THE CIRCUITRY OF MEMORY:
TIME AND SPACE IN MAD MEN

by

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Abstract

Memory is central to *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner 2007-15) as a period piece set in the 1960s that activates the memories of its viewers while also depicting the subjective memory processes of its protagonist Donald Draper (Jon Hamm). Narratively, as much as Don may try to move forward and forget his past, he ultimately cannot because the memories will always remain. Utilizing the philosophy of Henri Bergson, I reveal that the series effectively renders Bergson’s notion of the coexistence of past and present in sequences that journey into the past without ever leaving the present. *Mad Men* ushers in a new era of philosophical television that is not just perceived, but also remembered. As a long-form serial narrative that intricately layers past upon present, *Mad Men* is itself an evolving memory that can be revisited by the viewer who gains new insight upon each viewing.

*Mad Men* is the ideal intersection of Bergson’s philosophy of the mind and memory and Gilles Deleuze’s cinematic philosophy of time. The first chapter simply titled “Time,” examines the series’ first flashback sequence from the episode “Babylon,” in it finding the Deleuzian time-image. The last chapter “Space,” seeks to identify the spatial structure of the series as a whole and how it relates to its slow-burning pace. Chapter two, “Memory,” highlights the viewer’s memory making processes, and appropriately bridges “Time” and “Space” together, just as it bridges spatial and temporal consciousness together for the individual. This thesis emphasizes the individualized experience of the *Mad Men* viewer who watches Don evolve over seven seasons. Two narrative structural aspects of the series are shown to be especially activating of the viewer’s memory: its flashback sequences and its meditative moments featuring Don in deep contemplation. With reference to literary theory that has identified the concepts of Bergson in the modernist literature movement, as well as to Bergson’s schemas that precisely illustrate his
concepts, this thesis concludes that *Mad Men* can be understood as a carousel that takes viewers on a trip through the circuitry memory.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Molly Elizabeth Lewis. A version of chapter one was presented on June 3rd, 2015 at the FSÁC – ACEC Annual Conference in Ottawa, Ontario.
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The many publications of Henri Bergson have been abbreviated as the following:

ME  Mind-Energy
MM  Matter and Memory
TFW  Time and Free Will
Acknowledgements

When I came to UBC five years ago, I had no intention of majoring in film studies. My only interaction with the study of film was at Langara College where I began my undergraduate studies. I took a wonderful course in the English department from Karen Budra called “Narrative Film” that opened up a whole world of possibilities for me without me even knowing it at the time. I was introduced to film as an extension of literature, and as an avid reader and writer, I did not think I could major in anything else but English. However, upon discovering the wealth of courses offered in UBC’s film studies department, I knew I had found my calling. As I discovered, film studies allowed for the study of what some may consider lowbrow culture in an academic setting, and I was overjoyed with the realization that all my hours of watching television could actually be intellectualized as the subject of my academic writing.

I offer my deepest thanks to Dr. Brian McIlroy, my supervisor and mentor throughout my two degrees, who was always available for intelligent discussions and listened to my many thoughts and musings with great respect. I will always be grateful for him approaching me in his Auteurism seminar to ask me to do the Honours program, as that was the moment where I truly realized my intention to go to graduate school and continue my academic pursuits indefinitely.

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Introduction

In AMC’s original “Quality Television” program Mad Men (Matthew Weiner, 2007-15) when the employees of Sterling Cooper break into their boss Bert Cooper’s office to secretly view his elusive Rothko painting, they have the following exchange:

SAL. It must mean something.

KEN. Maybe it doesn’t. Maybe you’re just supposed to experience it because when you look at it, you do feel something, right? It’s like looking into something very deep. You could fall in.

(“The Gold Violin”)

What the above dialogue expresses is the same sentiment shared by the viewer who experiences Mad Men. Ken (Aaron Staton) succinctly expresses the emotional and thought-provoking experience of watching the series, a complex experience best understood through application of the theories of Henri Bergson. As this thesis will go on to argue, the experience of Mad Men is like falling into something very deep, as it is a series that is not just perceived, but remembered. It challenges viewers’ ability to remember details and to assemble them mentally, to orient him or herself spatially within the narrative, and most importantly it provokes a thought process that can very easily turn inward. What one falls into is not just the drama on screen but oneself. When one feels, one thinks, and one remembers. Time, memory, and space become joined in a viewing experience that is just that, an experience.

As a character driven drama with a narrative that features an intricate layering of past and

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1 Referred to throughout, this terminology warrants capitalization as a proper noun because many scholars as I detail later have identified “Quality Television” as more than just a trend or movement; rather, it is considered a genre in contemporary television programming.
present, of fictional and historical, *Mad Men* has a certain depth that eludes the application of only one single method of analysis. As I write this introduction in the afterglow of the series finale, multiple collections of essays have already been published on the series utilizing a myriad of theoretical angles and academic disciplines. The series has been examined from many different perspectives, beginning in 2011 with two collections of critical essays edited by Stoddart and Edgerton, and then Stern, Manning, and Dunn’s collection the following year. In the last two years, two more essay collections have been released (Marcovitch and Batty’s in 2012, and Goodlad, Kaganovsky, and Rushing’s in 2013) which make evident *Mad Men*’s persisting ability to capture the imagination of viewers and scholars alike. As a period drama set in the 1960s following the happenings of a Manhattan advertising agency, much has been said regarding *Mad Men*’s depictions of America’s past and present politics of sex, gender, and race. However, sweeping aside the cultural implications of *Mad Men* as a contemporary mirror that reflects the fictive yet historically grounded past to our contemporary present, I examine the past of its protagonist, his memories and how they shape his identity, his character, and how the *Mad Men* viewer is implicated in the circuitry of memory.

In what follows, I narrow my focus to the series’ enigmatic protagonist Donald Draper (played by Jon Hamm) to explore the nature of memory from a philosophical standpoint that incorporates the theories of Bergson, whose ideas were later advanced and applied to cinema by Gilles Deleuze. Flashback sequences where the series depicts the past of Don demonstrate Bergsonian notions of memory, specifically, the human mind’s ability to expand vertically as well as horizontally along planes of memory. Additionally, sequences from *Mad Men* stand as examples of Deleuze’s time-image, a cinematic image of thought championed by his *Cinema 2*. In *Mad Men* we witness a different kind of time-image unique to the televisual realm, what I
term the “telesign:” a moment in television when the narrative pauses or plunges into the past so as to allow viewers to think, to remember, and to create memories.

Many philosophers, from the ancient Greeks onward, have attempted to explain the complexities of human memory. As Mary Warnock notes, it was the empiricists of the seventeenth century who made memory a philosophical focus as they attempted to understand its relationship to imagination and knowledge (15). The philosophy of memory is one that is empirical in nature, as our understanding of memory is drawn from our conscious experience of it. Before Bergson, the philosophical approach to memory was in the form of description, as it can be described in the terms of images, beginning with Aristotle who wrote of remembering as picturing (15). Two common ways of understanding memory are as an image in the mind or as a form of knowledge, but from reading Warnock’s thorough overview of the history of the philosophy of memory, it becomes clear that memory is an endlessly interpretable subject and its precise nature and function has been grappled with for centuries, with philosophers building upon each others’ theories. For example, Bertrand Russell (who wrote of the nature of memory in his The Analysis of Mind) builds upon the theories foregrounded by thinkers who preceded him such as John Locke and David Hume (Warnock 20). Although Russell is highlighted as the first to discuss memory in terms of evoking feelings of “familiarity” and of “pastness,” it was not until Bergson that the experience of memory was really explored (21). The way in which Bergson emphasizes the experience of memory is unprecedented. Paul Ricoeur’s Memory, History, Forgetting explores the connections between personal and collective memory and history and could certainly be applied to the Mad Men as a series that explores the historical era of the 1960s through a narrative that centres on a fictional protagonist, but Bergson’s theories brush aside the concept of historiography in terms of what collective memories tell us about our
culture and ourselves. Rather, Bergson narrows his focus to how memory functions at the level of the individual, reaffirming the inadequacy of the clock and calendar to measure the duration of our own unique consciousness that is defined by memory.

Bergson’s metaphysical approach to memory is essentially dualist in nature, something he admits in the opening lines of *Matter and Memory (MM)* when he writes that the book “affirms the reality of spirit and reality matter” (9). As Bergson reveals, it is memory that joins the physical actions of our body together with the mental processes of our mind. Bergson contrasts the empiricists with his argument that pure memory, the abstract repository where all of our memories are stored, is not actually experienced consciously. As Warnock writes, “our whole thought process is committed to a serial, spatial view” (29), yet the actual experience of life and memory is one that is difficult to put into words. Bergson visualizes memory for his readers through the use of illustrative schemas, which in a way contradicts his argument of subjective time that cannot be measured. However, despite the abstract nature of some of his concepts, what makes his ideas so attractive is “his concept of spontaneous memory” which attempts to explain “the feeling we have about recollection,” why it is so significant to us, and what the process of recollections reveals to us about our “true nature” (Warnock 31). In gaining an understanding that the past coexists with the present, one can better apprehend our emotional and bodily reactions to what we perceive as being directly related to memory. Rather than simply describing memory, Bergson sheds light on the more mysterious, experiential effects of memory, a methodology that lends itself well to analyzing the “central role of memory, both in literature and in life” (Warnock 28). As this thesis goes on to argue, memory is also central to *Mad Men* as a series that narrows its focus to an individual’s mental, creative, and emotional processes by highlighting Don’s cognitive functions as he searches for inspiration for his next great pitch as an
advertising creative director. Like Bergson’s study of memory, this thesis is also empirical in nature as it examines in detail the observed reaction of the *Mad Men* viewer whose memory is activated by the series’ temporal and spatial construction.

Despite *Mad Men*’s unique focus on the mind and memory of its protagonist, it shares characteristics with other series of our modern television era. As Steven Johnson claims, contemporary television is increasingly becoming an intellectually demanding experience as viewers must “do work to make sense of” series such as *Mad Men* that asks its viewers to observe, analyze and, most importantly, remember (63). *Mad Men* is often championed as “Quality Television” programming, a term that has been used to describe television series dating back to the early 1980s (McCabe and Akass 3). Television scholars such as Robert J. Thompson use the word “Quality” to distinguish long-form serialized television dramas from episodic “‘regular’ TV” (13). As Lucy Mazdon notes, Quality Television is a genre in and of itself, and *Mad Men* fits into it perfectly with its moments of ambiguity, its open-ended narrative, its realism, and its emphasis on character (5). And, as Quality Television, *Mad Men* requires its viewers to exercise the same cognitive ability “conventionally ascribed to reading: attention, patience, [and] retention” (Johnson 64). *Mad Men* is a series that should be consumed like a novel: read in detail, and analyzed in its totality as televisual modernist art.

Although *Mad Men* is a fictional drama that differs from the televised adaptations of serialized nineteenth-century novels, such as the “prestige productions” by Ismail Merchant and James Ivory (Lugkett 292), as a work of Quality Television it is imbued with novelistic qualities. As noted by Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock, “the expansive structures of television fictions” distinguishes long-form television narratives from film (6). *Mad Men* is one of many contemporary dramas that serially adds “layers to the sedimentation” of its own history in a way
much more similar to a novel than a film (11). The complexity (another characteristic of contemporary Quality Television foregrounded by Jason Mittell) of *Mad Men* makes it difficult to focus on just a single episode without drawing connections to events later or earlier in the series, as demonstrated by George Toles’s analysis of its premiere episode (in his essay “Don Draper and the Promises of Life”). The series builds upon its own incredibly detailed history; for example, it imbues what may seem to be trivial props with narrative information, such as Don’s lighter in the sixth season. When Don accidentally switches lighters with an American soldier on break from Vietnam in Hawaii, it effectively reminds viewers of the lighter’s importance as an cataclysmic object that, when dropped in gas by the bumbling new soldier Dick, led to the explosion which killed his namesake Donald Draper, as viewers find out in season one. Sequences throughout the series feature Don staring at the lighter, thinking, remembering, and in turn viewers think with him, reflecting on the object just as he does. A single object brings about a wealth of memories, triggering the time machine of the mind.

