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"You See Everything"

Evoking Cinema

Faces in the Crowd

After the brutal torture and murder of his boyfriend Brandon Wright (Michael Kevin Darnall), Omar Little (Michael K. Williams) intensifies his feud with the Barksdale drug organization. As a stick-up man who robs low-level dealers, Omar has always been in conflict with drug kingpins. But when he ambushes the Barksdale gang's loyal soldiers, killing Stinkum (Brandon Price) and wounding Wee-Bey (Hassan Johnson), Avon Barksdale (Wood Harris) increases the bounty on his head. However, Stringer Bell (Idris Elba), Avon's deputy, wants to lure Omar out with the promise of a ceasefire. So they arrange a parley through Proposition Joe (Robert F. Chew). It appears that Omar takes the bait, showing up alone to discuss a truce ("The Cost," 1.10). Actually, he is wearing a wire for the Baltimore police department's special crimes unit, which is eager to eavesdrop on Barksdale's second-in-command. Given *The Wire*'s (HBO, 2002–08) general penchant for stark realism, the cinematic apparatus usually remains indiscernible. But in this sequence of their public rendezvous, it is conspicuously visible.

Omar and Stringer meet in front of the majestic Market Fountain, near the entrance of Power Plant Live, a major entertainment and dining venue in Baltimore. They size each other up, stealthily keep an eye over their shoulders, and walk around unhurriedly, talking about a potential cessation of hostilities. The camera stays fluid for most of the scene, tracking them as they walk around, then cutting to emphasize their deadpan faces, then back to tracking. It is distant enough from them that, as children play in the water fountain and people walk around with their shopping bags or coffee cups in hand, Omar and Stringer are sometimes obstructed from view. They could be just two faces in the crowd, except that they are walking around the fountain in a circle. Their conversation goes around in circles too, as neither has any intention of proposing an actual resolution. Stringer denies even knowing

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Barksdale but insists that his unidentified boss can "give [Omar his] life back." Though there has been violence on both sides, he assures, they can "call this shit even." Because Stringer says nothing incriminating, Omar ups the ante, asking for a kickback of $5,000 to $10,000 for his early retirement. Right at that moment, we cut to the interior of a van, where Detective McNulty (Dominic West) listens to this exchange in real time. He turns the dial on a monitor displaying the jagged green sound waves that transmit the two men's speech. The camera now stays inside this van, spying on Stringer and Omar as they part ways. While McNulty is expressing his frustration over not being able to capture more evidence against Stringer to Detective Greggs (Sonja John), Omar enters their van and returns the wire.

A scene that invests in long tracking shots ends with close-ups, focusing on the failure of the surveillance devices, since no new information is gleaned from this ostentatious setup. This kind of surveillant futility is typical of *The Wire*, which explores how law enforcement tangles with varied legal and illegal institutions in the city of Baltimore. The series offers a deep historical and broad political interrogation of whether it is possible to sustain a just and safe American city—and of the role played by the police in that endeavor. Again and again, the police are dazzled by the latest surveillance technologies, which prove to be inadequate for curbing crime. The dealers use outmoded pagers and payphones to make contact, which cannot be tracked as easily. After D'Angelo Barksdale (Lawrence Gilliard Jr.) is acquitted in a murder trial, for example, he praises Wee-Bey for intimidating the witnesses. Wee-Bey immediately forces him out of the car and makes him repeat out loud their rule, which forbids them from talking in the car, on the phone, in any place that isn't theirs, or to anyone who isn't one of them ("The Target," 1.1). When the phone rings one morning with nobody at the calling end, Avon orders Wee-Bey to remove all landlines from his apartment ("The Pager," 1.5). What the cops don't realize until later is that the criminals prefer low-tech means for doing business, because they can ditch or switch those means whenever necessary. As Linda Williams astutely observes, *The Wire* critiques law enforcement zeal for new types of surveillance, which "entraps the police as much as those they would entrap."[1] It is not surprising, then, that they put so much stock into the moment when Omar wears a wire as a confidential informant. To his chief, Lieutenant Cedric Daniels (Lance Reddick), McNulty makes the case against buying more drug busts and for tapping payphones. His argument is that because the police are always a step behind, they are "never where [they] need to be" ("The Wire," 1.6).

He has been recommending the use of more advanced surveillance options all along, and when Omar makes common cause with them after Brandon's murder, McNulty truly believes that they can glean something significant from the rendezvous with Stringer. But it also not surprising that when the chain of command finally signs off on the wire, they gather no new data that way. Stringer is obviously on to them. When he offers the deal to spare Omar's life, he doesn't even mention the name of his boss, calling him only "my man" and himself "just the messenger" and claiming that he "don't know nobody called Barksdale." The hitch is not with the technology itself; even with the hubbub of activity all around them, the conversation between Omar and Stringer is heard clearly by the detectives in their van. What *The Wire* critiques is the distance, both literal and figural, between those who employ surveillance technology and their subjects. Wearing a wire does not create a shortcut to understanding people's motivations and vexations. Moreover, the series rebukes the use of technology for creating a pervasive surveillance culture, particularly in the post-9/11 world.

Though narratively the two texts have nothing in common, this critique of having blind faith in surveillance technology unexpectedly connects Omar and Stringer's public encounter at the Market Fountain in *The Wire* with the extended opening sequence of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974). In that film's introductory arrangement, a wide-angle crane shot slowly zooms in on a crowd in San Francisco's Union Square. The credits roll in the lower right corner, which is mostly darkened by shadows, thus leading our eyes to the lower left corner, where it is impossible to tell whom to focus on. The camera seems to settle on a mime who follows people and dogs as they go about their day. When the zoom-in finally reaches ground level, the mime draws our attention to a man in a gray raincoat holding a coffee mug. We later learn that though he is the one being spied on here, the man is Harry Caul (Gene Hackman), a private surveillance expert who is recording a couple's personal conversation as they walk through busy Union Square. Up to this point, the scene is too strikingly stylized to be compared with the more practical tracking shot of *The Wire*. But after Harry crosses the park to a nearby inconspicuous van, from where he observes and listens to the couple, the two scenes are uncannily similar. Ann (Cindy Williams) and Mark (Frederic Forest) try to blend in with the crowd; sometimes the camera loses them behind a bush or a passerby. They are aware of the possibility of being bugged, so they look over their shoulders as they stroll along. Amid the park's cacophony and their small talk, Harry's long-range microphones pick

up their conversation about a murder. Here too the words themselves are audible, but their meaning remains illusory. There is also a strange glitch in the soundtrack, which pops up unexpectedly and makes surveillance technology sound menacing. In the immediate aftermath of Watergate, the use of such technology in a public location makes everyday citizens appear vulnerable to involuntary scrutiny.

The parallels between these scenes in *The Conversation* and *The Wire* are obvious. Beyond the visual similarities—two people walking around in a public location are being spied upon from a distance—both texts scrutinize the value of a surreptitious investigation involving state-of-the-art means. Both align the viewer's gaze with that of the investigator, only to undercut that alignment by raising doubts about surveillance itself. And both are skeptical about investigating remotely. The opening shot of Coppola's film illustrates this point more dramatically, but *The Wire* is just as critical of keeping physical distance from the subjects of the investigation. When Stringer Bell claims that he doesn't even know Barksdale, McNulty and Greggs are surprised by his cautious behavior, because they naively subscribe to the notion of technology as a regulatory miracle. Though it is easy to see these resemblances, how exactly do we describe *The Wire*'s relationship with a film like *The Conversation*? Unlike the connections we observed in the previous chapter, it is hard to say that *The Wire* is actually paying homage to Coppola's film. There is nothing overtly reverential or adulatory about this moment. And the intertextual relationship between these texts does not extend beyond this sequence. So what does it mean to suggest that the series is referring to *The Conversation*? Is the reference explicit, or is it unexpectedly evoked? In order to answer these questions, we need to rethink how referencing could work as an intertextual methodology.

On Allusions and Evocations

While writing about tech-savvy youth culture, Douglas Rushkoff pauses to consider the role of referencing. He argues that "viewers need to understand the media as a self-reflexive universe of references, any of which can be used to elucidate any other."[2] TV shows refer to cinema and television but also to comic books, advertising, and other forms of popular culture. Rushkoff calls this form of referencing "recapitulation," "where images and ideas from very disparate sources are revealed as somehow relevant to one another."[3] That is

to say, references are not limited by genre or period or any other constraints. These arbitrary connections show how media texts circulate and how referencing is a more complex strategy than remaking or remixing. Rushkoff briefly cites *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (*MST3K*) as a paradigmatic example of recapitulation. Though he does not elaborate, it would be worth looking at a specific episode of this long-running series to observe how self-reflexive references work in television. Since 1988, there have been multiple iterations of *MST3K* on various platforms. The show has moved from a local television station in Minnesota (1988–89) to Comedy Central (1989–91; 1991–96) to the Sci-Fi Channel (1997–99) to Netflix (2017–18). But the basic premise remains the same: an unwitting human being is held captive on a spacecraft by a group of wild scientists. He is forced to watch awful B movies, presumably to test how they can drive him insane. Each episode has the human being watching a movie with two sentient robots, and the three of them comment on their mandatory screening in order to keep themselves from going mad. In addition to overtly calling up Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), every episode contains varied references that are woven into the characters' commentary on the film they are compelled to watch.

In the show's twelfth season, for instance, evil scientist Kinga Forrester (Felicia Day) and her assistant Max (Patton Oswalt) force Jonah Heston (Jonah Ray) and his robots Servo (Baron Vaughn) and Crow (Hampton Yount) to watch six bad movies back-to-back. One of those movies is Mary Ann Fisher's *Lords of the Deep* (1989), a sci-fi horror film about alien stingray-like creatures attacking an underwater laboratory run by biologist Claire McDowell (Priscilla Barnes) ("Experiment 1203," 12.3). As in every episode, we see tiny silhouettes of Jonah and the bots in the bottom right of the screen. Though they are nearly invisible, their wisecracking overshadows the big screen. Here is a small selection of their assorted references: they call characters Goose (Maverick's sidekick in Tony Scott's *Top Gun* [1986]) and Minions (the supervillain's underlings in the *Despicable Me* franchise); they ironically quote well-known lines, like "Barbara, they're coming for you," from the opening sequence of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and "A man is not a piece of fruit," Willy Loman's complaint in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949); and they invoke everyone from Amelia Earhart to the Marx brothers to James Earl Jones. These references are issued without context or analysis. The titles of their sources are not included; some of them are obvious, while others may be somewhat opaque. Rushkoff

reminds us that *MST3K*'s most ardent viewers spend significant energies on tracking down and cataloging them, and this shared specialized knowledge encourages online fandom. If we take *MST3K* as a model, then televisual referencing appears to be a form of encoding that can be decoded by regular viewers and especially by the shows' superfans.

