomboyish physicality to the role that belies the normal sexualizing markers of feminine adulthood. All of this helps support the sense that Carrie is still in some sense frozen in her teens, in the trauma of her psychotic break in the fall of 2001.

These two threads—of her home's alienation and of her underlying instability and paranoia—finally come together in the incident of 'The Wall:' (Fig. 8.2), a large assemblage of stolen CIA documents now covering her living room that if only arranged properly will, she hopes, become a roadmap out of the maze she's built. Hopefully it will reveal the truth of her frantic searches, sexual liaisons and shifting paranoia about Brody, help her distinguish truth from lies, intimacy from functionality, Brody-as-lover from Brody-as-terrorist. It will let her love him or arrest him, and either way will help her return to some kind of stability and certainty and perhaps even to her full job status at the CIA. As the final big scene begins with a ring of her doorbell, Carrie runs from

the Wall to her door excited and flushed with the certainty it is Brody, coming there to be her lover and her partner, stabilizing her life and giving it clarity and meaning. Instead, in a dramatic reversal she opens the door onto her boss and his CIA employees: Brody has betrayed her.

Now she has a series of powerful revelations, taking place at many levels. The invasion of this space by antagonistic fellow members of the CIA shows her the impossibility of conflating her work with friendship, sex, love, and family. When the Wall is torn down we see Carrie realize that she is an obsessive, a prying and desperate person with no life or family. This defeat soon leads her to agree to electroshock treatments to erase her present and begin life again away from the CIA. We know of course that while this is all true, her paranoid feelings were also correct and so as we watch her punish herself in true purgatorial fashion through electroshock treatments that erase her memories, we are left with an abrasive sense of injustice and intense empathy that makes Carrie's story feel open-ended and unresolved.

A different dramatic effect, and a different form of Dantean space, is deployed to convey Brody's alienation and violation. Brody's season-long conflict comes to a head in episode 12, the season finale, when he finally enters the bunker to kill the vice-president and complete his mission. Here the writers' overall architecture becomes clear when this space becomes a Dantean cauldron of gendered schizophrenia, the final dramatic collision of Brody's old masculinist American home, his tiny torture cell in Iraq, and his feminizing Arabic home where he played the role of loving wife and mother. Deepening the incipient racism in the show, the Arabic home defines transgression through the violent crossing of homosocial boundaries. In this home the straight Brody is forced to kiss the terrorist and then become a mothering figure for the terrorist's child. Then after bonding with the child, he witnessed this child being killed by a drone authorized by the American vice-president, a trauma that made him commit to the terrorist cause and set out to destroy the vice-president, an emblem of traditional masculinity. Now in the visual and emotional summary of the season, Brody may both lose his mind and set off his hidden explosive vest here in this high-pressure bunker full of male authority figures which echoes with his middle-class home, his torture cell, and the terrorist's domestic home. Only his crying daughter's phone call and her plea that he 'just come home' can save him—he walks out from the bunker, heads home and (temporarily) puts his old world back into balance and his forced choice of allegiances temporarily at bay.

And so a parallel crisis of space reflects our paralleled protagonists. In the melancholy tragedy of our violated Homeland, this masculinized woman has no home at all while this feminized man now has three too many. These penultimate settings bring home the homes of *Homeland*: they are each a Dantean projection of a violated psyche, places where these two characters wrestle with their own shifting desires for non-anxious, non-ethnic, gendered ideals, trapped in half-imagined homes that neither can realize or understand.⁹

This analysis reveals a crucial aspect of Dantean spaces : because they echo with the traumas that originate and power the character's story, and because they often appear in the story when the character can no longer avoid or control her trauma-caused emotions, such spaces are often the site of the unresolved moral, social or gender tensions in a protagonist. This is why they are a powerful tool for dramatists and a useful forensic tool for theorists.

NOTES

1. See particularly *In the Metro* (Augé, 2002).
2. After critiques such as Maximiliano E. Korstanje's, Augé has more recently re-conceived of airports as hyperspaces, places of great consumer and social stimulation, but this older concept is still useful here to describe this form of alienated space in stories.
3. Note that the first five episodes of *Star Trek: Discovery* (CBS, 2017-) features a starship with no Home spaces or Third Spaces and has some of the dark cladding aspects of DeathStarchitecture. This different starship conveys a sense of Work-house space that helps convey the show's sense of a world locked in war. In this way the show resembles Carrie's home in *Homeland*, is a kind of *Star Trek* for the age of the War on Terror. See D'Adamo 2018 (forthcoming) for a social history of spaceships.
4. For a description of dispassionate space in sets see D'Adamo (2013). To see it playing out in contemporaneous music, see D'Adamo (2015b, 2017).
5. For more on this see D'Adamo (2017, pp. 50–51).
6. Some of this critique of whiteness can be traced back to the cultural conflicts over Funk and white and black identity. Consider for example how in her 1972 novel *The Bluest Eye* Morrison defines white environments when describing black girls who have over-assimilated to the hegemonic white culture: 'Wherever it erupts, this Funk, they wipe it away; where it crusts, they dissolve it; wherever it drips, flowers, or clings, they find it and fight it until it dies. They fight this battle all the way to the grave' (Morrison 1972, p. 68). For more on this topic see D'Adamo (2017).

7. Note that while all of these alienated spaces and bleached lines of dialogue are empty in terms of the characterological manifold, this means that they are lacking in character but not in plot. Their character-empty nature is in fact crucially-needed so that the plot, powered by Benjamin's problem and search, can feel urgent and vivid.
8. Some viewers may not relate these internal conflicts to the space and simply admire them as spectacle, even tuning in because they long to be in that world themselves. They have a dispassionate frame of reception towards the show, which means they ignore or overlook or simply cannot see its empathetic linkages. The dispassionate viewer does not link Draper's external objectives of winning every account from the many internal objectives and personal history he is striving so hard to hide in episode after episode. The Dantean viewer instead links all this spectacle of wealth to Draper's deeper reasons for his anxious striving for social status. Once again dispassion is a prioritizing of external objectives over internal ones, while a Dantean reception of Draper requires an empathetic synthesis of character; ie, a grasp of the narrative and mis-en-scene as powered by the characterological manifold. We explore these drames of reception further in Chap. 10.
9. Dedicated to Michael Silver and the Alexandria.

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