Throughout the series as more and more is revealed about Don’s past, the viewer is required to remember more and to reimagine his character in its totality. The series becomes inscribed in one’s memory as a living entity undergoing constant evolution. For example, during the course of the first season, one major piece of the puzzle of Don’s past is revealed: he is not the man he claims to be. Through flashback sequences and a few revelatory confessional scenes, viewers learn that during the Korean War Don transformed a horrifying accident into an opportunity to desert the fight while also leaving behind his true identity as Dick Whitman, the orphan child of a prostitute mother and philandering father. By stealing the identity of his fallen comrade Donald Draper, Dick is able to start anew and leave behind his unfortunate upbringing. Like F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby before him, Don reinvents himself (an apt literary
comparison made by Hernandez and Holmberg 16). Don is clearly a character drawn from American folklore, but the series is more than just about the revealing of its protagonist’s past. Don’s past crops up in the form of mental images, and also quite literally in the form of forgotten family members and secret friends, but the secrets of his past do not result in a tragic end. Nor does present triumph over past. Rather, the series renders the past as coexistent with the present, due to the nature of memory. Throughout the course of the series Don’s past and present selves harmonize. Mad Men thus emphasizes the inability of one to escape the past because mentally memories of the past are intrinsically part of one’s present. And furthermore, the way in which the series constructs this temporal conflation in the mind and memory of its viewers unleashes it from the cultural-historical angle of analysis and opens it to the philosophically and literary informed analysis of what follows.

As previous scholarship demonstrates, I am far from the first to write of Mad Men as novelistic; indeed, Lauren M.E. Goodlad identifies a “realist aesthetic” in Mad Men similar to the serialized narratives of Victorian literature, such as by Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope, that seeks to depict life realistically as a series of events that carry over from one installment to the next (321-22). She places Mad Men alongside the groundbreaking series The Wire (David Simon, 2002-08) as Victorian due to the way in which it elongates time, aesthetically and structurally (322). Goodlad is correct in her assertion that like the serialized narratives of the Victorian era, Quality Television series such as Mad Men are released in weekly and seasonal installments which can be accessed after the fact in the form of DVD sets which can be bought, rented, or downloaded. Goodlad is not alone in her comparison, as she notes others scholars such as Mittell who too have “compared today’s serial media to Victorian precursors, describing the intensely felt serial habitus cultivated through narrative installments.
spread over time” (321). Irrefutably, serialism creates anticipation for future seasons. *Mad Men* is truly serial television, as it has been released in installments over a period of eight years and diegetically spans eleven years in the lives of its character. The series’ detailed layering of past and present as well as its temporal play in the form of flashbacks may at first confuse viewers, but rewards those who are patient, who remember, or who may revisit episodes, and notice details never noticed before, and then reevaluate, reinterpret. As such, it is a series that lends itself easily to re-watching and also binge watching, which is becoming the preferred method of television consumption among the Netflix generation (as argued by Matrix). The series’ reverberations as a serial narrative are evident within the mind of the *Mad Men* viewer, who will access the series again mentally through the function of memory and physically through video-on-demand technology.

Clearly *Mad Men*’s seriality inspires comparison to Victorian literature, but it also has characteristics in common with the modernist literary movement due to its focus on the mental life of its protagonist as well as its activation of the mental life of its viewer. *Mad Men*’s very precise fictional representation of daily life in the 1960s supports Goodlad’s comparison to serialized Victorian literature, but she overlooks the series’ exploration of memory and its illustration of subjective time in brief, and important segments centering on Don. The flashbacks and quiet moments of contemplation that Don experiences are two types of sequences during which the series takes focus off the unrolling future, and brings viewers in touch with the present, which coexists with the past. These sequences may have an elongating effect, but their purpose is not just to delay, but also to engage. Viewers of *Mad Men*, like readers of modernist writers, are often plunged into a “mental landscape . . . which cannot be immediately understood but which must be moved through and mapped” (Childs 4). *Mad Men*’s tendency to enter the
mind of Don, to render his thought processes visually, could be said to share the modernist tendency to “render subjectivity more real than realism” (3). Although Goodlad correctly identifies *Mad Men* as a period piece with a realist aesthetic, it is nevertheless a character driven drama that renders the subjectivity of its protagonist.

Like modernist literature that features a playful stream of consciousness writing style, *Mad Men* brings attention to the present, to the experience of the individual, which makes it an ideal avenue to explore the philosophy of Henri Bergson (whose influence on the modernist literature movement, although debatable, is well documented by Gillies as well as explored in a collection of essays edited by Ardoin, Gontarski, and Mattison). Featuring its own spatial-temporal manipulations, *Mad Men* is defined here as a modernist television series with the ability to provoke philosophical thought. The connection between *Mad Men* and modernist literature at first may seem tenuous; however, I am not the first to make this comparison. Sean O’Sullivan has also drawn connections between *Mad Men* and modernist literature in his “Spaceships and Time Machines: *Mad Men* and the Serial Condition,” in which he observes a “conflict between fragmentation and unity, between art as pieces and art as a whole” (117). Although O’Sullivan highlights the viewer’s “desire to see patterns,” he disregards the importance of the role of memory in the series. He also overlooks Bergson, who literary scholars cite as a key influence on the modernist movement of the early twentieth century. In the same vein but with *Breaking Bad* (Vince Gilligan, 2008-13) as his example, Dafydd Wood builds upon Raymond Williams’s theories of television in order to reveal similarities between contemporary Quality Television and Modernism in terms of their “radical newness” (15). Thus, it is not enough to say that these contemporary serialized narratives borrow from the nineteenth-century literary tradition. The way in which *Mad Men* in particular pushes the boundaries of serial storytelling, especially in
terms of its activation of the viewer’s memory, is deserving of a more apt comparison to Modernism. *Mad Men* shares the qualities of modernist literature, not just thematically and structurally but also in terms of the demands it places on its viewer.

Writers associated with the modernist literary movement such as Virginia Woolf explored the experience of the individual in works that dived into the consciousness of their characters, unfolding at a pace that allowed an extreme attention to detail of the inner-workings of one’s mind in which the past, present, and future may all seem to exist through the abstraction of memory and imagination. Gillies notes that a major influence on Woolf’s writing style was Bergson’s concept of *durée*: “moments during which past and present time not only literally coexist, but during which one is aware of their coexistence” (109). To render televisually the coexistence of past and present may seem to be an impossible feat, yet in what follows I identify moments in *Mad Men* when this is successfully accomplished. My argument utilizes Bergsonian theories to shed light on the series’ philosophical implications. Following Gillies’s methodology that reveals the influence of Bergson on Woolf, I perform a close reading of segments from *Mad Men* to reveal illustrations of Bergson’s schemas of memory; as Gillies asserts, whether Woolf or in the case of *Mad Men*, Weiner,² read Bergson becomes “beyond the point,” for their work clearly “echoes his ideas” (126).

Moreover, as Melissa Ames illuminates, television narratives of the twenty-first century have demonstrated their tendency to play with time: “slowing it down to unfold the narrative at rarely seen before rates (retardation and compression) and disrupting chronological flow itself (through the extensive use of flashbacks and the insistence that viewers be able to situate

² Although television like the film industry is an artistic collaboration, Weiner as the showrunner, as well as writer and director of many episodes, is referred to throughout as the main creative force of *Mad Men.*
themselves in both the present and past narrative threads simultaneously)” (9). I agree with Ames that the “temporal play” of recent television programming should be highlighted in the contemporary discourse of Quality Television (9). Furthermore, Bergson’s notion that the “[f]uture does not come out of past time: the minute one stops to analyse a present moment, that moment becomes part of the past and its impact is not felt on the present instant but on the moments that follow the present” (Gillies 126), can be applied to the experience of the viewer of Mad Men, who must comprehend the presently unfolding narrative while scanning memory for its impact on the rest of the narrative. The viewer rearranges the many moments of Don’s past and present in order to create a whole, but never complete puzzle. Inspired by Frida Beckman’s claim that philosophy may be the breakthrough theoretical angle from which to examine complex television’s challenging of viewers’ cognitive ability (179), this thesis serves to explain through philosophy how Mad Men actively engages the minds and memories of its viewers.

The following chapters are simply titled “Time,” “Memory,” and “Space” and reflect the three main aspects of the series that open it up to an analysis informed by literary theory and Bergsonian philosophy. Bridging together “Time” with my third chapter “Space,” is “Memory,” for as Bergson argues, memory bridges together our concept of time and space as it is the key to consciousness. The first chapter “Time” highlights Bergson’s influence on Gilles Deleuze’s philosophical concept of the cinematic time-image. This chapter advances Deleuze’s theories by identifying time-images in a series that is itself one large time-image, due to its complex layering of actual and virtual. I argue that Mad Men contains the “telesign,” a term inspired by Deleuze’s terminology from Cinema 2: The Time-Image used hereon to identify the existence of the time-image in the televisual realm, such as found in the first flashback sequence of the series that occurs in the opening scene of the sixth episode of season one, “Babylon.” A fall down the stairs
on the morning of Mother’s Day triggers a flashback for Don to his childhood. The schemas from Bergson *Matter and Memory*: the circles of memory, also known as attentive recognition (see Figure 1), and the inverted cone, or the totality of memory (see Figure 2) are utilized to understand the representation of time as it is evoked in the staging of this flashback. The chapter then ends with a discussion of the viewer’s experience of the sequence’s layering of past upon present that extends into his or her own mental process. Just as the circles of Don’s memory widen, so do those of the viewers who are required to simultaneously comprehend and remember.

The second chapter titled “Memory” further examines the mental experience of the *Mad Men* viewer as related to the series’ activation of memory. One example the chapter analyzes is the hallucinatory opening sequence from the first episode of episode one (“Out of Town”) in which Don witnesses his own conception, birth, and delivery in a basket to his adopted mother. Imagination and recollection fuse together in a sequence that dramatizes Don’s memory processes while putting into motion the circuitry of memory for those who view it. Viewers are required to remember the sequence later in the series, but its purpose does not end there. The sequence is part of the evolving experience of the series that is influenced by the viewer’s own subjective memories. The act of re-watching is discussed alongside the philosophical capabilities of art in light of Bergson’s concept of memory in an analysis that utilizes literary theory reveal the “intuitive experience” of the series.

The third chapter “Space” examines the narrative pace and structure of the series. This chapter identifies seemingly banal sequences in the series that feature Don sitting silently in a moment of deep contemplation. Such sequences serve as pauses for the viewer to advance the narrative in their own mind as they think about what Don is thinking. The scenes do not propel
the plot forward so much as further reveal Don’s emotional and psychological state to the viewer. Such sequences test the viewer’s patience as well as his or her analytical skills, as the viewer is urged to contemplate Don’s contemplation. The viewer may ponder, for example in the first episode, what Don is thinking about as he lies on his couch in his office and stares up above at a fly trapped in a ceiling light (“The Smoke Gets In Your Eyes”). This thought process may turn inwards and as such, I make reference to Jimmie Manning’s quite personal response to the series, “Finding Yourself in *Mad Men,*** to argue that *Mad Men* has the ability to provoke personal contemplation.

This chapter also analyzes the overall structure of *Mad Men* as a series through a comparison to the structure of the modernist novel. Building upon the seminal work of Joseph Frank and his concept of spatial form in the modern novel first put forth in 1945, this chapter concludes with the argument that *Mad Men* is a narrative that does not conclude so much as end. I offer many different image-invoking metaphors in an attempt to put the temporal lived experience of the series into spatial terms. The consequence of a series that so strongly engages the memories of its viewers with a narrative that reaffirms the power of the past on the present is that it is difficult to conclude and therefore shut down the past experience of the series. To offset this result, Weiner’s finale brings viewers back to the beginning, back to Don sitting, thinking, and finding inspiration in the world around him.

The conclusion briefly reasserts claims made in this introduction: *Mad Men* is a television series with modernist qualities that is best understood when examined from a philosophical standpoint. I end by characterizing television as an emotional and intellectual force while also foregrounding *Mad Men’s* seriality, temporality, and spatiality as key to its unique viewing experience. I also put forth a call for further research into other Quality Television programming.
that also radically manipulates time and space in such a way that they may also engage the minds and memories of viewers in the same manner as *Mad Men*. What the future brings is uncertain, but what is clear is that these series with which viewers spend so much time have an impact far beyond that of just entertainment. *Mad Men* is one example of an intellectually engaging series that provokes its viewers to ponder time and space.
Chapter 1: Time

Henri Bergson’s major publications, beginning with *Time and Free Will (TFW)*, in which he first introduced his famous concept of *durée* or subjective time as a constant process of becoming, through to *Mind-Energy (ME)*, which revisits key concepts from his philosophical legacy, consistently grapple with concepts related to the complexities of memory. Bound up in its metaphysical exploration of the relation of the soul to the body, his second major publication *Matter and Memory* reveals the intricacies of the mind through illustrations in the form of figures and analogies, to demonstrate the circuitry or perception of memory. Bergson’s most inspiring idea is “consciousness as being fundamentally defined by memory” (Pearson xi), and he expresses this through an innovative philosophical analysis that weaves together science and psychology, evolutionary theory and philosophy, written in an almost poetic style of relatable analogies (Kumar viii). Bergson liberates time from its subordination to movement by reorienting it within consciousness, which is after all memory itself (*ME* 5); therefore, Bergson’s philosophy encourages introspection and an embracing of all things subjective: consciousness, perception, recollection, and dreams.