It is not surprising that this understanding of referencing appears time and again in popular practice as a way to register how TV shows borrow from cinema. David Crow, for instance, lists a wide range of American films that *Community* (NBC, 2009–14; Yahoo! Screen, 2015) refers to.[4] Crow's piece is not an argument about referencing. It merely catalogs how the sitcom transcends expectations by "mining pop culture, counter culture, and really just about any kind of culture for a gag." For instance, inspirational film professor Eustice Whitman (John Michael Higgins) exhorts his students to "seize the day," like English teacher John Keating (Robin Williams) from Peter Weir's *Dead Poets Society* (1989) ("Introduction to Film," 1.3). After everyone hypnotically transforms into members of the glee club cult, Jeff Winger (Joel McHale) pursues the only unaffected person, Britta Perry (Gillian Jacobs), invoking Dr. Matthew Bennell's (Donald Sutherland) terrifying, open-mouthed shriek at the end of Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) ("Regional Holiday Music," 3.10). Ben Chang (Ken Jeong) believes he might be a ghost, like Malcolm Crowe (Bruce Willis) in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) ("Bondage and Beta Male Sexuality," 5.7). What Crow's essay also suggests is that popular media treat references as hidden or not-so-hidden cinematic citations that can be cataloged. In that sense, televisual referencing is seen as analogous to simple allusion. As a literary device, an allusion is an implied reference. The source text of the allusion may not be directly mentioned. It depends on readers' prior knowledge of or their ability to discover that literary or mythological or biblical origin. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) is composed out of hundreds of allusions to canonical and minor texts. In describing London, for example, he alludes to Charles Baudelaire's description of Paris as an "unreal city" in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), to the fog in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), and to the hell of flowing crowds in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1472). This is how critics usually treat TV referentiality. However, they are not concerned with analyzing the effects of these allusions. That is, they would not explore how Eliot's allusions to texts separated by era and circumstance demonstrate that the cheerless urban condition he is depicting in the wake

of World War I "is neither unique nor insurmountable."[5] Instead, popular critics tend to compile lists of references to other texts, sometimes referred to as Easter eggs online, and their emphasis remains on pinning down the origins of those sources.

Many film and media scholars also pursue TV's citations of cinema, though they take seriously the interpretive possibilities opened up by such allusive references. There is pleasure, of course, in "that shock of recognition of catching the reference."[6] But the scholarship on television's referentiality moves beyond delighting in "catching the reference" to exploring its analytical implications. *Twin Peaks* is one of the most widely analyzed texts along these lines. Scholars have explored the series's allusions to classical Hollywood films, like *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944), *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950), and *Vertigo*, as well as to European art films, like *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel, 1929) and *Orphée* (Jean Cocteau, 1950). Nicola Glaubitz and Jens Schröter, for instance, show how *Twin Peaks* "succeed[s] in inducing cognitive and emotional dissonance with a surreal and macabre effect" through the "piling up of familiar motifs from family melodramas and mystery, horror, and film noir stories."[7] Though scholars like Glaubitz and Schröter go much further than popular critics in their analysis of how references are employed, their emphasis remains on "familiar motifs"—that is, on references that can be directly discerned.

This critical practice is quite common, but we need to linger more carefully over its theoretical assumptions. Jim Collins attributes this strategy to postmodern cultural production. TV shows, like other postmodern texts, are the result of bricolage. They borrow from a range of sources, so much so that referencing has become integral to postmodern television. Moreover, Collins argues, TV shows are able to elevate their status above regular television via referencing. Prestige is associated with this process, which "has become a marker of 'quality television.' "[8] Media scholars use these references to explore the text's constructedness and its relationship with other constructed texts. In fact, contemporary serial dramas are so invested in referencing that, as Robin Nelson puts it, they function less as cultural representations and more as a play of discourses. As Nelson points out, a show like *Twin Peaks* "is an intertextual weft, the tropes of which refer less to a recognizable historical world than to rhetorical figures in other television and film."[9] This playfulness opens up possibilities for interpretation, for scholars can chase down and analyze a chain of references seemingly without any definitive ending. It is easy to see why this form of referential analysis would be called

intertextual. Though John Fiske resists the idea of linking referentiality specifically with allusion, his work has demonstrated why referential analysis has been theorized as intertextual. For Fiske, "intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledges is brought to bear upon it."[10] That is why scholars who follow this model have claimed that thinking about one text's reference to another is synonymous with intertextual analysis, which enables them to explore how media texts borrow from and communicate with each other. So far, as an interpretive practice, studying intertextual references has facilitated an understanding of how and why televisual texts invoke cinematic texts. But, invoked by whom?

It is striking that, as the earlier examples show, these analyses assume that referencing is a textual strategy deployed by media producers and unearthed by critics. The critical implication of this assumption is significant. For there is a tacit understanding that cinematic references are buried consciously within the televisual texts. This raises an internal contradiction: whereas examining how texts are made out of other texts is certainly intertextual, assuming that references are built into the texts is rather restrictive. Little critical attention is paid to Barthes's proposal that "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable. . . . [T]hey are quotations without inverted commas."[11] We observed in the introduction that there is considerable disagreement about the scope and reach of intertextuality, with theorists like Kristeva and Barthes arguing for a loose and unstructured version, and those like Genette and Riffaterre arguing for codifying it into a systematic methodological paradigm. In fact, Jonathan Culler unequivocally argues against the Kristevan or Barthesian model because it represents a vast and undefined territory that includes, seemingly, everything. Culler objects to working with the "unmasterable series, lost origins, endless horizons" of intertextuality, and his solution, like Gérard Genette's, is to outline its boundaries more distinctly.[12] Intertextual referentiality usually falls in this latter camp, with scholarship centering on references that are marked in the text. Here is just one example, also from *Twin Peaks*: several scholars have analyzed how Laura Palmer's (Sheryl Lee) mysterious death parallels the disappearance of Preminger's Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney); drawing on this allusion, they have smartly traced how Lynch's TV show alludes to and rewrites classic films noirs.[13] Readings like these tend to effortlessly, even if perhaps inadvertently, return to an assessment of influence, one that intertextuality was meant to move us beyond. Irene R. Makaryk cautions against

such a narrower version of intertextual referentiality precisely because "this may involve little more than the philological tradition of influence tracing."[14] I am not as pessimistic as Makaryk, but I am troubled by the relentless pursuit of allusive references. Though this methodology generates constructive criticism, it sees borrowing among texts as a matter of conscious authorial strategy. In what follows, I want to develop a more open-ended approach to the referential relationship between television and cinema—by opening up a distinction between invocation and evocation.

In the traditional sense, invocation entails the act of actively summoning a God or deity or muse. Near the end of *Inferno*, for instance, as we enter the last circle of hell, Dante summons help: "But may those heavenly ladies aid my verse / who aided Amphion to wall-in Thebes, / that my words may tell exactly what I saw."[15] Dante speaks of how inadequate language is for describing the harsh realities of hell accurately. So he calls upon the Muses who helped Amphion, who "was a poet who moved stones with the power of his language, a version of Orpheus who placated and tamed the savage beasts within our hearts."[16] Dante is invoking specific mythological characters, and our task is to analyze how they form a chain of references in this moment of the farthest descent into hell. He is simultaneously invoking an entire tradition of invocation, as ancient authors regularly invoked the Muses at the beginning of epic histories or hymns, and Dante is signaling that he is working within that poetic tradition. Thus, invocation functions similarly to allusive referentiality, for it calls to mind sources that are direct, specific, and recognizable.

Evocation works differently. Catherine Grant describes the practice anecdotally. Upon seeing the museum sequence in Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (1954), which reminded her inexplicably of Fielder Cook's *The Hideaways* (1973), a children's film based on E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967), Grant notes "being suddenly, utterly seized by a strange feeling of bodily connection." Though the films have almost nothing in common, except that they both star Ingrid Bergman at very different points in her career, Grant is struck by their use of a specific musical technique, called modal scales, which she later discovers is commonly used "to figure uncertainty or uncanniness, as well as to signal flashbacks."[17] Grant compares her moment of discovering this incidental musical link to what Christopher Bollas calls an "unthought known," which is "the sense of being reminded of something never cognitively apprehended but existentially known."[18] Because although she intuitively perceives a

connection between the two films upon first encounter, she doesn't quite know how to analyze their connection. These images enable her to break with a chronological understanding of films, since she had watched the later film, *The Hideaways*, earlier in her life, but it is the earlier film, *Journey to Italy*, viewed later, that evokes this associative experience. In an uncanny video essay, she brings them together, but she doesn't simply point out the aural connections or explain whether one film has influenced the other. As she places the images from the two films in her video editor, she finds additional unanticipated connections, such that both films become meditations on detection via their "distilled staging of processes of decryption and sudden discovery."[19] This is the territory of evocative intertextuality. Unlike invocation, which accentuates manifest sources, evocation relies on recalling suddenly and often unexpectedly a trace of an earlier viewing. These emergent associations pop up without warning or intent, and they can be used to pursue intertextual leads that aren't being referred to explicitly. Rather than showing how cinema influences television, or how television alludes to cinema, evocative associations can lead to unanticipated connections between serial drama and cinema. The next section fleshes out the implications of such connections—by activating the cinematic echoes and resonances that appear spontaneously in *Mad Men*.

Cited often as the most cinematic of contemporary serial dramas, *Mad Men* chronicles the professional and personal lives of those working in the advertising industry in 1960s Manhattan. Much recent scholarship has delved into how the series uses cinematic references and allusions to engage critically with issues of gender, race, capitalism, and so on. Studies have focused primarily on the show's key inspirations, such as Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), Billy Wilder's *The Apartment*, and Jacques Demy's *Model Shop*. These films serve as sources, and their analyses explore how *Mad Men* adapts them. This chapter differs, as it is invested primarily in cinematic moments not explicitly being quoted. Such moments signify softly and unexpectedly, the way old memories flash before one's eyes. They are embedded deeply, though not necessarily deliberately, in the show's seven seasons. Though the series does overtly invoke the era's films, which we will look at shortly in order to establish contrast, it is the evocative moments that corroborate Umberto Eco's argument that "texts are created by texts, and all together they speak to and with one another independently of the intentions of the authors."[20] For what makes *Mad Men* cinematic isn't its citations of films but its absorption of the cinema of its period. The series engages with

American cinema to talk about and over and through its era. By thinking about evocative intertextuality, this chapter demonstrates how *Mad Men* and the movies blend, clash, and dialogue with each other and how a series that is deeply rooted in historiography participates in a backward cinematic gazing.

To commemorate the airing of *Mad Men*'s final episodes in spring 2015, the Museum of the Moving Image hosted a film series called "Required Viewing: *Mad Men*'s Movie Influences." The series featured ten canonical films that, according to show runner Matthew Weiner, served as the show's key cinematic inspirations, motivating its themes, mood, and style. From Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, Weiner notes, *Mad Men* "absorbed much of its 'ordinary man in extraordinary circumstances' narrative drive"; from Wilder's *Apartment*, it borrowed the blending of "humor and pathos"; and Claude Chabrol's *Les Bonnes Femmes* (1959) influenced its production design of having "little embellishment." As the series title suggests, these films were required viewing for the crew during the show's seven seasons. In the terms of the previous chapter, these are the canonical films that *Mad Men* pays homage to. Of course, there are numerous other films that have molded *Mad Men* too. Weiner has tried to cultivate a visual grammar and a thematic sweep aligned with a wide and eclectic range of movies from the 1950s and '60s. As cinematographer Christopher Manley recalls, Weiner would cite fairly diverse films Manley needed to watch, from Michelangelo Antonioni's *La Notte* (1961) to George Sidney's *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963), for particular episodes.[21] Cinematographer and director Phil Abraham explains that "*Mad Men* has a somewhat mannered, classic visual style that is influenced more by cinema than by TV." But he hastens to add that "movies were an influence, but [they] didn't say, 'Let's make *The Apartment*.' "[22] To put it differently, *Mad Men* does not remake canonical films, but they end up being part of its DNA. The show wrestles with a range of cinematic references, allusions, and borrowings from primarily, though not exclusively, American cinema.