Bergson’s ideas are inspiration to philosophers and artists alike, and were particularly influential for the modernist literary movement (Kumar, but also more recently Gillies have explored and argued for his influence in more detail). Perhaps it is the clarity of his writing aided by analogies and description that provides his philosophy with a certain level of accessibility. There is also an inherent logic behind his ideas that imbue his arguments regarding the structure of the mind and memory with obviousness; they seem instinctive. Bergson put “into words something then dawning within human consciousness” in the early twentieth century: “an increased sense of the inadequacy of the clock as a time-measurer,” as author Dorothy
Richardson remarked in 1938 (qtd. in Kumar 36-37). And what the clock measures is the passing of a present that can hardly be grasped; it is a “mathematical instant” used to “separate past and future” (ME 5). Indeed, there is no present, only duration: consciousness bridging together “what has been with what will be” (ME 6). Furthermore, the past and the present which unroll into our imminent future are coexistent, which is a key Bergsonian concept Deleuze explores in his 1966 Bergsonism, a text cited by many scholars as responsible for ushering Bergson’s philosophy into the second half of the twentieth century. Deleuze revives Bergson’s philosophy through his application of it to a new realm, that of cinema. Deleuze utilizes Bergson’s theories regarding the ontology of human consciousness and the psychical processes of memory in his Cinema books to understand the complex temporal structure of modern cinema and its ability to provoke meditative thought in its viewers. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, the malleability of Bergson’s philosophy allows it to also be used as a lens through which we can understand the complexities of the televisual experience that is Mad Men.

Just as Kumar is careful to point out in his Bergson & The Stream of Consciousness Novel, it is pertinent to clarify that the argument at the heart of this thesis is not that Weiner was inspired by Bergsonian philosophy. Rather, like the style and form of the work of Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Dorothy Richardson, that seem to be influenced by, or seem to “parallel” (Kumar’s word choice) or “echo” (a word used by Stevenson) Bergson’s concept of duration and subjective time, Mad Men, at least in brief segments, seems to also be illustrative of the ideas of Bergson. The modernist preoccupation with the individual, subjective time, and memory has come back around with a television series that layers actual (present) and virtual (time) in complex sedimentation that makes the two indiscernible, similar to what is seen in the time-images identified by Deleuze in Cinema 2. Perhaps at the root of this preoccupation is not a
shared influence—Bergson—but a natural human attraction to the act of introspection, to understanding our minds from not only an objective but subjective point-of-view that reaffirms individual thought and perception.

As Bergson writes in the opening pages of Matter and Memory, his book’s mission is to reveal the “tones of mental life” that are just as complex as reality itself (14). Similarly, Mad Men has risen to the task of reflecting mental subjectivity through a character that too has experienced many different tones in his mental life. Mad Men illustrates the mental life of Don in a thought-provoking manner that challenges the memories of its viewers, offering them Deleuzian time-image to ponder. Mad Men is thus the ideal intersection of Bergson’s philosophy of the mind and memory and Deleuze’s cinematic philosophy of time. Utilizing the converging concepts of these two theorists, what follows is a close reading of two key flashback sequences from the series. Just as Bergson’s philosophy saliently maps out the mental process of memory, Deleuze similarly maps out cinematic images and their relationship to time, space, and thought. And, as I go on to argue, Mad Men too maps out a historical yet fictional world of characters that are looking toward tomorrow, actively moving forward, while the past nips at their heels.

The story of Mad Men as period piece is one “that can only be told in the past” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 50). A comment Deleuze makes regarding the work of Joseph L. Mankiewicz and F. Scott Fitzgerald applies perfectly to Mad Men. Deleuze writes that the question these authors ask is not “what is happening” or “what will happen,” but rather “what happened?” and “how have we arrived here?” (50). The way in which Mad Men answers these questions is two-fold. Mad Men’s narrative engages with America’s past through its fictionalization of an advertising agency in New York during the 1960s; it virtually answers the question “what happened” half a century ago in America for people like these characters. For example, we see the fictional employees of
Sterling Cooper react to landmark events such as the assassination of JFK and the 1969 moon landing: the actual is embedded within the virtual. Although the images of television, like the images of narrative cinema, are linear in nature in that one succeeds the other in order to tell a story, the images that make up *Mad Men* are uniquely constructed so that “[a]t one and the same time the image is present and past, still present and already passing” (Rodowick 126), just as humans experience their own present as one that coexists with the past. Furthermore, the series engages with the past memories of its protagonist, visualizing the nature of subjective time for its viewers.

*Mad Men* is not just a recreation of the past of America, but also character driven television structured around the question “Who is Donald Draper?” This question is posed directly twice in the series, first by Adam Whitman (Jay Paulson) when he confronts his long lost brother (in the season one episode “5G”), and again in the fourth season by an Advertising Age reporter (“Public Relations”). In the second instance, the question is seemingly directed at the audience as the camera films the reporter straight on in a close-up before cutting to Don and revealing him as the interviewee. Indeed, this is a question on the audience’s mind, as it hangs over the series. Especially in the first season, Don refusing to talk about his childhood highlights the mystery. In the second episode of the series, “Maidenform,” Don tells his boss, “I can’t talk about my childhood it would ruin the first half of my novel.” Other characters also comment on the mysterious aura that surrounds Don. For example, in the following episode Harry Crane (Rich Sommer) quips, “Draper? Who knows anything about that guy? No one’s ever lifted that rock. He could be Batman for all we know” (“Marriage of Figaro”). Although for viewers, that rock is lifted. At the end of the first season, through a series of flashbacks and confessionals, viewers can answer the question. Who is Don Draper? Don Draper is Dick Whitman. The overarching
message of the series is that the past cannot be simply blotted out or escaped. Mentally, the memories will remain, perhaps only to arise when least expected. But one’s past can also come back to haunt in a much more visceral way, in the form of visions, hallucinations, dreams, and ghosts. People who are sealed away behind a mental block, who are from a life of somebody else, can return through memory mentally as well as literally. The past of Dick interrupts Don’s present life in these various ways.

In light of Bergson’s notion that one can never escape one’s past because the past coexists with the present, Don’s struggle with his past identity can be seen as a tragic paradox that, although heavily dramatized, is at its core relatable to everyone who has also tried to forget something, only to be unsuccessful. A comment made by Peggy (Elisabeth Moss) to Don regarding her own attempt to wipe the slate of memory clean, demonstrates the impossibility of truly and intentionally forgetting the past. In the season four episode “The Suitcase,” Don asks Peggy if she ever thinks about her unintended pregnancy and the child she unexpectedly gave birth to at the end of season one and subsequently gave up for adoption. She responds: “I try not to, but then it comes up out of nowhere,” and she adds after a pause, “Playgrounds.” What this short line of dialogue implies is that when Peggy sees a place usually occupied by parents and their children, she cannot suppress the memory of the child she could have raised. As Bergson argues, the reason she cannot is because memory occurs alongside perception; we are constantly remembering, whether automatically or intentionally, therefore: “there is no perception which is not full of memories” (MM 33). Thus, it is impossible to wipe the slate clean, as we need memories in order to understand and react to what our senses perceive, in order for our body to react accordingly. This can happen at the automatic or habitual level, or on a much more emotional level that is triggered by repressed recollections.
For example, Peggy’s memory of the child she gave up carries into the final season when, in the episode “Time & Life,” an angry mother blames Peggy for injuries her daughter suffers at the office, chastising her: “You do what you want with your children, I do what I want with mine.” These words provoke a strong reaction from Peggy, who swears at the mother and becomes visibly upset. Later, Peggy shares with Stan (Jay Ferguson) the truth behind her reaction. Peggy did “what she want[ed]” with her child by choosing not to raise him, and the words directed at her in ignorance by a stranger painfully remind her of this. She tearfully explains: “I'm here, and he's with a family, somewhere… I don't know, but it's not because I don't care. I don't know because you're not supposed to know, or you can't go on with your life.”

Although Peggy tries to “go on” with her life by suppressing the memory of the child and his current whereabouts, she cannot forget the birth, and neither can the viewer. During Peggy’s confession to Stan, the viewer may call upon the memory of the flashback sequence from the season two’s “The New Girl.” In a sequence that revealed a visit Don pays Peggy in the hospital where she remains after she has given birth, he advises her to “move forward” and forget about the pregnancy, telling her bluntly: “This never happened. It will shock you how much it never happened.” However, Don’s understanding of memory is flawed. It is possible to move forward; Peggy does indeed ascend in the company and prove to be a talentd professional, but the memory of the child she chose not to raise will always be there. Because the memory remains, ready to be accessed voluntarily or involuntarily, she can choose to share it with the people she loves and trusts like Stan, with whom she enters a romantic relationship a few episodes later in the series finale (“Person to Person”). It seems that what shocks her more than the ability to act as if something never happened is the ability for memory to come back so unexpectedly. A
sentence heard or a sight seen provokes an emotional reaction in Peggy, which proves not only the endurance but also the strength of memory.

Don also struggles to suppress painful memories of the past. For example, his half-brother Adam haunts him at various points throughout the series. Adam first approaches Don in person after he discovers a photo of a man who looks like his brother Dick in the newspaper (“5G”). He physically confronts Don and identifies him as Dick. The brothers catch up over coffee but Don, emotionally distant, refuses to let Adam into his life, just as he refuses to acknowledge the coexistence of past and present. Because he cannot escape the past mentally, Don tries to banish it physically by paying his brother to leave him and his family alone. When Don has second thoughts and tries to contact Adam again, he learns that he has committed suicide by hanging himself in his hotel room (in the episode “Indian Summer”). Later in the sixth season, Don sees a vision of Adam while under anesthetic at the dentist office (“The Phantom”), demonstrating once again how the past can be recalled involuntarily, such as in the form of hallucinations informed by memory. Under inebriation, Don remembers the brother he so unceremoniously rejected. Although physically Adam is gone forever, the memory of him and the associated feelings of guilt live on within Don.

Even memories we choose not to access nevertheless still exist in a virtual realm of what Bergson calls “pure memory,” or the totality of memory: all of our recollections bound up in an ever-expanding form, stored away in the unconscious, as represented by his famous inverted cone schema (see Figure 2). Memories hidden in the deepest planes furthest away from the apex of the cone may not be accessed voluntarily or regularly, but they nevertheless exist, and can be triggered unconsciously in a dream or when we perceive something that reminds us of them, such as a playground for Peggy. Therefore, as Don’s flashbacks and hallucinations make evident,
although he may try to “forget about that boy in the box” representing his former self Dick Whitman, as he is told by a woman on the train with him when he refuses to deliver the burnt corpse of the real Donald Draper to his family in Pennsylvania, that boy is still with him, or at least we can say his memories are with him, somewhere deep in the strata of the cone of total memory.

Although Don comments in the finale of the first season that “nostalgia is more powerful than memory” (“The Wheel”), Bergson believes, and as the overarching narrative of the Mad Men series demonstrates, nothing is more powerful than memory. Nostalgia, or “the twinge in your heart” as Don describes it (“The Wheel”), may be accessed voluntarily; it can be sought out in moments of need. Although the tune of a song one has not heard in years may unexpectedly conjure up a nostalgic recollection of one’s first high school dance for example, that recollection would not be possible without memory. Nostalgia is an emotional response, the feeling of sentimentality, but memory is the mental process that makes nostalgia possible. What we perceive with our senses has the ability to trigger not just recollections of the past (pictures and images), but familiar feelings and emotions from the past, ones that are perhaps more poignant than the fuzzy warmth of nostalgia. For example, everyone has experienced a flood of past memories triggered by a single whiff of a certain scent; the wafting odor of a cigar may unexpectedly conjure up memories of one’s grandfather. Similarly, the act of warming milk over a stove may conjure memories of one’s mother, as Don experiences in the opening scene of the premiere episode of season three (“Out of Town”). Although Don initially responds nostalgically to the image of his birth mother that has been conjured up to enact the past in the present space of his kitchen, that nostalgia quickly disintegrates into feelings of remorse, regret, or even
confusion, as the close-ups of Don’s changing facial expression during this remembering indicate. Nostalgia is fleeting; memories are enduring.