Characters often refer to movies in conversations, and these references function as micro-commentaries on their lives. To celebrate Mother's Day, Don Draper (Jon Hamm) makes breakfast for Betty Draper (January Jones); while they cuddle in bed, they discuss Jean Negulesco's *The Best of Everything* (1959). Though the movie is about the romantic entanglements of working women in 1950s Manhattan, here it highlights Betty's obsession with keeping up with outward appearances ("Babylon," 1.6). Her critique of Joan Crawford

as an aging actress— and her praise for the younger, more upper-class, and glamorous Suzy Parker—underscores her inability to deal with her own aging. Pushed to reveal what makes him tick at the beginning of an affair, the enigmatic ad man Don Draper (Jon Hamm) confesses he likes the movies ("The New Girl," 2.5). He mentions in particular Antonioni's *La Notte*, a reference that helps explain why he can't openly confront his own alienation from his wife and from the bourgeois midcentury social milieu. Even the briefest references prove to be influential. Lane Pryce (Jared Harris) mentions possibly going to see Stanley Kramer's *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963), a madcap quest for stolen money that Dana Polan uses to reflect on the ways in which madness is framed and critiqued in the series ("The Good News," 4.3). The "mad" in the title, he points out, "is not 'madness' as poetic inspiration of, say, a beat sort: the madness that impels these would-be gold diggers is sheer greed and self-interest."[23]

Characters not only talk about the movies; they also go to and obsess over them. As Don's secretary-turned-copywriter-turned-confidante Peggy Olson (Elisabeth Moss) confesses when asked what she desires out of life, she "want[s] to go to the movies" ("The Strategy," 7.6). Sometimes via sweeping over-the-shoulder pans, at other times via shot-reverse-shots, we see them directly in front of the big screen, absorbed in lives seemingly grander than themselves. Though Lane cites Kramer's film, during an evening of tomcatting, he and Don actually see Noriaki Yuasa's *Gamera* (1965), where the customarily buttoned-down Briton yells drunkenly at the screen in faux Japanese, making his traditional hypermasculinity appear as laughable as the gigantic monster plodding across the miniature cityscape on the big screen. Though Peggy turns down her boyfriend Abe's (Charlie Hofheimer) offer to see Cornel Wilde's *The Naked Prey* (1965), she ends up at the movies by herself after a failed ad pitch, watching James Hill's *Born Free* (1965) instead, sharing a fellow moviegoer's weed and giving him a hand job ("Far Away Places," 5.6). It may look like she's loosening up, but her anxiety that "she's not going to make it out there on her own" is as much about Elsa, the lion cub to be released into the wild in *Born Free*, as it is about herself. The day after Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated, Don takes his son Bobby (Mason Vale Cotton) to see Franklin J. Schaffner's *Planet of the Apes* (1968), whose fears of the end of the world resonate with the audience ("The Flood," 6.5). Bobby seems especially taken by the ending's despair, and in an empathetic gesture, he asks an African American man cleaning the theater if he has seen the film. "Everybody likes to go to the movies when they're sad," the janitor offers.

This screening holds out hope for racial healing, though Don's silent exchange with the unnamed black man suggests how everything has changed and nothing at all.

Because movies are such a vital part of American life, advertising agencies use them to create consumerist desire. Many of the ads crafted by Sterling Cooper, for instance, allude directly to popular films of the time. For Patio, Pepsi's competitive response to Diet Coke, they try to recreate Ann-Margaret's performance in the title musical sequence of Sidney's *Bye Bye Birdie* ("Love among the Ruins," 3.2). This recreation—as well as the private reenactments of that recreation by Peggy and art director Sal Romano (Bryan Batt)—highlights how desire is constructed. For the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Don pitches this idea to Sheraton: over a tagline of "Hawaii: The Jumping Off Point" is an image of a discarded jacket, tie, and shoes, with footprints leading into the ocean ("The Doorway," 6.2). Don thinks he is trying to sell a state of mind, but it is impossible to miss the ad's morbid reference to Norman Maine's (James Mason) suicidal walk into the ocean in George Cukor's *A Star Is Born* (1954). For St. Joseph's aspirin, Peggy draws on Roman Polanski's psychological horror film *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), to show a crying baby being offered remedies by a satanic cult, until the mother soothes it by offering aspirin ("The Quality of Mercy," 6.12). Though the US Food and Drug Administration wouldn't caution against the use of aspirin for infants until the 1980s, the ad aligns advertising with American capitalism, which it critiques, as M. Keith Booker and Bob Batchelor note, for being "a system fueled by greed and willing to do untold harm to its customers in the quest for greater profits."[24] Significantly, all of these ads fail to excite the clients and are never aired. Is it possible that their closeness to their cinematic referents—the Patio commercial, for example, is meant to be "an exact copy, frame for frame"—might be the reason they are not as appealing? For there is something restrictive about invoking specific cinematic sources so overtly. The space for interpretation exists, of course, but it is always circumscribed by the recognizable referents invoked by the ads.

This is the case with much of the broader critical conversation about *Mad Men* and the movies too. As the examples so far illustrate, the majority of scholarship has tried to search for *Mad Men*'s cinematic roots. Even when Booker and Batchelor offer a more comprehensive analysis of the show's relationship with American culture, they maintain that "the specific films referenced in *Mad Men* are often chosen quite carefully for their thematic relevance."[25] These referenced films are carefully chosen, we can assume, by

the show runner and writers, who use them to enhance their depiction of the cultural moment. But the show's compelling relationship with cinema goes well beyond these inspirational or homage-paying moments. When Peggy introduces Don to the idea of remaking the song from *Bye Bye Birdie* for the Patio commercial, he admits he hasn't seen the film yet. This surprises Peggy because, as she tells Don, "You see everything." So, a moment later she stands behind him, projecting the scene from Sydney's film in a darkened office and filling in the gap in his screening history. A few episodes later, Don confirms this notion of complete viewing. While Sterling Cooper adjusts to the pressures of being under new management, Lane, the financial officer installed by the ad agency's British parent company, emphasizes cost-cutting and fiscal efficiency. When Don abruptly leaves a meeting exclusively focused on the extravagant usage of pens, pencils, pads, paper, and postage, Lane stops by to stress his desire for economizing ("The Fog," 3.5). Don defends what Lane simply calls "waste," at first endorsing the excessive use of supplies for "throw[ing] out bad ideas," then arguing for letting "creatives be unproductive." When those approaches don't work against Lane's hard-nosed dictum of "pennies make pounds and pounds make profit," Don asks him to "think of the men's morale," a justification of excess that, recognizing the allusion to David Lean's epic *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), Lane regards as highly dramatic and attributes to Don's penchant for the movies. Don pleads guilty, responding cheekily that he's "seen everything," paid for by the company because it has his "ticket stubs." His answer ought to not be surprising, since we have witnessed his preoccupation with cinema. But his full-throated defense of film bears further consideration, particularly because it reflects the series's wide-ranging devotion to cinema. To put it differently, even if Don hasn't actually seen everything, it appears that *Mad Men* has. That would explain why the series evokes films that are far beyond the perimeters of what Weiner et al. have confirmed as influences. The next section draws on these evocative references to explore how deeply television is immersed in cinematic history. My point of entry is the question that is at the heart of the show: who is Don Draper? Don Draper, I argue, is an empty signifier that we fill with meaning derived from various evocations. Instead of being a single, solitary character, Don evokes midcentury ideas about identity: he functions at first as a mask, then a zombiefied habit, then a kind of vanishing. It has been said again and again that *Mad Men* demonstrates how the sixties hang over and inform our present. What the next section reveals is how cinema from the '50s, '60s, and '70s continues to haunt contemporary serial dramas.

"A Place Where We Ache to Go Again"

Upon being greeted as Richard Whitman, Don looks up from his magazine but doesn't immediately respond, looking over his shoulder instead to see who else is around ("Marriage of Figaro," 1.3). Larry (Jerry Kernion), the man who has hailed Don as Dick, appears to be an old acquaintance from the Korean War. He tells Don/Dick about where he works and lives and gives him his card. Don reveals very little, making a vague, noncommittal promise to "catch up." His hesitation introduces the question about double identity that *Mad Men* grapples with, especially in the early seasons. This accidental encounter is the first time the series points directly to Don's secret past. In the pilot, as he wrestles with a pitch for Lucky Strike, Don rummages through his things, and out falls from his drawer a Purple Heart awarded to a Lt. Donald Frances Draper ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," 1.1). An antacid fizzles in his glass of water, symbolizing his interior agitation over this unplanned sighting. Later that afternoon, as he tries to rest in his office, he stares at a fly trapped in a ceiling light panel, while we hear the non-diegetic sound of bombs going off. This scene hints at something disturbing about Don's past, but we get no insight into what this involuntary recall implies beyond the lingering trauma of war; in early sixties America, there isn't anything eyebrow-raising about that. But two episodes later, during the chance encounter with Larry Kryzinski, we learn that Don Draper may not be Don Draper at all. He responds, though haltingly, to the name Richard Whitman. Larry's certainty about names and identities brings Don's tentative response into sharper focus. Larry is positive he has the right man. He points to a spot near his heart where his name would've been inscribed on his army fatigues, saying "Kryzinski L." That name in that space secures his identity—and it should Dick's as well. But when the camera returns to Don, his brows are furrowed, his mouth is clenched, and his facial lines are more visible. As he turns his head away, we see the left half of his troubled face in profile, while a partial reflection of the right half can be seen on the window as the train leaves the station—a clear indication of his dual personality. He appears unsettled, strangely unlike his usually cool, unflappable self.

The revelation of Don's secret double life evokes an instant in Ida Lupino's *The Bigamist* (1953), when Harry Graham (Edmond O'Brien) is beckoned by a neighbor. Harry is on a business trip in Los Angeles, where his wife Eve (Joan Fontaine) surprises him by flying in from San Francisco for an

impromptu anniversary celebration. After dinner, Eve suggests a stroll, but Harry is "afraid every step of the way." Los Angeles is not only for routine corporate visits; it is also where he has set up a second family and home; it is where he goes by Harrison Graham, Phyllis's (Ida Lupino) husband and little Danny's father. Harry hopes nobody will recognize him in this big city, until a young man calls out to him: "Mr. Graham, if you're going home, could you give me a lift?" Unlike Don's run-in with an old pal on the train, this is not a matter of a secret identity, in that he is indeed the addressee, Mr. Graham. But the idea that he has a "home" in Los Angeles can expose more than his infidelity to his first wife. In setting up a second home, even as Mr. Graham, Harry has built a second identity. Therefore, Harry looks startled, anxious about the unraveling of what he later calls his "insane double life."