1.1 The Telesign

When Don makes this comment regarding the power of nostalgia, it is during his presentation for Kodak’s new “wheel,” or what Don dubs, “The Carousel:” a machine that projects images that contain the trace of time and memory. The identification and categorization of images, be that of the movement-image or time-image, are Deleuze’s primary concern in his *Cinema* books, in which he combines the semiotics of C.S. Peirce with Bergson’s philosophy of perception, time and memory to identify and categorize the many types of images in cinema. Following Bergson’s claim that everything, including our brains, is an image (*MM* 18), Deleuze views cinema, itself a collection of images, as having the ability to induce different types of thought in its viewers depending on the image (Rushton 11). Movement and time are simply “different modes of filmic expression” (Rushton 8).

The best way to define Deleuze’s time-image is through relation to what it is not, the movement-image. Deleuze’s cinema books describe classical cinema (that is pre-WWII cinema) as that of the movement-image. Time is subordinated to movement as the measurer of the acting subject, and the images of the movement-image are dictated by what Deleuze, borrowing a term from Bergson, calls “sensory motor schema” (*Cinema* 2 xi). One way to understand the sensory motor schema is to imagine it as a metronome relentlessly ticking in rhythm with the action of the cinematic image, and although this schema can sometimes be interrupted, it is nevertheless present in the cinema of the movement-image: classical cinema, which Deleuze differentiates from modern cinema (post-war cinema) of the time-image, a cinema in search of more thought, which Deleuze describes as “the cinema of the seer” (2), a cinema with “deeper layers of reality
and subjectivity” (Marrati xv). Deleuze references Bergson throughout his cinema books and goes so far as to declare in Cinema 2 that modern cinema is “Bergsonian” (109). As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, television too can be Bergsonian.

Deleuze views modern cinema, beginning with the postwar cinema of Italian neorealism, as capable of containing the earliest instance of the time-image: an “image of memory” (Rodowick 69), one that is “double sided” as both “actual and virtual ” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 273). The double-sided nature of the time-image creates indiscernibility for viewers; as actual and virtual do not become confused so much as interchangeable. Furthermore, as viewers try to discern, they nevertheless engage with the film text: they are required to read the image in order to understand it and, in turn, they think. It is this mental process of the spectator that Deleuze highlights in his analysis of time-image cinema. He ultimately brings to light the unique ability of cinematic time-images to inspire thought, and to be more than just gazed at but also read, interpreted, and remembered. For example, what Deleuze terms the direct time-image differs from the indirect images of time of the movement-image discussed in the first Cinema volume. In Cinema 2, Deleuze writes of the time-image, and provides many different examples. Although I risk oversimplifying, I will briefly explain a few of his time-image examples. Direct images of time can be found in art cinema, such as in the films of Yasujiro Ozu. In particular, Ozu’s static shots of which the most famous example is the vase from Late Spring (1949) are said to contain the time-image (17). Similarly, shots where characters leave the frame, and the camera lingers on the space they have left (as found in the films of Antonioni), also effectively undo the agent oriented action image of movement-image cinema and are thus “capable of creating other links with different forces, forces of time and thought” (Marrati 62). However, this is not to say that shots that feature a character are not also time-images. Shots of characters who are physically
stilled and directly experience the passing of time is another examples of the time-image given by Deleuze, seen again in the work of Antonioni (17). But Deleuze’s examples are not limited to static shots of still characters; this is merely where he begins to make time-image cinema distinct from the movement-images of classical cinema.

As Deleuze writes in his second chapter of Cinema 2, the time-image of modern cinema is one that is virtual, meaning that it is “imaginary,” “subjective,” and “mental” (46). However, it is also a double sided image, as the cinematic flashback when, for example, the “virtual image” enters into a “relationship” with an “actual image” as the past interrupts and takes over a present moment of the narrative (336). The brief moments in the Mad Men series that depict Don’s subjective memories in the form of flashbacks and hallucinations are simultaneously virtual and actual. These moments create a spectator-image relationship similar to what Deleuze describes with the time-image. However, since Deleuze never explored images of time in the television realm, the time-images of Mad Men are here termed the “telesign” and are particularly evident in its uniquely constructed flashback sequence. Furthermore, as a contemporary fictionalization of the historical past, the series can be seen as one big flashback that weaves the actual and virtual together into a tapestry that makes the two indiscernible, and thus reveals to us many thought-provoking time-images.

Television, perhaps more than film, is a time-filled event. Time dictates the pace at which television narratives progress and the length of weekly installments. As a series unfolds over many weeks, months, and years, the time viewers spend watching a show can be precisely measured. With the recent development of streaming technology, the time viewers spend with a series changed as re-watching and binge watching is increasingly easier and more popular. Binge watching practices contract the time spent with a series by cutting out the season breaks of a
series with multiple completed seasons. One can watch an entire series in the span of days or weeks, but the fact still remains that viewers spend great amounts of time, no matter how drawn out or compressed, with a series. The individual experience of watching the series can depend on the viewer and how he or she chooses to access it. However, no matter how the viewer chooses to watch a series like *Mad Men*, he or she still invests time and memory. Furthermore, our contemporary era of television seems to be increasingly open to temporal experimentation, as Ames argues. Additionally, the viewer’s own ability now to retard and compress the time of his or her own viewing further adds a level of temporal complexity to our modern landscape of television.

The Greek root of the word television, *tele*, can be translated as meaning “far,” implying the great distance the technology itself is broadcast. Television broadcasts can indeed stretch across nations, continents, and the globe but they are increasingly no longer reaching viewers on the living room television set, during a time predetermined by networks. Today viewers can access a desired series on their computers: they can watch and re-watch at their leisure, on their own time (this increasing personalization of television will be addressed more in my third chapter in relation to Manning’s self-exploration through *Mad Men*). The *telesign* does not refer to the distance an image can cover but rather its depth, and this depth can be best explored through philosophical analysis.

Television has developed towards the time-image. As a Nietzsche quote included by Deleuze in *Cinema 2* reveals: “it is never at the beginning that something new, a new art is able to reveal its essence; what it was from the outset can be revealed only after a detour in its evolution” (qtd in. 43). As most evident in *Mad Men*, the time-image has begun to reveal itself in Quality Television programming. Although Deleuze claims in his preface that the television
image “remains so regretfully in the present unless it is enriched by the art of cinema” (xii-iii), I argue contemporary television has developed beyond cinema in its engagement of the past through memory. Television may very well be influenced by the nonlinear story structure and flashbacks characteristic of the modern art cinema Deleuze analyzes, but, unlike cinema, television has more time and space available to explore the subjective experience of time and memory. A long-form, serialized drama like Mad Men develops its story over the course of nearly a decade, and it requires its audience to remember the past in order to make sense of the present narrative. Television such as Mad Men is able to blur the distinction between present and past in a precise evocation of Bergson and Deleuze’s theories.

1.2 The Flashback

The term “flashback” implies a departure of sorts, a flash of a mental image that takes one back to the past. It is a common literary and cinematic technique. In regards to cinema, Deleuze writes that the flashback is only a “signpost” that is only there to simplify “complex temporal structures” (xii). In the third chapter of Cinema 2, Deleuze elaborates further on the flashback in reference to the films of Joseph L. Mankiewicz. A typical flashback can be found in All About Eve (1950); for example, when the voiceover of Karen (Celeste Holm) recalls, “It was last October…” a sound bridge to the past is used as the image cuts to a marquee displaying the name Margo Channing. This editing convention of using a sound bridge to transition to a flashback has become ingrained in our collective film viewing memory. Viewers are usually not confused by the jump back in temporality due to the way in which the flashback is structured. Another common editing technique for flashbacks are dissolves and superimpositions that layer the past over the present. For example, Mankiewicz’s Suddenly, Last Summer (1959) uses both during the film’s climax when Catharine (Elizabeth Taylor) unearths the traumatic memory of her cousin’s
death while under hypnosis. The screen slowly fades and then gives way to the repressed memories.

A dissolve is another common editing convention to introduce a deeply buried memory. In Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* (1969), what Paul Seydor terms the “oil dissolve” creates the impression that the memories that slowly come into focus are struggling forth from the annals of the mind. As Seydor writes of the film’s first flashback, “[t]he image . . . appear[s] to quiver momentarily before deliquescing, and the effect is as if the present tense of the film were struggling to suppress the past tense” (162). Although Pike (William Holden) would rather not remember his past mistakes, the memories nevertheless intrude on the present. Similarly, Don struggles with past memories that tend to interrupt his present. His biggest past mistake of dropping the lighter that led to the incineration of his commanding officer in Korea is revealed to viewers in a flashback that departs from the present and delivers viewers to the past (“Nixon vs. Kennedy”). However, *Mad Men* does not use the watery cinematographic effect of present fading into past to demarcate his flashbacks. He transitions more suddenly, surprising viewers who must more immediately infer that they have been transported to the past through the process of Don recollecting. This example of halting the present to explore the past only to return again to the present to continue the narrative is a conventional technique that rarely confuses the viewer. Flashback sequences constructed in this manner usually serve the purpose of characterization, as viewers are given a glimpse into how the character was in the past. *Mad Men* does not always use this flashback technique, however. Sometimes the series depicts the past

3 For more on the key role the flashback sequences play in *The Wild Bunch*, see Seydor, chapter 5.
alongside the present in sequences that distinguish the series from traditional cinema and television.

As Mittell notes, television too utilizes the flashback in order to strengthen characterization, but the flashbacks of complex, Quality Television programs usually require “viewers to engage more actively” (36). In what Mittell dubs “conventional” television, programs “typically maximize…[the] obviousness” of flashback sequences “by explicitly signaling them as differentiations from a norm, predicated by expository narration (‘I remember it well’) or contrived scenarios (like hypnosis, courtroom testimonies, or recollections over a photo album) to highlight how the show is using unconventional conventions” (37). Similar to the examples from the films of Mankiewicz and Peckinpah, television usually clearly demarcates its flashbacks. Contemporary complex television narratives, on the other hand, are more ambiguous with their flashback use. They may startlingly transition to the past with little or no warning, or blend the two temporal spaces together, of which *Mad Men* does both. The flashback and hallucinatory sequences featuring Don in *Mad Men* lack such obvious signaling and are much more similar to the memories and fantasies depicted in modern art cinema, the site of Deleuze’s the time-image.

According to Deleuze, the conventional flashback that announces itself produces only indirect images of time, as the sequences are still clearly defined by a linear movement. The narrative may move backwards for a brief time, but the use of conventional editing techniques prepare the viewer for the transition and return them comfortably back the present. In contrast, the direct time-image temporal structure “goes beyond the purely empirical succession of time” as a “coexistence of distinct durations” (xii). In the films of Orson Welles, for example, “the first great cinema of time” (99), we see “sheets of the past coexist in non-chronological order,” since
the very structure of *Citizen Kane* explores different versions of the past in a non-linear manner. Apart from the overall structure of the film that enables an exploration of memories of the past, the time-image is also evident within a single shot due to Welles’s innovative use of an extreme depth of field. As Deleuze writes, the depth of field in *Citizen Kane* allows the image itself to extend “over into a past and a future of which the present is now only an extreme limit, which is never given” (38). Whereas a psychological memory or a recollection-image refers us back to a former present, like the conventional flashbacks found in *All About Eve*, in Welles’s *Citizen Kane* there is a deeper sense of memory expressed through the deep space mise-en-scène construction: “a memory of the world directly exploring time, reaching in the past that which conceals itself from memory” (39). The temporalization of the image achieved by Welles is just one of many examples Deleuze provides of the direct image of time in cinema. Depth of field is “an invitation to recollect,” as it creates “a certain type of direct time-image that can be defined by memory, virtual regions of past, the aspects of each region” (109). In scenes in which the foreground is as crystal clear as the background, Deleuze believes we see not just different planes of actions simultaneously, but different planes of time: past, present, and future.