The Bigamist is a product of a time deeply invested in issues of secrecy, suspicion, and paranoia. In the face of an intensifying Cold War, American culture became obsessed with doubt and distrust. While the anti-communist witch hunts cast a wide net to rein in anyone who could be suspected of hiding their true selves, suspicion played out on the personal level as well. As Elaine Tyler May has argued, just as containment became a political strategy for containing the spread of communism as well as the terror of the atomic bomb, domesticity became an ideological tool, and the home became a place where dangerous and destabilizing energies could be tamed. Domestic containment, as May calls it, promised "secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages in a secure country."[26] It is not surprising, then, that Harry Graham appears so alarmed when he is recognized by a neighbor while out walking with Eve. The look on his face suggests guilt, as though he had been hailed by an officer of the law or accused of being a secret communist. Lupino's film is not alone in making this connection. In Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), friends and neighbors in the small town of Santa Mira are converted into robotic, emotionless pods, hiding among regular Americans to launch a cultural revolution. In Jesse Hibbs's *Ride a Crooked Trail* (1958), an outlaw is mistaken for a US Marshal because he rides into a rough river town on the deceased Marshal's horse, with his four-point-star badge. In Alfred Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956), Manny Balestrero (Henry Fonda), a family man and string bass player at New York City's Stork Club, is accused of being a bank robber, because he is identified from a line-up by witnesses, and he misspells a word exactly as in the stick-up note. Though Manny is exonerated, doubt and distrust lead to his wife Rose's (Vera Miles) mental breakdown and the near-dissolution of his marriage. All of these

films pivot on a very specific idea of double identity, of a person hiding or being suspected of hiding their "true" inner selves. Though they hint at the possibility of someone being more than one thing at the same time, their resolutions seem to erase doubt and offer clear distinctions between right and wrong men.

At first glance, these films appear quite distant from *Mad Men*. Jim Hansen offers a terrific reading of Don Draper while arguing that the series does not rely on a distinction between exterior (fake) and interior (real) selves. Tracing Don's roots in the Wildean dandy, he demonstrates that all identities are superficial. That is why Hansen compares Don not to Manny Balestrero, but to the other wrong man in Hitchcock's oeuvre, *North by Northwest*'s Roger O. Thornhill (Cary Grant), an ad executive who is mistaken for a government agent named George Kaplan. Don invokes Thornhill explicitly, Hansen notes, because he also "project[s] the image of an urbane, masculine sophisticate, while he remains a construct of pure style, an imagined man."[27] Thornhill is an empty suit, a product of the advertising spectacle that his industry perpetuates. Even his middle initial, O., stands for nothing, indicating the lack of a stable moral or emotional core. Moreover, the person he is assumed to be is a fictional spy created by the US government—Kaplan literally does not exist. As George M. Wilson puts it, "One 'nothing,' Thornhill, is accidentally mistaken for another, Kaplan, and it is from this confusion of ciphers that all the dizzy consequences flow."[28] Coincidentally, Wilson's term "cipher" is used to describe Don as well—by an *Advertising Age* reporter (Sean Blodgett), who interviews Don after his highly successful Glo-Coat floor wax commercial ("Public Relations," 4.1). The reporter is intent on an intimate portrait of his true personality. But Don hems and haws, deflecting his question, "Who is Don Draper?" So, the portrait is rendered meaningless, as the reporter's conclusion is that the admired adman is only "a handsome cipher." Don doesn't mind, as he embraces the absence of a real self, as though he actually were the two-dimensional, faceless, floating figure of the opening credits. He espouses an almost Althusserian vision of identity. Love, he tells a client, is a construct invented to sell nylons; happiness, he notes during the Lucky Strike pitch, is an advertising creation to equate the purchase of a new car with freedom and security ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," 1.1). In cultural terms, Don insists that there is nothing real lurking underneath this exterior. His construction aligns nicely with the advent of postmodernism. Analyzing the series in relation to its contemporary artists, especially Andy Warhol and Dan Graham, Irene V. Small observes that *Mad*

Men's conception of identity functions "not in terms of penetration or revelation, but in terms of equalization, deflation, and the emptying out of value."[29] Don Draper is not really Don Draper; he is only playing that role. The motif of acting appears in relation to Roger O. Thornhill too. His abductor Phillip Vandamm (James Mason) accuses him of "playacting" and of "overplay[ing] [his] various roles rather severely." It is not surprising that Weiner himself cites *North by Northwest* as a direct influence.

Without disagreeing with these persuasive analyses, I would nuance *Mad Men*'s engagement with identities as surfaces by paying more attention to the films the series inadvertently evokes. It is easy to say that since Kaplan does not exist, Thornhill is simply playacting. But Don Draper is simultaneously Dick Whitman. Like Harry/Harrison Graham, Don Draper consists of multiple fragmented selves in place of an authentic deeper self. So there is more than one surface in play. As Richard Shusterman points out, "There is some depth to any surface, and what lies beneath the surface—the undersurface—both has a surface and *is* itself a surface of some kind."[30] Though superficial, identity can be read as multiple surfaces stacked on top of each other. There is Dick playing Don. But in moments like the one with Larry Kryzinski, he is Don playing Dick. Then there are also times when, as at the end of the pilot, Don is playing Don. At the end of a day and a half in the city, where he struggles to find a new pitch for Lucky Strikes while having a dalliance with his bohemian lover, Don Draper returns home ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," 1.1). Until this final sequence, we have no idea that he lives in the suburbs. Like other raincoat-clad men, Don gets off a train, gets into a car, and drives to a house in Ossining, New York. This is the eerie suburb of Gerd Oswald's *Crime of Passion* (1957) rather than the sunny suburb of Vincente Minnelli's *Father of the Bride* (1950). An arresting overhead interior shot shows Don entering the house quietly, just as isolated in this dark, deserted entryway as he has been in the bustling city. Then a cut displays a woman's hand reaching into the frame to turn on a lamp by her bedside. The woman, it turns out, is his wife Betty, with whom he has two kids and a seemingly picture-perfect domestic life. In retrospect, it feels like Don's entire, Thornhill-like urbane life so far has been a fake product that the show has been selling to us. But this domestic scene doesn't give us the "real" Don Draper either.

In its undermining of true versus fake selves, this moment is evocative of the long opening sequence in Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man*. Hitchcock's film opens at the Stork Club, where elegantly dressed couples dance to a lively rumba, played by a band in the corner of the room. As the night progresses,

the camera registers people leaving and time passing via a series of dissolves, and it ultimately zooms in on the band's bass fiddle player, Manny Ballestrero, who leaves the club to head home. At first, it appears two policemen are following him and are about to apprehend him, but that is a false alarm. He takes the subway, where he scans the racing page of his newspaper; stops at a coffee shop, where he seems to be an early morning regular; gets a cup of coffee and checks out the racing section again, while police sirens blare in the background; and then finally heads home. He enters the house furtively, as if he were breaking and entering. After walking down a dark hallway, he checks in on two boys sleeping in a bedroom and slips into his own bedroom, when his wife Rose, still awake due to a toothache, turns on the light. For the most part, Manny has appeared suspicious and stealthy, but his conversation with Rose suggests that he is a wholesome family man. Paula Marantz Cohen argues that the opening scene's "thwarting of narrative meaning is ultimately a form of foreshadowing for a more all-encompassing narrative of mistaken identity."[31] I would add that that mistake is never corrected. As much as the plot tries to separate the right man from the wrong one, or distinguish between the upright citizen and the crook, Manny is never fully absolved. He may not be guilty of robbing banks, but it would be wrong to assume that he is completely innocent. Inexplicably, he accepts his assumed guilt, without protesting his arrest or trial. Rose loses her sanity and ends up institutionalized; Manny is to blame for reacting passively and not fully defending himself against the social bureaucracy. Before descending into madness, Rose screams, "How do I know you're not guilty?" She can't know, because there is no truth about his identity that she can know with certainty. Manny may work late and check in on his family lovingly, but he can also be responsible for the destruction of their fragile domesticity.

Don goes further than Manny in checking in on his kids. Betty watches from the hallway as he caresses the heads of his slumbering children in the episode's penultimate shot, while Vic Damone's "On the Street Where You Live" cues the closing credits. Tim Anderson argues that this lightsome tune is "placed in opposition to the on-screen images to create the disaffection that permeated the period."[32] Anderson's argument about the absence of matching between the image and sound tracks is accurate, but this is hardly just a scenario about midcentury malaise. Don's tender conversation with Betty and his warmth toward his kids are not fake, at least not in the way that Thornhill pretending to be Kaplan is. Still, these warm familial gestures actually raise our suspicion instead of resolving it. It isn't that we are mistaken

about Don's double personality, although at this stage he isn't guilty of anything more than adultery. *Mad Men* isn't about Don being the right or wrong man. It deconstructs the narrative of double or secret identity—of a person not being who he claims to be or of a person falsely accused—that we too quickly associate with the Cold War era. Instead of dismissing it or making a mockery of it in the way *North by Northwest* does, the series investigates the façade of selfhood *as a façade*. For that purpose, in place of the old adage about a face being a window to the soul, *Mad Men* explores the face as a mask.

With that in mind, let us return to Don Draper being greeted as Dick Whitman on the train and see how it conjures up another moment of (mis) recognition—from John Frankenheimer's *Seconds* (1966). Frankenheimer's film pushes beyond McCarthy-era fears of false identities, as it rewrites the longer American story of self-reinvention. Arthur Hamilton (John Randolph) is a burned-out, middle-aged banker who undergoes an elaborate procedure at a clandestine Company to rid himself of his old life. The Company specializes in "rebirthing" people via plastic surgery and "killing" their old selves in mysterious accidents. Before he has even thought through the implications, Hamilton is transformed into Tony Wilson (Rock Hudson), an artist in Malibu. After the procedure and rehabilitation, Tony flies out to California in his new body. On the flight, an attendant asks if he wants a pillow. She is the first person to address him as Mr. Wilson without knowing his history. He tries to stay calm, but then panics and runs into the restroom, staring at his new face in horror.

Before the surrealist terror takes over, the scene is remarkably similar to the one in *Mad Men*. For Don, it is his old identity as Dick that generates panic; for Tony, it is his unsettled new identity that makes him crumble. Like Don, we see Tony in profile. It is as if he is both the new Mr. Wilson and a ghost of his former self. He is slightly shaken when called by his new name, which can be read as an allusion to Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839). Poe's eponymous protagonist recounts from his deathbed his encounters with his uncanny but tenacious doppelgänger. William Wilson insists on authentic and distinct selves, and so he tries to kill his double. But his illusion is shattered when, in attempting to stab the other Wilson, he stabs himself. Tony Wilson similarly battles with his former self, trying desperately to kill it from within. Though his signature has been renewed, he is not able to live out his new identity. Instead of embodying it, his new face hangs like an ill-fitting mask. When he scampers into the airplane restroom, disorienting canted angles depict his inability to see his "true" self in his new body. Tony expects

to become himself authentically after the transformation. He has willingly forgotten that he was just as uncomfortable as Arthur Hamilton. From the moment we first meet him in the film's opening sequence, where Hamilton walks along a railway station, boards a train, and heads home, he appears out of joint. James Wong Howe's dazzling cinematography depicts how he is already uncomfortable in his own skin. Distorted camera angles and extreme close-ups show a man whose "identity and purpose are disturbingly out of whack."[33] Hamilton's identity as a banker and family man is simply a role he has been playing—and playing it badly. That is, being Hamilton is already a mask. Becoming Tony Wilson is about donning a new mask. The film underscores this point during the transformational process, when the surgeons focus on two-dimensional drawings of faces to give him his new appearance. There is never any discussion of Arthur/Tony's psychological state or his reasons for desiring a new life. When the bandages around his face are removed to reveal the new face/mask, the Company's founder (Will Geer) calls it "a masterpiece," as if he were praising a work of art. And when they wheel Tony around to look at a mirror, he shudders to see his visage, which still bears the scars of his surgical renovation (Figure 2.1). He is unable to speak, as if he doesn't see himself being reflected in the mirror.

This moment hauntingly reappears in *Mad Men*, when Dick Whitman becomes Don Draper. Through snippets, hints, and flashbacks over the course of the first season, we learn that Don Draper is born Dick Whitman,

Figure 2.1. *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)

an illegitimate son of a prostitute and a drunk in rural Illinois. His mother dies during childbirth, and his father Archie (Joseph Culp) raises him with his wife Abigail (Brynn Horrocks), until Archie is kicked in the face by a horse and killed in front of ten-year-old Dick. Abigail and her new beau Mack (Morgan Rusler) then bring Dick up in a brothel with his half-brother Adam (Jay Paulson). During the Korean War, Dick joins the military, and, in a remote location with his commanding officer Lieutenant Donald Draper (Troy Ruptash), their foxhole gets blown up accidentally, killing Draper and injuring Whitman. During one of these flashbacks, we see a severely injured Dick Whitman hobbling over to the senior commander's unrecognizably burned body and switching dog tags ("Nixon vs. Kennedy," 1.12). The dead lieutenant no longer has a face or, by extension, an identity. It is as though, by taking his dog tags, Dick metaphorically steals Don's face and then wears it as a virtual mask. While he is in the hospital, a Purple Heart is awarded to Lieutenant Draper, and it is pinned on his chest. For the military, the person who has Donald Draper's dog tags is Donald Draper. Dick Whitman is stunned, but he does not dissuade anyone from believing that he is Don Draper, as though he is processing the idea of taking on this new identity. Wearing Don's mask appears disorienting at first. Although he has not actually undergone facial reconstruction surgery, Dick/Don has bandages and scars on his face, just like Tony Wilson. And he too stares in shock and is unable to speak. Like *Seconds*, *Mad Men* demonstrates the horror of realizing that an old identity can so easily be discarded and a new one so easily be donned. At that point, nobody suspects the reincarnated Draper, who moves on to building a new life, going from a car salesman to a furrier to a celebrated and envied advertising executive on Madison Avenue. As Figures 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate, only mirrors reveal how tentatively masks fit.

Unlike *Seconds*, however, what is truly horrifying in *Mad Men* is how Dick slides into the role of Don Draper anyway. He is aware that he is role-playing, because the series emphasizes the façade *as* façade. Each time someone calls him Dick Whitman—when he is greeted by his old friend Larry, or blackmailed by junior executive Pete Campbell (Vincent Kartheiser) about being a deserter ("Nixon vs. Kennedy," 1.12), or tracked down by the widow of Don Draper ("The Gold Violin," 2.7)—he goes into panic mode. He fits into both masks, as if he is "always prepar[ing] a face to meet the faces he will meet."[34] But neither makes him Dick Whitman or Don Draper. Because there is no real Dick Whitman or Don Draper within. Don adjusts better than Tony Wilson, who tries desperately to truly become the artist he believes he wants

Figure 2.2. *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner, 2007–15)

to be. But even Tony must realize that identity is not internal, for he returns to the Company asking for a new mask and hence yet another new self. Don continues as Don, but by revising the idea of Don along the way, as we will soon see. When Don visits Anna Draper (Melinda Page Hamilton) in San Pedro, he shows that he is aware of the veneer and desires something more ("The Mountain King," 2.12). We see him in profile, as he tells Anna that he's "been watching his life," he "keep[s] scratching at it, trying to get into it," but he can't. Don intuits that the reason he can't *get into* his life is because there isn't a more authentic inside to get into. He does not misrecognize himself as a subject with an interior (versus exterior) identity. But he is not merely a handsome cipher either. Looking at *Mad Men* through the lens of films like *The Bigamist* or *Seconds* allows us to analyze how the series redefines the notion of double or secret identities during its first four seasons, while Don tries to hold on to his constructed self.

More than that, the series undermines the grander American story of self-creation. When Pete Campbell discovers that Don might be a deserter, he turns him into company founder Bert Cooper (Robert Morse), expecting harsh rebuke of and maybe even subsequent legal action against the man who is hiding his "true" self. But Bert cannot be riled up by Pete's finding. "This country was built and run by men with worse stories," he tells the junior executive, "than whatever you've imagined here." Of course, the idea of reinventing oneself is at the heart of the American mythos, and it has

been deployed in literature and popular culture and used by politicians and poets alike. It is one of the things Alexis de Tocqueville found so remarkable about democracy in America. In contrast to European aristocratic societies rooted in and tied strongly to historical tradition, he saw America as a continent where "new families constantly issue from nothing, others constantly fall into it, and all those who stay on change face; the fabric of time is torn at every moment and the trace of generations is effaced."[35] This almost-magical issuing from nothing serves as the backbone of many quintessentially American biographies, from Benjamin Franklin to Walt Whitman to Bob Dylan. Fictional narratives have relied on this trope as well. A desire for self-reinvention is what connects James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo to Mark Twain's Huck Finn to F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby to Orson Welles's Charles Foster Kane to Ralph Ellison's invisible man to Brian de Palma's Tony Montana. Don Draper has already been compared with all of these figures.

There is one big problem, however, with aligning Don's story with this mythology: it doesn't contain the deliberate, liberatory energies of these reinventions. In each of these examples of self-fashioning, characters redefine themselves by finding their "true" selves. As Nick Carraway tells us about Jay Gatsby, the exemplary self-made American who transforms himself from a rural North Dakota farm boy to a wealthy Long Island businessman, he "sprang from a Platonic conception of himself."[36] His poor parents and humble upbringing are unacceptable to him, so, at the age of seventeen, James Gatz remakes himself as James Gatsby deliberately, believing that that is who he truly is. There is none of this idealism in Don's transformation. For unlike Gatsby, he isn't creating a new self. As Lilly J. Goren puts it, he seems to be "los[ing] himself in the facades."[37] He is dangerous not because he has a secret identity but because he seems to have no real identity beneath the many surfaces—thereby calling into question the possibility of individual or cultural self-invention. Therefore, his double identity is a danger not to national security but to national mythology. When his ad agency tries to sign up North American Aviation, the Department of Defense conducts a background check on all senior executives ("Hands and Knees," 4.10). Don isn't aware of this, as his secretary Megan Calvet (Jessica Paré) fills out the paperwork. Per standard practice in cases involving aerospace accounts, two agents grill his now-ex-wife Betty, asking questions about his past and his loyalty to the country. Don loses his nerve. As though fearing the fate of Manny Ballestrero after that character is hailed by two police officers in *The Wrong Man*, he panics when he is approached by two strangers outside his own apartment.

But this is a false alarm, as the strangers are not cops; they're only looking for directions. Nothing comes of Don's investigation either, as Pete helps end the account. This could have been a moment of genuine starting over. After Don recovers from his panic attack, he tells his girlfriend Faye Miller (Cara Buono) that he is "tired of running" from his past. But instead of returning faithfully to Dick Whitman or truly embodying Don Draper, he slips on another mask. On a trip to Los Angeles, after an extremely brief romance, he proposes to his secretary Megan ("Tomorrowland," 4.13). Everyone at the office rushes to congratulate them, but in private, they mock the stale predictability of this relationship. Joan (Christina Hendricks) lampoons the way Don returns from California "smiling like a fool, like he's the first man that married his secretary." What appears to be another transformation—he abandons the suburbs, moves into a swanky Park Avenue apartment, and goes to work with Megan everyday—is no reinvention at all. Perhaps Don himself realizes this. When he meets with Betty before they sell their suburban home, she lets on that change has not been easy on her relationship with Henry (Christopher Stanley). But instead of confronting what has been hard, she focuses on the kitchen being imperfect in her new house, to which Don replies resignedly, "So you'll move again." Moving again and reinventing oneself is not really a solution, he knows. It is at best yet another mask that reveals that there is no true self to reinvent.

He tries his hand at pretending to be the hipper mid-to-late sixties man, but Don is never fully invested in this newest transformation. For one thing, he does not look the part. He goes half-heartedly with Harry Crane (Riche Sommer) to a Rolling Stones concert, because a potential client, Heinz, would like them to make a commercial ("Tea Leaves," 5.3). Megan makes light fun of his style, since he's dressed like the man in the gray flannel suit, calling him "so square, [he's] got corners." Harry wears a turtleneck, but he doesn't fit this scene either. In fact, he cannot tell that he ends up meeting with imposters. When the real Stones arrive backstage, all the fans run toward them, whereas Don and Harry are left behind literally. Although it doesn't have the documentary's uncontrolled visual energy, this moment evokes D. A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* (1967), which viciously mocks men like Don and Harry. At the end of the scene, the two of them look baffled and uncool—a cross between the *Time* magazine reporter Horace Freeland Judson, whom Dylan cruelly derides in Pennebaker's film, and the fictional Mr. Jones from "Ballad of a Thin Man," who embodies the hapless bourgeois man confounded by the burgeoning counterculture. Don confirms

this association when he is threatened by the hire of Michael Ginsberg (Ben Feldman). Roger Sterling (John Slattery) argues that the presence of a younger Jewish copywriter "makes the agency more modern" ("Tea Leaves," 5.3). As Matthew Zoller Seitz points out, Michael is "positioned as the next-generation version of Don Draper: a slumming genius with no interest in workplace protocol."[38] Instead of embracing Michael as his own, Don tries to sabotage him. Though the creatives agree to pitch both Don's and Michael's ideas for a new drink called Sno Ball, Don leaves behind Michael's concept in a cab, thus winning the account by unfairly crushing the junior copywriter ("Dark Shadows," 5.9). Threatened by the next generation, Don exercises the power of the old establishment.

By the end of this season, Don has almost entirely returned to his old ways. Unlike his undermining of Betty's foray into modeling for Coca-Cola, he encourages Megan's career. He even shows up on set for her first commercial ("The Phantom," 5.13). But when she is being prepped for her role as "Beauty," he walks out into the darkness, leaving her, the soundstage, and the gleaming camera lights behind. The first notes of the theme song to Lewis Gilbert's *You Only Live Twice* (1967) begin playing extra-diegetically. This allusion to the Bond film creates a clever parallel between Don and the suave secret service agent, but it does more than that. As Adrian Daub and Charles Kronengold note, in *You Only Live Twice*, "People reinvent themselves with amazing ease and speed, to the point of absurdity."[39] These farcical reinventions include James Bond (Sean Connery) having a fake wedding at a Shinto shrine and transforming himself into a Japanese fisherman. Though Don's alteration is less dramatic, playing Megan's monogamous husband is just as ludicrous and short-lived, and Don soon reverts to his usual ways. In the episode's final scene, he sits by himself at a busy bar and orders an old-fashioned—until a young woman approaches him for a light, while her friend wonders if he is alone. We have seen this side of him before, though here he has lost much of the charm of earlier seasons. He looks up, doesn't answer, and we cut to the closing credits. He and we remain unclear if he will have a dalliance with this woman. It is almost as if he has returned to this place out of habit.