The way in which *Mad Men* depicts the past alongside the present makes it more akin to the work of Welles rather than the classical Hollywood cinema of Mankiewicz. This is made most evident by the deep space staging of the very first flashback of the series that opens the sixth episode of *Mad Men* first season (“Babylon”). In this sequence, the present and the actual occupy the same space: Don’s house in Ossining. It is Mother’s Day and, with breakfast in hand

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4 It should be clarified that this is the first visual flashback of the series; a sonic flashback is featured in the series’ first episode in the scene when Don stares at the fly trapped in the ceiling (discussed in my third chapter).
5 Budgetary constraints may have influenced the staging of this flashback; however, as Bigsby points out, the staging is evocative of the theatrics of Arthur Miller (further supported by a comment made by Weiner in his
for his wife Betty (January Jones), Don walks up the stairs. Here we see the Deleuzian action-image that is driven by movement and action (of Don walking up the stairs), gives way to the time-image: Don trips on a toy and comes crashing down the stairs. As he falls backward physically, mentally a flashback is triggered, and as he reaches the bottom of the stairs, he is replaced by a younger version of his former self: Dick Whitman. Unlike the flashbacks in Mankiewicz’s films such as All About Eve and Suddenly, Last Summer this flashback is not demarcated by a grandiose voice over describing the memory first, which then transports to the past. Don simply falls back and then the flashback begins. Strangely, once young Dick stands up and begins interacting with his family that occupies the Draper’s living room, Don continues to lie at the bottom of the stairs, apparently unable to do anything but watch. Just as in the time-images Deleuze describes in the work of Antonioni, Don becomes immobile as action around him continues. Young Dick walks into the living room from the foyer, and apprehensively meets his half-brother Adam to whom his stepmother has just given birth. As the scene comes to an end, one notable shot places past Dick and present Don in the same frame looking at each other: Dick, in the living room, turns to look at Don still lying at the bottom of the stairs. In this shot we see the time-image: an image of Don’s past self gazes at his future self, visually evoking Deleuze’s claim (one firmly rooted in Bergsonian theory) that: “there is no present that is not haunted by a past and a future” (Cinema 2 7). The deep space composition of this shot suggests that Don’s past coexists with his present in the form of memories that interrupt and then take

_ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN TELEVISION_ interview with Herman). For more on the influence of Miller’s play on television, see Weiner’s comments in Bigsby, 378.
over his present unexpectedly. Due to the persistence of memory, the very setting of his living room becomes a space where the Bergsonian nature of time can be explored.

This depth of field staging is not just restricted to this first flashback; it is repeated most notably in the finale of season six. When Don walks away from his wife Megan’s (Jessica Paré) shoot for Butler shoes and the strings of Nancy Sinatra’s “You Only Live Twice” begin to pick up momentum, an extreme depth of field is created as Megan in the background gets further and further away as Don walks towards the foreground, in perfect focus. Is this not the same effect created “in the great scene where Kane catches up in depth with the friend he will break with” (Deleuze Cinema 2 106)? I argue that the effect is the same, for “the quality of depth of field is to reverse time’s subordination to movement and show time for itself” (109). Don’s walk away from Megan to a seat at a bar, where he orders an old fashioned, is a traversal over a large sheet of the past. It is unclear how much time passes during Don’s walk. All we know is that he is moving through time and not space, towards his future where a woman at a bar flirtatiously asks him if he is alone. Thus, within the time-image that is Mad Men itself, we see other time-images in shots that effectively layer Don’s past over his present.
1.3 Bergson’s Schemas

For Deleuze, the schemas provided by Bergson in *Matter and Memory* illustrate Bergson’s theories of the different functions of memory as they translate to the cinematic realm. Deleuze appropriates Bergson’s schema of attentive recognition (Figure 1) to describe the cinematic flashback (Bogue 113). He also adopts Bergson’s inverted cone schema (Figure 2) representing the totality of memory, to explain the way in which films such as *Citizen Kane* explore sheets of
the past, or “transpersonal memory space” (Bogue 142). Before I address how these figures are expressed narratively and aesthetically in *Mad Men*, it is first necessary to distinguish between two different kinds of recognition outlined by Bergson, which is precisely how Deleuze begins his third chapter of *Cinema 2*. The first kind is the memory of habit, “automatic or habitual recognition” (44), which is the mental act of retrieving memories subconsciously in order to perform everyday activities. Bergson uses the example of the “auditory recollection of words” to describe this kind of recognition (*MM* 109). In an “automatic sensori-motor process” we scan the phrases we hear and reach into memory to fill in the thought the words produce in our mind, that is, the memory-images they call upon (109); this is the “habitual linkage of memory and perception within action” (Bogue 113), or as Deleuze explains, the extension of perception “so as to draw on its useful effects” (*Cinema 2* 44). On the other hand, attentive recognition, as depicted in the schema seen in Figure 1, is a deeper accessing of memory, one which starts from an object being presently perceived (represented by O on the diagram), and “reflects upon the object a growing number of suggested images” (represented by the circles A,B,C,D) that expand vertically from the perceived object (*MM* 104). Rather than remembering something habitually, “attentive recognition is a kind of circuit in which the external object yields to us deeper and deeper parts of itself [B’,C’,D’], as our memory adopts a correspondingly higher degree of tension in order to project recollections toward it” (116). When we recollect, “we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past” (134), a process, which Bergson likens to that of a camera adjusting as it focuses on an object. O (object) triggers an expansion of memory, which “comes into view like a condensing cloud” (134), as we are mentally transported through the circuitry of memory (A,B,C,D), and then returned to the present object, “so as to emphasize certain contours” as
Deleuze explains further (Cinema 2 44). “When we remember, we figuratively leap from the actual present into a virtual past, find a virtual memory-image, and then bring it into the actual present” (Bogue 116), and this is the mental process of Don precisely depicted in the very first flashback sequence of the Mad Men series.

Before the flashback begins, Don is walking up the stairs while time unfolds linearly along a horizontal plane, represented by the horizontal line bisecting Bergson’s schema into two. O, the object perceived, is what triggers the flashback, and in this case it is the act of Don falling down the stairs that launches him back to the day of the birth of his half brother. Don recalls a deeply buried memory, a mental action represented by Bergson as a traversal of the circuitry of memory. Mentally, Don leaps from O, to join the deepest strata, D, only to come full circle, bringing the past memory into the present moment in order to reflect on it attentively. What allows this flashback sequence to be particularly illustrative of Bergson’s schema is its staging: the past literally invades the present space of Don’s foyer and living room. This suggests that even when one is transported mentally to the annals of memory, one physically remains in the present and vice versa; when one is in the present, the past is simultaneously being created, being preserved in the present, and as represented by Bergson’s inverted cone schema (Figure 2). In this brief scene from Mad Men, we can see salient illustrations of Bergson’s concept of memory, as well as Deleuze’s recollection-image inspired by Bergson’s attentive recognition. Viewers watch Don recollect in a flashback staged so that it becomes unclear whether the space it contains is present or past or, as Deleuze would put it, actual or virtual; the two become indiscernible, especially at the end of the sequence when young Dick turns around and stares at old Don. It is unclear whether past is gazing at the present or if the present is reflecting on the past, and thus we have a time-image in television, a telesign.
It is generally understood that for Deleuze, the flashback does not bring forth the cinematic time-image, made evident by his comments in *Cinema 2*’s preface that the time-image has nothing to do with recollection or a flashback (xii), because “[r]ecollection is only a former present, whilst the characters who have lost their memories in modern cinema literally sink back into the past, or emerge from it, to make visible what is concealed over in recollection” (xii). As Deleuze elaborates in his third chapter of *Cinema 2* (“From Recollection to Dreams: 3rd Commentary on Bergson”) in reference to Bergson’s model of attentive recognition, the flashback “is precisely a closed circuit that goes from the present, to the past, then brings us back to the present” (115), a description that proves accurate when one looks at the flashbacks of Mankiewicz discussed above. D.N. Rodowick references these passages from *Cinema 2* and firmly states that the recollection image is not “the proper subjective correlate for the direct image of time because the actual and virtual are contrasted and discernible” (91). However, as I argue above, the recollection images of *Mad Men* do indeed blur the actual and the virtual on a micro and macro level. In terms of the single flashback sequence from the “Babylon” episode, its unique staging creates an indiscernibility of past and present, or virtual and actual. Furthermore, in agreement with Ronald Bogue’s reading of *Cinema 2*, the “creative use of the flashback” can develop into a time-image, especially if the structure and logic of the flashback contrasts the conventional flashbacks of classical cinema (115). Additionally, the entire structure of *Mad Men* as a series is one that creates indiscernibility between past and present, as it is a period piece that nevertheless exists in our modern present and reflects contemporary issues.

Ignoring the macro structure of *Mad Men*, one could attempt to claim that this particular flashback sequence cannot bring forth a time-image because the flashback merely “describes a circle of memory restored—an originary actual image dives into the past to restore the sequence
of images that led to it” (Rodowick 91). Thus for Rodowick, reading into statements made by Deleuze, if the flashback eventually returns to the present, it is made somewhat redundant, and the visual narrative text still belongs to the regime of movement rather than time. In *Mad Men*, however, the “restoration” of the sequence of images Rodowick describes is delayed. As a long-form, slow burning narrative, *Mad Men* does not reveal the full narrative weight of these flashbacks until much later in season one. It thus places mental demands on its viewers, requiring them to remember the flashback sequence for later reference. Episodically, the flashback functions as a commentary on mothers, thus emphasizing Don’s lack of a motherly figure like his wife Betty when growing up. When young Dick meets his half-brother Adam, his reaction is “that’s not my brother,” to which his Uncle Mack responds: “’Course he is, you’ve got the same daddy.” It is made clear that the woman who just gave birth to Adam is not his mother, and that his “daddy” is not present. Although Don’s orphan-hood is not completely confirmed until four episodes later in “Long Weekend,” when Don shares the truth of his childhood in dialogue with Rachel Menken (Maggie Siff), this flashback sequence plants the seed.

Furthermore, it is not until the third season that viewers truly understand that the birth of his half-brother has more weight than just as a memory triggered by mental associations with Mother’s day. If viewers remember or revisit the sequence, they then realize in the third season that what Don remembers is the day his stepmother truly became a mother by finally giving birth to a healthy child because her husband (Don’s father) is dead and no longer a physical threat to her and her child’s well being. For viewers who watched the series air live, years passed before they finally learned this information in the opening episode of the third season (“Out of Town”). Even for those streaming the series continuously, an entire season separated this revelation. In a sequence structured similarly to the flashback in “Babylon” Don witnesses his stepmother
(Brynn Horrocks), giving birth to a stillborn baby in his kitchen. This sequence clarifies why she treats young Dick so badly (as viewers see in “The Hobo Code” flashbacks): she resents him, as Dick symbolizes the child her husband could not give her.

The sequence that opens “Babylon” may at first be confusing, as it features characters viewers have never seen before, including a young Dick Whitman. The sequence demands attention from the viewer who must discern what is going on while also experiencing it. Then, the sequence lives on in the memory of the viewer who may revisit it mentally or physically. *Mad Men*’s engagement of memory is part of its cognitively challenging serial form. The flashback sequences are particularly engaging, as the *Mad Men* viewer gains a wider view as to who Don is and where he came from. And, in comprehending the way in which Don’s past impinges on his present in the form of painful, uncontrollable memories, the viewer may gain an understanding of the past’s overall influence on the present. As Bergson writes, “[e]very moment of our life presents two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on one side and recollection on the other,” and this is made literal in the visual staging of the first flashback (*ME* 132). Just as Don perceives his present situation of falling down the stairs on Mother’s Day, he simultaneously reflects on his past. Similarly, the *Mad Men* viewer too reflects on Don’s past while applying it to his present.
Chapter 2: Memory

Although likely not Weiner’s intention, *Mad Men* nevertheless is an effective evocation of Bergson’s theories as well as Deleuze’s Bergsonian inspired film philosophy. The promotional poster art by Brian Sanders for the sixth season is another example of *Mad Men*’s unintentional yet vivid illustration of Bergson’s theories. In the poster a rendering of Jon Hamm as Don in a dark suit clearly passes by another Don in a grey suit; their eye lines match as they each turn back to look at each other. When this poster art was released much of the media commented on the presence of police behind the two Dons, with some fans hypothesizing that Don’s past crimes (desertion and fraud) were going to come back to haunt in a very direct way of criminal charges in the forthcoming season.\(^6\) However, these predictions based on interpretations of the poster were proven incorrect,\(^7\) for although Don does interact with police in the sixth season after his children are held hostage while his apartment is robbed, this has nothing to do with his two selves: Dick and Don. The two selves are the focus of this advertisement and also another Bergsonian theme explored throughout the series. Although Don is two men in one in that he is Dick Whitman living as Donald Draper, according to Bergson we all have two selves in the form of an inner self and an outer self. We tend to privilege our outer self. In *Time and Free Will* Bergson declares that: “we live for the external world rather than for ourselves” (231). Through “deep introspection,” however,” it is possible “to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly becoming” (231), in which our states “melt into one another like the crystals of a

\(^6\) For example, see the sixth season predictions put forth in three online articles posted by Moaba, Gajewski, and Edwards.