If *Mad Men*'s first half rethinks identity as a series of masks, then later seasons align it with a robotic sense of habit. Much has been written about how the series dwells on the social and personal behaviors of sixties America; about whether it glamorizes or critiques the era's drinking, smoking, and casual sex; and about the habit of moviegoing itself. I want to turn briefly, however, to a philosophical consideration of the concept of

habit, which goes from being seen as an intimate personal rule to mechanistic behavior, from natural to culturally enforced conduct. But these distinctions are not always clear, as one can slip into the other. Aristotle's *hexis* is often translated as habit, implying that the good life is one of mindless routine. But he actually used the word to connote virtue. When he stated that "moral excellence comes about as a result of habit," he indicated an active practice or repetition of virtuous actions rather than passive habituation.[40] Following Aristotle, Aquinas argued for aligning habit with freedom. Habits were seen as guiding principles that enabled people to freely choose virtue or vice. Starting in the Renaissance, however, habit underwent an alteration, bringing it closer to our contemporary meaning of mechanistic or binding regulation. Montaigne was among the earliest philosophers to raise doubts about habit, calling it "a violent and treacherous schoolmistress" who "establishes in us, little by little, stealthily, the foothold of her authority."[41] But he did not try to tear down habit entirely, as he also loathed novelty for its own sake. For Montaigne, habits, which he equated with customs, made us who we are. In the Enlightenment era too, habit was mostly praised for encouraging virtuosity. Returning to Aristotle's conception of habit, Joseph Butler called habit a source of moral virtue. But starting in the late eighteenth century, habit came to be disassociated with virtue. It should not be surprising that Kant broke with tradition, arguing unequivocally that "as a rule, all habits are objectionable." Habit hinges on necessity rather than freedom of mind. Habituation makes us less than human, Kant argued, as it "risks [people] falling into the same class as cattle."[42] Nietzsche too railed against the tyranny of habit, although he distinguished between brief and enduring habits. Brief habits are personal dispositions, which he allowed, whereas enduring habits chain people to the same associations or institutions, hampering any sense of choice. More recently, Foucault has argued that the soldier exemplifies this idea of enduring habits. The soldier's body becomes regularized. Repetitive training turns him into a mechanistic being; "a calculated constraint runs through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit."[43] For Foucault, political order is maintained through the construction of such habituated docile bodies. But even philosophers who do not define habit in starkly binaristic terms have trouble aligning it with free choice. Deleuze offers an intriguing way out of structuralist thinking about habit's role in identity formation, when he claims, "We are habits, nothing but habits—the habit of saying

'I.' "[44] For Deleuze, there is no pre-existing free self who is then mechanized by the force of habit. If anything, we are constructed out of our habituating acts.

It is this notion of identity as habit that *Mad Men*'s later seasons tackle in order to engage with the disintegration of American selfhood. Don ends up in professional and personal situations that he has already encountered earlier in the series, as if he is repeating past actions out of habit. When his ad agency is assigned to come up with the perfect idea for Chevrolet, Don asks the creative team to stay over the weekend. Jim Cutler (Harry Hamlin), one of the firm's partners, brings in a private doctor to administer "a complex vitamin superdose," or a shot of methamphetamine, in order to given them "24 to 72 hours of uninterrupted creative focus, energy, and confidence." After Don gets this shot, he claims to have a most exceptional proposal. He urges Ken Cosgrove (Aaron Staton), who is the main contact with Chevy, to get him in the room "so he can look them in the eye." His confidence is reminiscent of the early seasons' pitches for Kodak ("The Wheel," 1.13) or Hilton ("Wee Small Hours," 3.8). But it turns out that he is only rehearsing those old lines. Don frantically digs through the archives for an earlier soup ad and lands on an old oatmeal ad that shows a mother looking at her son affectionately; using it for inspiration, he types up what sounds like an extraordinary pitch about "what holds people together," a pitch that he claims is "way bigger than a car, it's everything." But when Peggy wonders if he can flesh this idea out into an ad, it becomes clear that he does not in fact "have any idea what the idea is" ("The Crash," 6.8). He is playing the role of advertising genius. When Ted Chaough (Kevin Rahm) returns on Monday, he realizes that no ideas were generated over that weekend. The creatives were so unproductive and wasteful that even Chevy is misspelled. In the early seasons, *Mad Men* assigns Don the task of navigating multiple constructed identities. By this point, however, he is drawing on an old script, claiming that "the timbre of [his] voice is as important as the content." But he is unable to deliver any content at all, almost admitting as much when he tells Ted that he will simply be going through the motions as creative director from here on.

Within its own universe, relying on intratextual memory, this episode brings to mind the zany energy, ironic twists, and fast pacing of "Shut the Door. Take a Seat" (3.13). Back then, in order to avoid a takeover by advertising giant McCann Erikson, the key players at Sterling Cooper devise a scheme to fire everyone, steal resources from the old firm, and start a new one; over a wild weekend of backdoor negotiations, they find a way to

stealthily establish Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, which is initially run out of a hotel room. "The Crash" may recreate that old dynamism visually—it even ends with Don slamming his office door shut—but no new agency or even new idea comes out of it. Rather, at this point, *Mad Men* is absorbing the pessimism of the Vietnam era. The creatives' wacky antics could evoke Bob Rafelson's *Head* (1968), which follows the trippy adventures of the Monkees through Hollywood backlots. Similarly, instead of leading a renaissance, Don could be in a Robert Altman film, like *California Split* (1974), fluttering in and out of focus but, in the end, not really making sense.

This kind of mechanistic behavior occurs in Don's personal life as well. He drinks himself into stupors again and again, and he becomes more and more reckless about his extramarital relationships. His affair with his downstairs neighbor, Sylvia Rosen (Linda Cardellini), resembles a robotic version of his earlier dalliances with married women, especially his involvement with Bobbie Barrett (Melinda McGraw). As the wife and manager of obnoxious comic Jimmy Barrett (Patrick Fischler), Bobbie knows how to navigate the business world with feminine charm. Don finds her attractive because she is sexually assertive, and she flouts the rules of midcentury propriety. But during a rendezvous in a hotel room, Bobbie upsets him by asking for "the full Don Draper treatment," revealing that she has heard from other women about his sexual prowess. Though she asks him to enjoy his "reputation," his disposition changes, and he leaves her tied to the bedpost ("Maidenform," 2.6). During a similar tryst with Sylvia in a hotel room, Don forbids her to talk about her husband, Dr. Arnold Rosen (Brian Markinson). When she doesn't stop, he forces her to stay in that room for two days, while he leaves and returns as he pleases. Sylvia plays along at first, per Don's demand, trying to "exist in the room for [his] pleasure." Sitting utterly still in a chair, he asks her to get on her hands and knees and bring his shoes to him. Sylvia balks. Though she follows his directions, she later breaks off their affair ("Man with a Plan," 6.7). This ploy has worked before to make him more alluring, but now it appears bluntly cruel.

Not only that, but his affair with Sylvia and all subsequent sexual relationships are haunted by his fever dream, in which he kills an ex-lover. When Don and Megan are still relative newlyweds, they run into his old flame, Andrea Rhodes (Mädchen Amick), on an elevator at work. Andrea flirts with Don, unsettling Megan, and she later sneaks into his apartment while he is very sick. Though he asks her to leave, she reappears, they make love, and she insists that this cycle will repeat itself because she is "a

mistake [he] love[s] making." That is to say, she sees him for what he has become: a creature of habit. This infuriates Don, who gets on top of her and strangles her on the floor of his bedroom; horrified by his actions, he quickly kicks and shoves her body under his bed. He then gets under the covers and leans over to see her; an overhead shot shows her hand and her foot with a red shoe sticking out from under his bed ("Mystery Date," 5.4). Paolo Diego Bubbio offers an incisive reading of this scene, arguing that this is Don's hallucinatory attempt to abandon what René Girard calls mimetic desire. Bubbio claims, via Girard, that Don desires to "become an authentic self," which is what leads him to keep assuming new identities—or, as we have seen, donning new masks. But when he realizes that these will not lead him to self-sufficiency, he tries to undergo what Girard might call an instance of redemption. For Bubbio, the nightmare with Andrea could have been "Don's chance to start the process of liberation from the mimeticism in which he is trapped: however, he decides to go back to his lost, shattered self."[45] I would push this contention further by arguing that Don's sense of self completely shatters here, and he becomes a kind of automaton. The scenario in his nightmare is almost entirely recreated in a flashback to his childhood, when young Dick (Brandon Killham) lived in his uncle Mack's brothel. Dick is also very sick, and Aimée Swenson (Megan Ferguson), a blonde prostitute, pulls him into her room. She assures him that it isn't consumption and nurses him back to health. Lying on her bed coughing, she seduces him, while he never gives consent. A cut to his face reveals a similar blend of pleasure and wrath as in the fever dream ("The Crash," 6.8). Though young Dick does not retaliate, after his nightmare, the threat of violence lurks uncannily beneath every sexual encounter. When Sylvia refuses to bring Don's shoes to him, she is sitting on the edge of the bed, like Andrea, and one has to wonder whether he will fly off the handle and kill her in real life. When he has a fling with Tricia (Kirstin Ford), a flight attendant, they walk into his bedroom inebriated, and she spills red wine on the exact spot on the carpet where Don had hallucinated Andrea's murder ("Severance," 7.8). Considering the cultural context of the late sixties, this explicit linking between sex and violence makes sense. Most immediately, Andrea's murder might be seen as a re-imagination of Richard Speck's torture and rape of defenseless nursing students. More broadly, it alludes to anti-rape and anti-violence campaigns prompted by second wave feminism.

Curiously, this moment that haunts all of Don's later relationships also evokes Doris Wishman's *Bad Girls Go to Hell* (1965). Wishman's film is typically classified as a roughie within sexploitation cinema. After a series of US Supreme Court rulings that decoupled the representation of sex from obscenity, erotic films called nudie cuties were produced for grindhouse or independent adult theaters. Roughies followed, featuring plots dealing with women's kidnapping and rape. They moved beyond the voyeuristic satisfaction of male erotic desire and foregrounded sexualized violence against women. In the hands Wishman, one of the only women in the porn industry at the time, roughies also contended with women's sexual desire and autonomy as well as with patriarchal abuse. In *Bad Girls*, Ellen Green/Meg Kelton (Gigi Darlene) is a dissatisfied housewife who is raped by her janitor (Harold Key). She kills him after he attacks her again and flees to New York City, where she is assaulted and exploited again and again. Near the end, it all appears to have been a bad dream, but after she awakes, she is attacked by the janitor again, thereby leading to a mindless repetition of the abusive cycle. "In Wishman's rendering," Elena Gorfinkel deftly argues, "all places, suburban and urban, contain the same threats to female subjectivity and desire"[46]—for *Bad Girls* relies on the structure of a roughie but also critiques it from within. This critique is evident in the vertiginous canted and overhead camera angles that unmake the active male gaze, and this is precisely what is replicated in *Mad Men* when Don dreams of killing Andrea. When the janitor assaults Ellen for the second time, he corners her in a bedroom, tackles her to the floor, and attacks her. Multiple short shots show the frenzied assault, whereas cutaways emphasize smaller details, like Ellen's shoe that's fallen off her foot and her long, polished fingernails. When the janitor gets on top of her and yanks her bra off, his hands reach her neck, as if he were strangling her (Figure 2.3). Don's asphyxiation of Andrea is eerily similar to this scene, down to the details of her manicured fingernails and stiletto shoes. Like Wishman's film, *Mad Men* foregrounds sexualized violence while also critiquing it. Though Don does not rape Andrea, this post-coital moment underscores how heterosexual encounters are laced with violence (Figure 2.4). Just as Ellen's attacks occur in a dream sequence but continue when she awakes, Don's nightmare looms over his sexual relationships, underscoring the shift in his persona from self-reinvention, however superficial, to mechanization.

Moreover, the sexualized violence in Wishman's film, which *Mad Men* evokes, calls up the sadistic brutality of horror films, the other type of

Figure 2.3. *Bad Girls Go to Hell* (Doris Wishman, 1965)

Figure 2.4. *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner, 2007–15)

exploitation cinema popular in this decade. The janitor in *Bad Girls* is represented as a lumbering brute who attacks Ellen almost mindlessly every time he lays eyes on her. With his sluggish stride and his lustful looks, he resembles the emotionless zombie that populates horror films. Following Linda Williams's theorization of "body genres," which make a spectacle of the body and cause a convulsive reaction in the audience, many scholars have paired pornography and horror and examined how they both emerge out of the demise of the American studio era, the loosening of censorship, and the introduction of the ratings system.[47] Elena Gorfinkel hints at this connection between sexploitation and horror when she calls Ellen's cycle of rape "a modern horror."[48] Indeed, the attacks on Ellen are decidedly similar to those in George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, where the dead come back to life to attack the living. Though they go after men and women, the strikes against the female characters, especially young Barbra (Judith O'Dea), are unambiguously sexualized. At the very beginning of the film, Barbra visits her father's grave with her brother Johnny (Russell Streiner) in rural Pennsylvania. A strange man (Bill Hinzman) approaches them from a distance. Johnny mocks Barbra's fear of this man as infantile, teasing that "they're coming to get [her]." But her fears are justified, as the bumbling man is a flesh-eating zombie who assaults her. As he reaches for her throat and tries to pin her down, her panicked cries for help are almost identical to Ellen's. Though Johnny rescues her and is killed instead, when she flees to a nearby abandoned farmhouse, he finds her there again, underscoring Gorfinkel's argument about the cyclical nature of these assaults. He shows up a third time among a horde of zombies who attack the barricaded farmhouse. Whereas Ben (Duane Jones), a fellow survivor, is able to fight them off, Barbra is dragged away by the ghouls. One of them is her own brother; not coincidentally, they are all men. Quick cuts show their hands grabbing her all over—a rendition of gang rape. Her body disappears among their bodies, literally devoured by them. Romero's zombies are often seen as representing an older generation cannibalizing the young. As Robin Wood puts it, their cannibalism represents "the specific notion of present and future (the younger generation) being devoured by the past."[49] Leslie H. Abramson elaborates on this argument by drawing attention to the fact that they "are primarily middle-aged, suit-wearing males, a collective of classically referent automaton-like figures intent on cannibalizing the free-thinking living."[50] Against the backdrop of protests against Vietnam and civil rights clashes, the flesh-eating creatures symbolize the old establishment lashing out against

the youthful counterculture. But this allegorical reading must be extended in gendered terms, because the zombies' threat is also sexualized. Each attack on Barbra is visually akin to rape, and the zombies are comparable to the unhinged men of sexploitation cinema.

This is where the disintegration of Don Draper comes in. If his hallucination about Andrea is rooted in sexualized violence, and if such violence parallels the nightmarish aggression in zombie cinema, then a case can be made for seeing Don as a virtual zombie. After all, in the later seasons, he seems less than fully human. After Sylvia breaks up with him, he goes back to Megan, who excitedly though naively describes the possibility of their returning to Honolulu for a vacation. He smiles and stares at her, but halfway through, her voice vanishes from the soundtrack. When we cut back to Don's face, his smile is frozen and his gaze is dull, as if he isn't actually present there. His blankness of expression isn't hiding anything; it is actually void of feeling ("Man with a Plan," 6.8). When he returns from the drug-fueled long weekend at the office, Don learns that his apartment was burglarized by someone calling herself Grandma Ida (Davenia McFadden), while his children were home alone. His daughter Sally (Kiernan Shipka) is traumatized by the incident, and Betty is livid. Instead of being apologetic or angry, his face is vacant of genuine feeling. He goes blank literally and passes out ("The Crash," 6.8). He even comes to look like the middle-aged, suit-wearing, emotionless male that Abramson refers to. In the moment where he passes out and again later when Sally catches him having sex with Sylvia ("Favors," 6.11), his disheveled look—his shirt untucked, tie untied, hair uncoiffed—and ashen face even remind us of a zombie walking haltingly and aimlessly. Of course, his is not an exact parallel with the undead ghouls of the time, who represent American nihilism during the Vietnam era. Robin Wood has argued that "the metaphor of America-as-graveyard is central to Romero's work."[51] The rural Pennsylvania landscape is plagued by the recently dead who now walk around without purpose. The thing that defines them is their repetitive pursuit of human flesh. It is this kind of identity that Slavoj Žižek invokes when he calls the zombie the figure "of pure habit, of habit at its most elementary."[52] This is what Don becomes, once he can no longer take the role of Don Draper seriously. Unable to embody his masks anymore, he becomes a virtual zombie at the end, living as if he were already dead.

Don Draper has been haunted by ghosts all along, though now he himself embodies the dead come back to life. His father Archie returns from the dead to mock Don when he is struggling with signing a contract at work ("Seven

Twenty Three," 3.7). He imagines seeing his oldest confidante Anna Draper (Melinda Page Hamilton) as a ghost while he is in a hallucinatory state ("The Suitcase," 4.7). He has visions of his half-brother Adam while having his tooth extracted as a result of being preoccupied with Lane's suicide ("The Phantom," 5.13). But all of these are actual apparitions, since these people are really dead. For Katherine Kinney, they "conjure an unstable relationship between past and present, a truth central to Don Draper's character, which is founded on his leaving his former identity as Dick Whitman behind."[53] Just as Don can't leave his own past self behind, he can't leave these dead people in peace either. What is different about the last two seasons, however, is that people almost die, then rise from the dead like zombies. Season six begins with one such moment. After the opening credits, the soundtrack registers a woman's scream, while the first shot is from the hazy point of view of a dying man. We cut to Don and Megan on a work vacation in Hawaii, but when they return to their New York City apartment, they are greeted by their doorman Jonesy (Ray Abruzzo), who collapses upon being asked how he is feeling. Cut back to the opening shot, and it becomes clear that it was Jonesy who had a massive heart attack before they left and was resuscitated by Dr. Arnold Rosen, the Drapers' downstairs neighbor ("The Doorway," 6.1–2). While the doctor works on saving Jonesy's life, Don looks petrified, as if he were seeing a ghost. When the scene returns to the present, Jonesy looks ashen and rather ghoulish. Don's ceaseless gaze amplifies this effect, as though he were baffled by Jonesy's return from the dead.

Don himself returns from the dead a few months later, when he, Roger, and Harry attend a Hollywood party. After smoking hashish, Don hallucinates seeing a pregnant Megan leading him away from kissing another woman. She draws attention to her pregnant belly, calling it "a second chance," but Don seems noncommittal. He runs into Private Dinkins (Patrick Mapel), the young soldier on R&R in Hawaii, when we hear Roger yelling about a man going overboard. Two shots showing Don staring feebly at a floating body in the pool outside follow, and then we cut to Roger reviving Don, presumably after diving in to save his life ("A Tale of Two Cities," 6.10). Moments earlier, Private Dinkins claims that he is dead and implies that Don is too. "You should see what you look like," Dinkins insists, and Don does, in the very next shot—staring at his own body floating face down in the pool in horror, while the partygoers continue their revelries in the background. In the past, swimming has proved soothing, even regenerative. At a pool party in Palm Springs, he smoothly associates with the nomadic Europeans to whom Joy

(Laura Ramsey) introduces him; though he passes out from heat exhaustion initially, he is able to right himself, even feel rejuvenated ("The Jet Set," 2.11). But here he looks more like a phantom than a person. This scene obviously invokes multiple cultural and cinematic touchstones. Don's floating body is reminiscent of Joe Gillis's body (William Holden) floating in the pool after being shot by the long-forgotten silent film star Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. Though visually similar, Joe speaks from beyond the grave, but there is no doubt that he is dead, whereas Don is virtually floating between the dead and the living. Don is no closer to Gillis than he is to Brian Jones, who drowned in his pool in 1969, less than a month after being kicked out of the Rolling Stones. He is more in the vein of Ned Merrill (Burt Lancaster), to whom Roger alludes when he later chastises Don for being "a terrible swimmer." Ned's disastrous expedition across his neighbors' swimming pools in Frank Perry's *The Swimmer* (1968) ends with his disintegration, for after he swims home, he realizes that it is deserted. Like Ned, Don now comes to realize that there will be no regeneration through water. Instead of another reinvention, this scene anticipates a form of extinction.

That is why it is significant to explore how this scene of Don's drowning also evokes James Ivory's overlooked *Savages* (1972). Ivory's film is a kind of inversion of Luis Buñuel's surrealist *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), where wealthy guests at a dinner party become savages, allegorizing the fall of a supposedly glorious civilization. By contrast, *Savages* begins with a tribe of "mud people" who follow a rolling croquet ball through their forest until they arrive at an affluent but abandoned mansion. They quickly reinvent themselves into "civilized" beings for the night, only to disappear into the woods the following morning. Intriguingly, a swimming pool is at the center of their transformation, and it foretells their downfall. After trailing the croquet ball, the mud people find an empty pool that inexplicably fills up. They use it to wash off their mud and, shortly thereafter, transmogrify into sophisticated party guests. Though they take their literal masks off, they wrap themselves in the fineries of the Jazz Age. When they emerge from the mansion for a Dionysian poolside party, it looks like a picture straight out of *The Great Gatsby*, complete with flowing champagne and wild dancing—as well as a dead body in the pool. But Gatsby's death may be read as a kind of redemption; he sheds his materialist trappings before entering the pool, and his death marks a clear and singular ending. The dead man in the pool, James/the Limping Man (Sam Waterston), finds no such resolution. Unlike

Gatsby's murder, it is not even clear if he jumps in or is pushed. As with the first two shots of Don's drowning, the socialites continue their carousing, as James's dead body lingers. In fact, as Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show, the two bodies gliding on the water are eerily similar, with their dinner suits clinging to their bodies and their arms spread open. James's body too floats in the pool, unnerving the inane conversations of purportedly civilized people. Their insouciance could be symbolic of their resignation at the impending collapse of their entire civilization. "Even if we intervene," Sir Harry (Neil Fitzgerald) condescendingly tells Lady Cora (Margaret Brewster), "the regime will collapse within the week." But this end will not be so straightforward. For James falls in more than once, each time a similar shot of his body hurtling into the pool. It is as if he comes back to life even after he has drowned, even though he is destined to drown again soon enough. When the mud people first arrive at the mansion, James/the Limping Man stares into the pool. Given that he cannot swim, it is as if he is seeing his body already in there. When Don stands at the edge of the pool, he literally stares at his own dead body in much the same way. Though Roger rescues him, he too is ill-fated. The doubling of Don in that moment is not about separating the dead Don from the one who is actually alive—just as the early seasons did not distinguish Don from Dick.

Figure 2.5. *Savages* (James Ivory, 1972)

Figure 2.6. *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner, 2007–15)

Seen through the lens of Ivory's *Savages*, we can interpret this moment as a doubling down on Don's impending doom.