\(^7\) To provide some validity to these claims regarding the art anticipating events, Weiner explains to Herman that the creative process of each season begins with him telling the marketing team at AMC the whole story of the season before he even tells the writers. The subsequent campaign is based on this; therefore, the posters are vital paratexts when discussing the themes of each season.
snow-flake when touched for some time with the finger” (TFW 138-139). What Bergson describes is not a split personality, but a psychical phenomenon to which we are not usually attuned. However, in moments of self-contemplation we can grasp our inner states as different than the outer world. Bergson expands upon this idea in his later work Mind-Energy when he relates one’s awareness of the two selves to that of an actor watching himself: “the more deeply he analyses his experiences, the more he will split into two personages, one which moves about the stage while the other sits and looks” (135). Therefore, when Don watches a version of his child self in Mad Men’s first flashback sequence, he is deeply analyzing himself and psychically comprehending the split between Don and Dick.

Although Don’s struggles with his identity are at the centre of Mad Men’s narrative, he is not the only character in the series to experience a crisis of identity. From Peggy’s secret impregnation by Pete (Vincent Katheiser), to Cosgrove’s secret science fiction writing career, to Joan’s (Christina Hendricks) untold marital rape in Don’s office, however minor or major, many of the characters hide aspects of their true identities. Many characters have private lives that they do not intend to make public at Sterling Cooper, with Don as the prime example. In the penultimate episode from the first season “Nixon vs. Kennedy,” Don tries to convince Rachel to run away with him in order to avoid Pete airing his secret publicly. However, Pete chooses the wrong person to share this knowledge with because Bert Cooper (Robert Morse) responds simply, “I don’t care Mr. Campbell,” as he understands a man’s performing self, the one who occupies the present room he is, to be the one that matters (as the Japanese proverb he recites expresses). Don avoids negative consequences of harbouring such a secret in the first season; however, in the sixth season when he chooses to reveal his true identity publicly, he is not so fortunate.
2.1 Both Sides Now

As Weiner illuminates in his *Archive of American Television* interview, the theme of private versus public is one he has always intended for the series to explore; in particular he highlights how people act differently in private than they do in public. Weiner further emphasizes this idea of the inside versus the outside when he comments: “Don is one person on the inside and one on the outside, and the one on the inside isn’t so great” (Herman). For instance, Don’s inner, ugly self eventually causes his second wife Megan to recoil in the seventh season, as she tells Don while in his divorce attorney’s office that he is an “aging, sloppy, selfish liar” who “ruined” her life (“New Business”). Even his daughter Sally (Kiernan Shipka) experiences severe disillusionment. First, she witnesses her father “comforting” his mistress and married neighbor Sylvia (Linda Cardellini), shattering the image of her father as happily remarried to Megan (“Favors”). Then, after being thoroughly embarrassed by her father flirting with her schoolmate, Sally forcefully tells Don before she leaves for an across country trip that she would be happy never to come back and have to see him again (“The Forecast”). Time and again the series demonstrates that when one allows too much of one’s private life to become public, it can have catastrophic circumstances, made most obvious by Don’s ill-fated Hershey’s pitch featured in the finale of the sixth season (“In Care Of”), where the truth of his “impoverished childhood” (as Jim Cutler played by Harry Hamlin cuttingly comments later in the mid-season finale of season seven, “Waterloo”) is far too real, and therefore creates great discomfort for the clients and his colleagues which leads to Don being put on leave by the firm.

Don makes a fatal mistake in the Hershey’s meeting; rather than ending on a pitch of a sentimentally fabricated version of his childhood, he shares his real memories of a Hershey’s chocolate bar:
I was an orphan. I grew up in Pennsylvania in a whorehouse. I read about Milton Hershey and his school in Coronet magazine or some other crap the girls left by the toilet. And I read that some orphans had a different life there. I could picture it. I dreamt of it. Of being wanted. Because the woman who was forced to raise me would look at me every day like she hoped I would disappear. Closest I got to feeling wanted was from a girl who made me go through her john's pockets while they screwed. If I collected more than a dollar, she'd buy me a Hershey bar. And I would eat it alone in my room with great ceremony, feeling like a normal kid. It said “sweet” on the package. It was the only sweet thing in my life. (“In Care Of”)

To Don, the Hershey bar represents his deep desire to be “wanted” and he cannot hold back the memories the bar conjures back when confronted with the people who gave him such hope as a child. As Don also says at the meeting, he found a certain satisfaction in the simplicity of the bar’s packaging that was designed so that what was on the outside looked like what was on the inside, honestly advertising it as brown “sweet” chocolate. Essentially, the Hershey bar was not a fraud, yet ironically, Don would have to steal from “johns” in the “whorehouse” in order to purchase one. And during the moment he would enjoy the chocolate, he would feel like a real kid, ever so briefly; this is the only “sweet tale” of his childhood he can honestly tell, one that is bookended by unsavory details. Don sharing publicly events he had so long kept private can be seen as a turning point in the series that was clearly anticipated. The season six promotional poster foreshadows this climatic moment when the two selves of Don co-mingle. Don reaches into the realm of pure memory, extracts a memory from Dick, and presents it at the meeting as Donald Draper.
In Bergson’s diagram for attentive recognition (Figure 1) the object perceived, in this case Don sharing his innermost secrets at the Hershey’s meeting, is at the centre of the concentric circles. The object becomes better outlined, better understood upon recalling the past, by the expansion of outer circles that finally begin to include the memories of Dick. Bergson writes of this process in *Matter and Memory*:

> memory, capable, by reason of its elasticity, of expanding more and more, reflects upon the object a growing number of suggested images—sometimes the details of the object itself, sometimes concomitant details which may throw life upon it. Thus, after having rebuilt the object perceived, as an independent whole, we reassemble, together with it, the more and more distant conditions with which it forms one system. (104-105)

Characters in the room during the Hershey meeting such as Roger (John Slattery) reflect upon Don in disbelief. “Was any of that true?” asks Roger afterward, to which Don simply responds, “Yes.” The partners of Sterling Cooper cannot reconcile themselves with what the elasticity of Don’s memory has brought to light in the meeting, and the version of Don they reassemble as a result is one that cannot be trusted with clients. Although for Don this is not a positive consequence of his sharing, it seems that, personally, this is a step in the right direction to harmonizing his two selves. As a result, not only does Don rediscover his passion for the creativity that advertising allows and the competitiveness of the business by literally starting over, writing coupons and tags, but in the next and last season he begins to acknowledge more of his past, this time in scenarios with less dire consequences. In season seven, Don tells Roger and a group of women a story of his Uncle Mack and a malfunctioning toaster (“Severance”), an event that was once sealed away in the forbidden memory strata belonging to his childhood.
Despite Don losing his position as creative director, the sixth season ends on a particularly self-affirming note. Following the partners meeting at which Don is told he must go on leave, Don picks up his children for Thanksgiving and makes a stop in Pennsylvania. They pull up in what his son Bobby (Mason Vale Cotton) deems “a bad neighbourhood” (“In Care Of”). Standing outside his old house, Don tells them this is where he grew up. The camera cuts to the reaction of Sally, who stares up at her father in a certain awe, perhaps a combination of disbelief and curiosity, while a cover of Joni Mitchell’s “Both Sides, Now” by Judy Collins begins to play non-diegetically, leading into the credits. The final verse, “I’ve looked at life from both sides now/From up and down and still somehow/It’s life’s illusion I recall/I really don’t know life at all” (Mitchell), expresses what his children, and viewers are experiencing. Although viewers, like his children, are closer to understanding Don by seeing this other side of him, it does not mean that all the illusions of life are revealed. Life is a constant unfolding flow of perceptions and sensations made real to us through the function of mind and memory. One must experience life in order to know it, and this experience at the level of mental subjectivity is something that cannot be condensed. Viewers gain more insight with each episode that passes, but who Don is, is not something that can suddenly be revealed or summarized simply. Just as Don grows as a character throughout the series by uniting his two selves, the viewer too grows. The viewer’s own memories impact his or her evolving perception of the series. When one perceives, one recollects. Recollection and perception: these are the two sides of mental life that form our consciousness, which is, after all, just memory (ME 5). This inner process of recollection and perception is not just an intellectual but also an intuitive experience that evolves. This evolution is accounted for in Bergson’s schema of inverted cone of total memory that is designed to expand vertically and widens to accommodate the constant production of memories.
2.2 Warm Milk and the Cone of Total Memory

The past exists as images in our memory and it has a tendency to come crashing in when we least expect, just as it does when Don falls down the stairs. But, reliving a memory mentally is not necessarily akin to that of watching projected images on a screen or watching players act before us, as we see in the series’ first flashback. Rather, the act of remembering is a mental process where our imaginations serve an important function. In the scene that opens the third season, which I hereon call the “warm milk” sequence, Don observes and reacts to events from a time before he was even born. He stands as the lone audience member at a performance of a virtual rendering of an actual scenario.

The scene that opens “Out of Town” begins with Don standing in his kitchen over his stove warming some milk for his pregnant wife. Don’s kitchen then literally opens up to a series of sequences that reveal the details of Don’s conception and how he came to be raised by a woman who was not his birth mother. This flashback is unique while also problematic in that it cannot even be called a flashback because it is impossible that Don could actually remember what he sees before him. No one has the ability to remember their own birth, yet Don witnesses these virtual, imaginary images in the actual space of his kitchen. These images are indeed from his past, but a past that is not from Don’s memory; rather, the images must be from his imagination; they are a mental construction pieced together. The scene unfolds in the following way: Don is warming milk over the stove while the camera films him from behind. Then, after the camera cuts to a reverse shot, we see a blood stained bed laid out in front of Don in the kitchen. On it lays his stepmother Abigail, exhausted after giving birth to a stillborn. She asks to see the child, the midwife (played by Lauri Johnson) shows her, and then Don’s father Archie (Joseph Culp) appears, asking: “You killed another one?” to which the midwife responds “Cause you had
nothing to do with this? Maybe you ought to stay off her once in a while.” After Archie tells the midwife to “get out of here you witch,” the camera cuts back to Don looking ponderous and slightly bewildered. A sound bridge carries us into the next scene, as we hear his father say, “I got 85 and my boots off…” before the camera cuts to a new scene in front of Don, that of his father and his birth mother (played by Kelly Huddleston), negotiating terms of the sexual transaction that results in Don’s birth. Following that, similar editing techniques are used to cut from medium close-ups of Don back to the events in the kitchen of his mother giving birth and then dying while cursing Archie (“I’ll cut his dick off and boil it in hog fat!” as she has previously threatened). And finally, baby Dick (named after his mother’s last words uttered in angry delirium) is delivered in a basket to the front door of Don’s Ossining home, which stands in for the Illinois farmhouse where he grew up as a child.

Similar to the “Babylon” flashback, this sequence departs in style and structure from the conventional cinematic flashback. Don’s reflection on his own birth as he warms the milk is dramatized similar to the first flashback when his home becomes a stage where past events are enacted. His subjectivity is projected onto the space of his kitchen. The milk boils over, which brings Don’s attention back to the warm milk. Thus, the cone of memory has run its route and Don’s attention as well as the episode returns to the present. Although the events Don witnesses in this sequence cannot be said to be true memories, they are still memory-images harboured within the constraints of the cone of memory. The sequence validates what Don told Rachel Menken, and what he will eventually tell Betty at the end of season three. The importance of the sequence cannot be debated. The question, rather, is can we not say that the images of Don watching himself as a baby being delivered in a basket to his father’s house contain the thought-provoking time-image? Again, due to the way in which this flashback or, more accurately,
hallucination or moment of illustrative subjectivity, is structured makes evident a telesign. Time, rather than movement, is the focus of the sequence, as viewers are presented with another double-sided image that effectively splits time into two parallels streams of past and present, as represented by the Bergson’s inverted cone schema (see Figure 2). What occurs in this sequence is a moment of perception, recollection, as both Don and the viewer contemplate the coexistence of past and present.

After all, this sequence is constructed for the viewer’s benefit. At first, the viewer may assume that the milk Don warms is for his new baby. At the end of the second season, Betty shares with Don that she is pregnant with their third child. As this is the opening scene of the third season, viewers may assume that time has passed between seasons and Betty has given birth. However, Don actually warms the milk for his pregnant wife, which perhaps explains the trigger for the flashback as associated with Betty’s pregnancy and imminent birth that is on Don’s mind. Weiner immediately calls upon the viewer to access his or her memory of the end of the second season in order to make sense of the third season’s opening sequence. The viewer is then required to reach even further back into his or her memory during the hallucinatory sequence to recall the “Babylon” flashback. As the last chapter revealed, the two sequences together form a better understanding of Don’s childhood and the people who raised him. Furthermore, the warm milk sequence provides legitimacy to Don’s origin story that he told Rachel Menken and which he will repeat to Betty at the end of the third season. A virtual imagining is made actual through a sequence that illustrates events forged in Don’s memory and confirms the truth of Don’s childhood while also catching viewers up on events from the previous season. Specifically, the series is reminding viewers of the stories Don has told others about his childhood. As this episode opens the third season, it seems that the sequence is meant
to highlight the horrible truth of Don’s childhood while also emphasizing for the viewers the secrets Don has yet to make public to the right people, mainly his wife. Furthermore, viewers must remember the milk sequence in order to better understand the preceding and following flashbacks as they slot together the puzzle pieces of Don’s life. Viewers too have their own cone of memory that must be traversed in order to make sense of events of the series. One episode can subtly refer to details provided earlier in the series as well as to information that has yet to be revealed. Therefore, the preponderant role of memory in Mad Men is such that it cognitively engages its viewers. It provokes viewers to think in time, to align events of the series, and to place actual alongside virtual in a complex layering of temporal sedimentation. Eventually the Mad Men viewer gains a greater understanding of how specific recollections from the mind of Don impact a particular point in the narrative of the series as well as its overarching narrative.

To return to Bergson’s inverted cone schema (Figure 2), it represents the totality of memory: all of our recollections bound up in an ever-expanding form. Or for Suzanne Guerlac, it represents the state of the mind itself as a circuit of perception and memory that “produces a kind of mix of idea and image (or mind and matter)” (153). We can say that any given point of the narrative of Mad Men, such as a particular scene or shot, is represented by the apex of the cone: S; it is from this point that the passing present becomes past. The parallel lines that vertically expand from the apex represent the past and present and how they are “coextensive with consciousness” (MM 151); as Bogue explains, the point of the cone represents “past’s coincidence with the present, and its widening volume representing the ever-growing expanse of coexisting past events” (136). The circles that bridge the past and present together in the form of the cross sections (A, B, A’, B’, A’’, B’’) represent all of the sheets of the past that are like the circular circuits of recollection: they can be accessed and remembered and brought back to the
apex of the cone. In regards to the flashbacks to Don’s childhood, as viewers watch such sequences unfold, their mind is transforming this present perception into an image that can be accessed later. Apart from each episode’s extremely brief “previously on Mad Men” montage, as well as subjective moments such as the milk sequence that function to characterize while also actualize, the series expects its viewers to remember details from earlier episodes while also paying attention to the present episode because, as Weiner expresses in his interview with Herman, “There’s drama in absorbing information.” The show thus requires two coexisting states of contemplation and absorption, much in the manner of the two streams of past and present flowing out from the apex of Bergson’s inverted cone of memory. A minor example of this at work can be found when Don says to Roger in the second episode of the first season (“Ladies Room”) that his childhood is “not that interesting a story” and to just think of him as Moses. He says to Roger, “I was a baby in a basket.” Viewers who file this line of dialogue away in their memory will access it later during the milk sequence. What at first seems to be a lightly made joke is actually rooted in fact as, seasons later, viewers find out that Don was indeed a baby in a basket.

The narrative structure of Mad Men places high demands on viewers’ attention, focus, and memory. Furthermore, the structure of a complex series such as Mad Men can be analyzed on two related levels. In Beckman’s “Freaks of Time: Reevaluating Memory and Identity through Daniel Knauf’s Carnivale,” she distinguishes between two different temporal axes that intersect in the HBO series; the same can be said of other Quality Television programming such as Mad Men. “The diegetic time of fictional universe” is deemed by Beckman to be the temporal-content axis, which often merges with the temporal-formal axis, “the temporality built into the medium of audiovisual representation in general” which is “a set of temporal conditions that affect and
include the viewer’s capacity to comprehend narrative” (179). In Mad Men, these two temporal axes do more than just intersect; they intermingle the same way that one’s present intermingles with one’s past. Mad Men’s diegetic depiction of an American advertising agency in the 1960s is one that more than just tenuously connects to the viewer’s own concept of life in the 1960s. The show actualizes the era for its viewers, tapping into their collective memory to provide a faithful reproduction of what many believe the 1960s to be. Furthermore, diegetic gaps in the narrative take viewers along a journey through time that starts in 1960 and ends in 1971, with many breaks in the narrative that actually mirror breaks in broadcasting. For example, when the series returned in 2015 to air its final seven episodes, a year’s time had elapsed in the diegetic narrative as for the viewer. Inferences based on clothing, hair, political events are necessary, and further, the serialization relies on the viewers to fill in the gaps with their imaginations based on these inferences appropriately. However, this time in between installments is also necessary for the process of absorption, as the viewer may return mentally to the series in the course of a year, something that not only builds anticipation but allows for the series to become part of the viewer’s own mental life. In our minds one is able to separate the two axes, but they nevertheless converge in the viewer. To phrase it in Beckman’s terms, Mad Men’s engagement of its viewers total memory along the temporal-formal axis allows viewers to better understand the temporal-content axis of the series. Rather than Beckman’s axes, I argue that this engagement of the Mad Men viewer’s memory is perhaps better understood in the terms of Bergson, for the streams of past and present, actual and virtual, or fictional and non-fictional, are clearly represented by the parallel streams of Bergson’s inverted cone that converge at the apex of one’s present perception.

2.3 The Intuitive Experience

Although this thesis is concerned with Bergson’s theories, his philosophy of art (as put forth in
his *The Creative Mind, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* and sections of *Creative Evolution* has been overlooked thus far. However, that is probably because, as Paul Ardoin rightly points out (in his “The Difficulties of Reading with a Creative Mind: Bergson and the Intuitive Reader”), Bergson’s description of the experience of art attempts to undo some of the theories so firmly put forth in *Matter and Memory*. Although “the centerpiece” of Bergson’s philosophy of memory is that our past is “always with us” (Ardoin 534), his writings on art and the artist seem to ignore this concept completely. Bergson claims that in art one may find “more qualities and more shades than we naturally perceive” but only “on the surface rather than in depth. It enriches our present, but it scarcely enables us to go beyond it” (qtd. in 534). These quotes open Ardoin’s examination of this apparent contradiction in Bergson’s philosophy. As Ardoin explains, “Bergson assumes that art and literature are experienced in a particular vacuum that isolates the viewer or readers from her past” (532), as though he has forgotten the overarching argument in his previous work that memory coexists with the present. According to *Matter and Memory*, it is impossible to approach any object, for example a work of televisual art, with a mind emptied of past memories because consciousness is memory. In an attempt to bridge together these two opposing theories, Ardoin proposes a “creative” reading experience, one that is intuitive rather than intellectual and utilizes the past experiences of the reader. When readers approach a work of literature philosophically rather than merely intellectually, they can then enter into themselves “vertically” through the work (538).

This process of intuitive reading can be better understood in reference to Bergson’s circle schema (Figure 1). The object perceived at the centre, such as a television episode, relies on an automatic accessing of habitual memory in order for the viewer to understand the events of the episode in relation to the whole series. Just as “the process of memory is inseparable from the
process of reading and making meaning” (Ardoin 536), so is the process of “reading” televisual stories, as it is one that relies on inferences and reference points. Beyond habitual recognition, the circular planes representing different strata of memory triggered by the perceived object dilate further as viewers relate what they see to their own past experiences. Moreover, if one decides to re-watch an episode, although the habitual memories accessed may be similar to those from the previous viewing, the deeper, more personal level of recollection and perception may be drastically different. As Ardoin explains, “[i]f my present always brings with it my past while pushing its way into my future (a favorite description of Bergson’s), then my first experience with a book becomes part of my overall past experience, along with everything that happens until the next time I read the book,” a statement he follows up with the example that a book will have a “different effect” on one as an adult than one as a teenager (537). Therefore, the experience of reading a book or watching a television episode becomes part of the cone of total memory. When we encounter the same art object again, although the memory of the previous interaction with it may be accessed, it does not dictate the same reaction, interpretation, or train of thought. Similarly, no two viewers may interpret the same work of art in an identical manner; even the same person, whether years or minutes later, may have a drastically different reaction each time he or she revisits the art object. This experience is directly related to the viewer’s past and how the viewer’s memories have evolved since his or her last interaction with the text.

Televisual art offers an especially personal viewing experience in that one watches television within the intimacy of one’s home. With the advent of DVD and streaming technology, one may now watch with even more comfort and convenience. Much like a reader of a book, a television viewer may climb into bed with a laptop to watch a few chapters. Furthermore, given the long breaks in between seasons of Mad Men (almost two full years
passed between the airing of the fourth and fifth season), an invested viewer may choose to watch past episodes again before the next installment. This is a ritual supported by AMC. Before the airing of the final episode of the series, the network dedicated their programming to re-airing the entire seventh season. Then, after airing the finale, AMC immediately played the episode again, allowing viewers to watch and then re-watch. Given the great amount of time that viewers may choose to spend with the series, it is understandable why some viewers become so personally attached, tuning in each week not just to follow the developments of the diegetic universe, but also to continue the personal experience of the series. What that experience is exactly is subjective and ambiguous, and can be difficult for one to put into words but Jimmie Manning, co-editor of *Lucky Strikes and a Three Martini Lunch: Thinking about Television’s Mad Men*, attempts to do just that. As he simply states in the conclusion of his highly personal essay “Finding Yourself in *Mad Men*”:

> What *Mad Men* has made me do is think about my life. A lot. And while many other television programs . . . have made me think, it is the way that *Mad Men* makes me think that interests me. I try to place my life into that text. I try to understand the relationship between my father and my mother into these two people that ostensibly have little in common with them. I use *Mad Men* to conjure stories from my life, to consider what it is, what was, and what could be. (96)

The television images of *Mad Men* have a particular “way” of inspiring self-reflection. Perhaps it is the series’ realism as a period piece that enables viewers who have actual memories of growing up in the era to relate to the series so personally. However, Manning is not reflecting on actual memories of the era and, as he states, his family actually has “little in common” with the characters of the series. Yet, he clearly cannot help but see his own life in the series. When
Manning sees Don drinking a beer while building a playhouse for his daughter’s birthday in season one, episode three “The Marriage of Figaro,” he is reminded of his own father: “‘That is so like Dad,’ I think to myself while watching an episode of Mad Men. ‘Building shit in the backyard and getting drunk while doing it’” (93). Manning suggests that it is something special about the series that causes it to provoke such a personal reaction. Mad Men’s characters are crafted with such verisimilitude that, at least for Manning, the struggles of the characters have a sort of universal truth that turns his thought process inwards, to examine his own life and the real people he knows. And in turning inward, there is an accessing of memory, for viewers may remember a time when they felt what that character is feeling, or somebody they knew did. Manning’s stance is that the series has an intrinsic ability to distract viewers to the point that they are no longer thinking about the series but thinking about themselves. Perhaps with its emphasis on struggles of identity and the inability to forget what would rather not be remembered, Mad Men is unique in its provocation of recollection and introspection.

Manning is not the only Mad Men viewer to write of his experience of the series this way. The New Yorker television critic Emily Nussbaum’s review of the first episode of the seventh season “Time Zones” concludes: “And I felt, as if it were happening to me, poor Peggy’s final fall to her knees,” to reveal that she empathizes with Peggy on a personal level, to the point that she feels what Peggy feels in that moment. Nussbaum’s reaction may be provoked by what she perceives on screen, but it is deepened by her own personal experience of the series. While watching the scene, viewers may reflect on all that Peggy has gone through to determine what causes her to collapse to knees in such defeat. A viewer’s memory of the series exists within the same abstract depository that contains all of memory, and the memories can intermingle. Nussbaum feels as if “it were happening” to her because Peggy’s memories have become her
own. The emotions Nussbaum experiences come from within her, triggered by a memory that occurs alongside her perception of Peggy. To return to Bergson’s theory of attentive recognition, as humans we constantly refer to our past experiences in order to act and perceive, and television is no different. No matter what we approach, be it a book or a television series, we bring all of our past with us. *Mad Men* is merely tapping into emotions and memories in perhaps a more visceral, experiential way. Watching the series is thus an intuitive experience, as the viewer traverses the circuitry of memory in order to apprehend the narrative and in turn feel what a character is feeling. And, when the series is revisited, viewers may not only notice details overlooked before, but their emotional reaction may be different due to which memories are accessed and how total memory has evolved since the last viewing.