The final season fleshes out this notion of looming catastrophe by emphasizing Don's ghostliness as a disappearing act. Who is Don Draper by the end? He looks to be a figure in the process of vanishing. In a shot reminiscent of the opening of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972), Freddy Rumsen (Joel Murray) makes a pitch for Accutron to Peggy. He sells it perfectly. Peggy calls it a "home run," even "an end run," which is technically true since Freddy is only serving as a face for Don's proposal. Don is on an indefinite leave after a disastrous pitch for Hershey and an escalating drinking problem, and this first scene of the season underscores his visual absence ("Time Zones," 7.1). Freddy's pitch is good, but it sounds eerie, because we hear Don's voice in it but don't see him. In fact, in that final season opener, Don doesn't show up for several minutes, as though the series isn't sure about his return at all, with or without any kind of reinvention. When the senior partners finally let him come back to work on the Burger Chef account, they put him in Lane's old office, indicating that they are anticipating that Don's fate will be similar to Lane's ("The Monolith," 7.4). He attaches himself to a Mets pennant, which might be an eccentric prop at first, but it becomes a sort of memento mori, as Don is already drinking again, and his next ruin seems inevitable. This notion is also intimated when Don walks off the elevator and into completely

deserted outer offices. There is no sound, except a consistent banging of an off-the-hook phone receiver against a desk, making this space seem post-apocalyptic. It turns out that everyone is gathered upstairs to hear about the installation of a supercomputer in the creative lounge. Given this particular episode's investment in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), it reminds us of the moment when Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea), the only surviving astronaut, walks into a Baroque-style bedroom, becomes older versions of himself, and then is absorbed by a monolith. The wide shot of the office with no other humans in *Mad Men* similarly accentuates spatial emptiness and foreshadows Don's obsolescence.

Before that comes to pass, however, Don disappears. After Sterling Cooper and Partners are absorbed by the advertising giant McCann Erickson, Don seems lost, often literally in the labyrinthine offices. During a meeting for Miller Beer, where Bill Phillips (Eric Nenninger) drones on about this mythic American male to whom they can sell light beer, and near-identical men in near-identical suits sit around a table with pens at the ready to take notes, Don looks out the window and observes an airplane flying over the Empire State Building. He stands up and leaves the meeting. Not everybody even notices, but a cut to Ted's face, looking both amused and impressed, suggests that he may never return ("Lost Horizon," 7.12). By the end of the episode, Don has taken to the open road. Alluding to the many road films of that era, he heads west, though not toward any place in particular. He picks up a hitchhiker and drives aimlessly to St. Paul. In the final wide shot, as David Bowie's "Space Oddity" kicks off on the soundtrack, Don's car drives toward the horizon and nearly disappears. The farther he goes, the more he sheds. By the end of the penultimate episode, after being falsely accused of stealing money by vets in the small town of Alva, Oklahoma, he tosses his car keys to the local hustler, Andy (Carter Jenkins) ("The Milk and Honey Route," 7.13). The shot of Don pulling over his Cadillac by the side of a two-lane road in the middle of nowhere echoes a scene in Daryl Duke's *Payday* (1972), where a successful country-western star, Maury (Rip Torn), travels through the rural South. Maury kicks his girlfriend Mayleen (Ahna Capri) out of his Cadillac after a trivial argument, tracks back to throw her a wad of cash, and then returns to take the money back because she "didn't earn it," whereas Don urges Andy to not "waste this." Giving up his car, and being left with his only possessions wrapped in a Sears bag, Don sits on a bus-stop bench, with a bemused yet peaceful look on his face. A medium shot cuts to a wide shot, which fades into the final credits. "That closing image of Don at the bus stop," Seitz notes,

"divested now of his job, his apartment, his wife, his suit, and even his car—feels pretty close to a perfect parting glimpse for the show's main character."[54] After all, he has told Andy that the "pink slip's in the glove box." That could imply that he is asking Andy to take over his role. In other words, this could very well have been the dissolution of—a literal and metaphorical fading out of—Don Draper.

Of course, Don does not fully disappear but remains ever in the process of vanishing. This notion is captured perfectly in the final episode's opening sequence, which begins with Don racing across a salt pan in a Chevy Chevelle SS at 130 mph. Neither the timeline nor the location is clear in the first three shots—the first and third show his car hurtling across the salt pan, from slightly incongruous angles, and the second offers a close-up of his sweaty face in a racing helmet and goggles. The following sequence explains that he has hitched his way farther west, to the Bonneville Salt Flats, and is helping some hot rodders break the land-speed record at an upcoming competition in El Mirage ("Person to Person," 7.14). But the opening shots remain suspended in ambiguity, carried along by their sheer speed. Don seems unmoored more than ever before. It reminds us of what Don tells his brother Adam early on: that his life "only goes in one direction: forward" ("5G," 1.5). If the scene had not cut to the interior of a garage, where he pulls in to warn the thrill-seeking mechanics about "a helluva shaker on 130," Don could easily keep driving into the horizon until he fades away. These dizzying shots, and the threat they represent, evoke Richard C. Sarafian's *Vanishing Point* (1971), a countercultural tale of Kowalski (Barry Newman), a Vietnam War veteran and former race car driver, who takes on the impossible task of delivering a Dodge Challenger from Denver to San Francisco in under twenty-four hours. During his amphetamine-fueled drive west, he is pursued by cops for speeding, but he eludes them, until they launch a much-publicized police chase. Though he has a destination, Kowalski isn't actually going any place in particular—for the film's frame narrative shows us the bulldozers being set up at the beginning that will cause his fatal crash at the end. Kowalski moves forward, but he is actually speeding toward the darkening horizon. In several wide shots, the white car is barely visible; though it occupies the center of the frame, it fades into its surroundings (Figure 2.7). In a chapter coincidentally titled "Vanishing Point" in *America*, Jean Baudrillard argues that speed "cancels out the ground and territorial reference-points, since it runs ahead of time to annul time itself, since it moves more quickly than its own cause and obliterates that cause by outstripping it."[55] Speed, in other words,

Figure 2.7. *Vanishing Point* (Richard Sarafian, 1971)

"initiates us into emptiness."[56] It is this emptiness that Kowalski confronts head-on. The title itself, David Pascoe argues, implies "the instant at which some kind of consciousness or existence evaporates, but it also carries with it perspectival overtones, and indicates the point at the centre [*sic*] of the frame towards which everything converges before disappearing."[57] If we place Don's drive in conversation with Kowalski's, we can see how, as his car accelerates, the ground beneath comes loose. And in *Mad Men* too, the future becomes a chimera in the wilderness (Figure 2.8). But once again, Don does not fully evaporate.

How, then, do we read Don's appearance at an Esalen-style spiritual retreat on the California coast to find himself? Is this yet another turn? Another reinvention, as promised by the counselor, who argues for a "new day, new ideas, a new you"? In the course of a single finale, Don discovers and accepts his moral shortcomings and ostensibly finds inner peace. On the phone with Sally and then Betty, he realizes that he is not needed or wanted in his children's lives, even after their mother dies from lung cancer. With Peggy, he shows regret for ending up without honor, or legacy, or a true sense of self. He is remorseful, he tells Peggy, because he "broke all [his] vows" and "scandalized [his] child"—but most of all

Figure 2.8. *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner, 2007–15)

because he "took another man's name and made nothing of it" ("Person to Person," 7.14). He weeps and sounds suicidal but recovers after a group therapy session, where he empathizes deeply with Leonard (Evan Arnold), who speaks up about feeling alienated and invisible. Don walks across the room, hugs him, and breaks down, a moment that appears incongruous with, or at least abrupt in relation to, what has preceded it. "This is a man who," Seitz argues, "throughout the show's run, has treated the expression of emotion as a sign of weakness. . . . And here he is, crying with a stranger."[58] For Seitz, it could be Dick who embraces Leonard, or it could be Don who embraces himself or his own invisible self. But that would be an uncharacteristically cheesy finale. On the other hand, before the series smash cuts to a Coca-Cola commercial, we zoom in on Don's face. He sits in the lotus position, chants "om," and breaks into a smile. The primordial sound of "om" is supposed to signify the contemplation and comprehension of ultimate reality. But it also reminds us of Freddy's Accutron pitch, where he paints this picture of "a businessman, staring at his watch as muffled conversation swirls around him. Now we just hear the electronic hum, ummmmmmm" ("Time Zones," 7.1). Given the distinct aural connection, Don's meditative discovery may be no more than a mechanistic hum, ready to plunge him back into advertising for Coca-Cola and more, and not a true embrace of his own invisible self at all.

I would argue that the entire sequence at the meditation retreat, including Don's final "om," is too brusquely decisive and therefore falls in line with Todd Berliner's argument about seventies cinema, which "place[s] an uncommon emphasis on irresolution, particularly at the moment of climax or in epilogues, when more conventional Hollywood movies busy themselves tying up loose ends."[59] For Berliner, Hollywood films of the seventies, whether conventional or radical, repeatedly undermine the harmony of classical narrativity. In an incredible reading of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, he argues that the film exemplifies the imposition of a false resolution. Though Regan (Linda Blair), the young girl possessed by a demon, is exorcised, this is hardly a resolution. Father Merrin (Max von Sydow) dies of a heart attack, and Father Karras (Jason Miller) commits suicide, and both deaths are foregrounded in the film's final shots. Moreover, the exorcism's terror is not resolved. Rather, Berliner points out that "the general horror of the film's final moments denote a successful exorcism, then the film has prompted spectators to understand concepts that do not, on their face, make sense, incongruous concepts that require creative distortion in order to resolve."[60] Though *Mad Men* has nothing in common with *The Exorcist*'s narrative itself—that is, though it ends cheerfully and not in an orgy of horror—I would suggest that its ending is akin to what Berliner diagnoses as the incongruity of seventies cinema. Whether interpreted as blissful or commercial, the series ending appears tacked on. The sequence at the retreat mimics seventies cinema, insofar as it becomes a resolution that leaves things unresolved.

In fact, if we look at the range of films evoked by *Mad Men* over the course of seven seasons, we can see how the series embodies the evolution of Hollywood cinema from classical to experimental to polemical. Each turn in Don's life comes with a marked shift in American cinema. When the first half of the series investigates Draper's many masks, it echoes films from the Cold War era about the problem of double identity. When it moves on to his transformations as a ghost or a zombie and then a vanishing figure against the backdrop of Vietnam, it also exhibits the transformation of American cinema as it becomes more overtly critical and less beholden to classical unities. Once we begin noticing the ways in which films from that era resonate in *Mad Men*, we come to appreciate how deeply American cinema permeates the series. What David Lavery notes about *Twin Peaks*—that though it is "clearly more authored than most in the inherently anonymous 'producer's' medium of television, taken as a whole *Twin Peaks* seems

generated from, spun intertextually out of (cloned from?) precedent texts"—applies to *Mad Men* as well.[61] Indeed, this may be a paradox of cinematic television: the more meticulously authored, the more notably evocative a series becomes. Or, though Matthew Weiner methodically copies canonical films of the period, somehow other films sneak into the show. This is why it is essential to move beyond homage. For in this case, the intermedial relationship between cinema and serial television is better analyzed within those sneaky cinematic moments that break through unexpectedly in the most punctiliously authored series.