The intuitive viewing experience of *Mad Men* offers new interpretive and emotional possibilities based on where the time-images mentally transport the viewer within the cone of total memory. Manning’s statement that he uses *Mad Men* to “conjure stories” from his life is particularly relevant to Ardoin’s concept of the intuitive reader. Intuitive reading brings forth a unique experience of the same work each time it is read. Whereas intellectual reading is a “kaleidoscopic” “rearrangement” of words and the images they bring to mind, intuitive reading is an act of “re-creation,” “a continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty” (Ardoin 538). Although Manning does not mention the act of re-watching in this essay, one wonders if he would have the same reaction if he were to watch “The Marriage of Figaro” for example ten years later? Would he still see his father? Only Manning can answer this question, but the point still stands that the series, just like any art object, has the ability to inspire self-introspection through the process of attentive recognition.

An audience reception study could explore this idea in much more detail, but that is beyond
the parameters of this thesis; I can only speak of my own experience with the series, and based upon my experience re-watching episodes multiple times, I have found that my interpretation of an episode and, in turn, my interpretation of the entire series is constantly evolving, similar to Bergson’s analogy of *durée* as the “phrase of a melody” (*TFW* 111). When a new note is added, it impacts not just the whole but also the possibilities of how that melody will develop in the future. Similarly, when new memories that are constantly being created alongside perception enter into the cone of totality that preserves them, the whole does not change so much as evolves, just as the possibilities of our future perceptions evolve. It is therefore possible to approach a series like *Mad Men* with philosophical intuition, using it as a “method,” as Deleuze does in his *Bergsonism*. Deleuze writes that intuition is “the movement by which we emerge from our own duration, by which we make use of our duration to affirm and immediately to recognize the existence of other durations, above or below us” (33). Intuitively grasping the complexities of *Mad Men* takes us beyond duration and to something deeper than ourselves, to a subjectivity articulated by a fictional world. We recognize “other durations” in the form of Don’s subjective memory processes that are depicted in flashback and hallucinatory sequences, and recognizing soon develops into sympathizing. We sympathize because we feel what the character feels; their memories have become our own. And, as the series develops, so do our memories, which may result in us feeling differently when we revisit a particular episode or scene. Bergson urges those in attendance at his lecture at the *Philosophical Congress* in Bologna in 1911 “grasp ourselves afresh as we are, in a present which is thick, and furthermore, elastic, which we can stretch indefinitely backward by pushing the screen which masks us from ourselves farther and farther away . . . immediately in our galvanized perception what is taut becomes relaxed, what is dormant awakens, what is dead comes to life again” (“Philosophical Intuition” 302). This is how
I understand my experience revisiting a series such as *Mad Men*: the new experiences I bring to it every time I watch it “breath[es] life into the phantoms” on the screen (302), as what is “dead” does come to life again through my own personal viewing experience.

A summary of Ardoin’s argument is pertinent to the discussion of *Mad Men* as a series that, as stated previously, lends itself to re-watching. Viewers may find the need to re-watch because they missed certain minor details during the first viewing. Viewers may also find subsequent viewing experiences to be different than the first. For example, although different viewers may interpret the subjective flashbacks of Don similarly, that is because the flashback’s purpose is rather straightforward: to better characterize the past of Don. There are, however, more ambiguous moments in the series that are perhaps more open to multiple interpretations, discussed further in the next chapter. Although moments, such as when Don stares at a crack in a glass in deep contemplation (“The Jet Set”), are perhaps purposely ambiguous, they still serve an important narrative purpose: they are not just illustrating the meditation of Don’s own contemplation, but also function as time-images that provoke a process of contemplation in the viewer that may even turn inwards.

It may be a stretch to claim that a television series has such a powerful personal effect on its viewers. However, as Manning’s piece demonstrates, as much as we may try to separate ourselves from the fictional performance of life before us on television, there is an overwhelming desire to relate to what we see on a more personal level. When Deleuze writes of the time-image, he writes of an image that detaches from the sensory-motor schema of the movement-image. Although this “detachment” occurs in the film world—the pillow shots of Ozu for example that purposely halt the narrative—this detachment also occurs within the viewer, who too may detach from the narrative and think, not about the film but about himself; furthermore, the viewer may
see himself in the characters on screen, or at the very least he may relate to them on a great personal level, as we see with Manning. This is not to say that when one watches Don, he sees an image of himself reflected back. And although the aesthetics of the series as a period piece may remind one of one’s own experience of that era, beyond aesthetics there is the temporal structure and pace of the series that cannot be denied. In particular, it is the series’ flashback sequences and Don’s meditative moments that contain the time-image, and it is the time-image that provokes a certain depth of thought in the viewer that may turn inward and then project outward, much like as represented by the circle schema of Bergson.

When confronted with a time-image that goes “beyond the purely empirical structure of time” to reveal “a coexistence of distinct durations” (Deleuze, Cinema 2 xii), the viewer may withdraw completely from the narrative world, and contemplate her own distinct duration. For example, the films of Antonioni, during what Deleuze calls the “idle periods,” also contain the time-image, as when an event is “being reported only through itself without being explained” as characters aimlessly wander about a world of actual locations rather than in a studio (7).

Similarly of Late Spring, when the camera holds the image of the daughter “half smile and the beginning of tears” (17), Deleuze writes: “This is becoming, change, passage” (17); and further: “This is time, time itself” (17). This is time unaltered by editing structures that compress and fragment, and we also see time this way in Mad Men. Only a matter of minutes into the first episode is a clear example of this when Don lies down on the couch in his office and stares at a fly trapped in the ceiling light above him. The sensory-motor schema seems to slow down or perhaps even halt as Don contemplates the fly; similarly, viewers are provided with time to contemplate Don, as well as to contemplate the nature of their own contemplation.

In Rodowick’s preface to his book-length examination of Deleuze’s cinematic philosophy
of time, he argues that what inspired Deleuze was his belief in “audiovisual culture” as a realm of self-discovery (xiii). Rodowick writes that for Deleuze, “the semiotic history of film is coincident with a century-long transformation wherein we have come to represent and understand ourselves . . . through [the] spatial and temporal articulations founded in cinema” (xiii). The spatial and temporal articulations we can find in Mad Men are represented in binaries: the inner self and the outer self; the actual and the virtual; the real and the imaginary; the present and the past. This theme of doubling also runs through Bergson’s philosophy, as many of the concepts he explains, such as attention, have two sides or two different ways of functioning. And similarly, so does the Deleuzian time-image. Deleuze writes in his conclusion of Cinema 2, “for the time-image to be born . . . [a]n image which is double sided, mutual, both actual and virtual, must be constituted” (273). As I have argued, in Mad Men there are many layers of these double-sided images, especially in the subjective sequences that open “Babylon and “Out of Town.”

From a philosophical standpoint, we can view all of us as forever navigating between the actual and the virtual. We may live in an actual moment, but the virtual image of our thoughts, our imaginations, and our memories of the past, are ever present.
Chapter 3: Space

The two flashbacks discussed in the previous chapters are key sequences that provide Don’s past with validity, while also functioning as valuable characterization; however, as the series develops past season three, there are no more flashbacks similar in style and structure to the ones that open “Babylon” and “Out of Town.” As the series progresses, rather, there are more hallucination and dream sequences. From Don imagining strangling a past lover in a fever dream (“Mystery Date”), to seeing the ghosts of Anna (Melinda Page, “The Suitcase”), Bert (“Waterloo” and “Lost Horizon”), and of a Vietnam soldier (Patrick Mapel) with whom he had switched lighters (“A Tale of Two Cities”), Mad Men becomes much more dream-like in its depiction of Don’s subjectivity. Rather than projecting the past onto the present, Don’s internal thoughts intermingle with a sort of spiritual force that brings those that have passed away before him to contemplate. Although these sequences are arguably more surreal, they are equally illustrative of Bergson’s idea of consciousness as a “thunderous action of memories” that “gnaw on present experience” (Kern 43), as Don’s dreams and hallucinations contain recollection-images that are actualized for the viewer similar to the manner of the flashbacks.

Although the hallucinatory sequences are intriguing in their own right, this chapter is more interested in sequences that make space rather than time their focus. As much as Mad Men plays with time, specifically the way in which it attempts to depict the anachronous and subjective time of memory as it is remembered and lived, it can also be apprehended spatially. This is most noticeable in the brief, yet poignant scenes in which time seems to slow down and even halt, providing space for the viewer to contemplate what is before them and how it relates to the overall narrative. It is these sequences that make evident the series’ “glacially slow pace” as an example of slow burn television (Mangan qtd. in Goodlad 322), while also demonstrating
the similarities the series shares with modernist literature, an art form also informed by modern perspectives of time.

Sequences such as the one that closes the episode “Maidenform,” of Don staring into the mirror at himself as the camera slowly backs away, can be perceived by some to be bizarre, unnecessarily drawn out, or even redundant. As CBCNews television reviewer Andre Mayer observes, despite the series’ intense following of passionate fans, it does not have the same consistent massive weekly viewership of shows such as Games of Thrones (David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, 2011-). Mayer reveals a stark divide in Mad Men’s reception, for although “[s]ome people have called Mad Men one of the most brilliant television shows of all time . . . [m]any others shrug it off as self-indulgent and boring.” Indeed, as Mayer points out, much of the criticism leveled against Mad Men revolves around its slower pace. And this criticism is hard to deny, especially in light of Goodlad’s observation that it takes Betty thirty-six episodes to open a drawer (329). The viewers of Mad Men must be active; they must be patient. They are required to perform mental work in order to make sense of the hallucinatory and flashback sequences, to figure out how remnants of the past fit into the present narrative. The telesigns viewers encounter attempt to illustrate the subjective nature of time as it is defined by memory, but there are more ambiguous segments of the series that demand patience from viewers and challenge their cognitive abilities in a different way than the flashbacks. They are sequences defined by space rather than time, which opens them to intuitive interpretation. As this chapter will go on to argue, these seemingly banal sequences are far from boring; rather, their importance can be understood in relation to Mad Men’s overall style and structure as a work of Quality Television with modernist artistic tendencies influenced by the theory of Bergson. The slow-burn of Mad Men’s
narrative pace thus mimics the literature of Eliot, James, Woolf and others who, influenced by Bergson, sought to depict subjective time in spatial form literature.

3.1 *Mad Men’s Slow-Burning Temporality*

As Woolf writes in her famous account of the “ideal fictional method” (Gillies 58) in her widely canonized essay “Modern Fiction:” “the greatest fault a writer could have was to concentrate on the external world at the expense of the inner” (qtd. in 58). *Mad Men’s* attention to character, offering not one but many characters for viewers to relate to personally, clearly privileges the inner world, especially Don’s. This contrasts more conventional television that follows the episodic sitcom style that dominated network television in the 1990s and 2000s, one that rarely explores the “inner world” of characters in such detail and in such a way that chronological structures are disturbed. Although comedies such as *Friends* (David Crane and Marta Kauffman, 1994-2004) may have flashback episodes in which characters humorlessly dress as if it is the 1980s, they do not dwell on the past of one character in particular such as in the manner of Don in *Mad Men*. If Chandler (Matthew Perry) were to stare off into a window that then opens up to a scene from his childhood, the only purpose such an artistic scene would serve would be comedy rather than introspection. Similarly, an episode of *Friends* rarely takes the time to have scenes unfold in real or slowed time, and its manipulation of chronology is usually for a gimmicky purpose. Using Woolf’s terminology, the majority of network television privileges the external world of characters in their centering on settings such as diners or coffee shops where characters interact. Although *Mad Men* has the setting of Sterling Cooper to ground its narrative, it is much more an exploration into the mind and memory of Don, his identity crisis, and what shapes his personality. This is not to say that the series abandons the external world, for it has an extreme attention to detail in its recreation of a 1960’s advertising office. Its realistic depiction of the era
is a key part of the series’ social commentary. Setting is not just staging for a story, but is also part of the story, just as we see in the first flashback that takes place in Don’s Ossining home. *Mad Men* has many “inner” sequences, but it is not at the expense of the outer world.

Indeed, *Mad Men* is a series known for its aesthetics, a characteristic that plants it firmly in the category of Quality Television. As Gry C. Rustad and Timotheus Vermeulen point out in their essay contribution to *Time in Television Narrative*, the term “Quality” can have contradictory meanings depending on the scholar and the country in which it used; however, their general definition is an excellent starting point for its identification. Their use of the word identifies a series with “an elaboration of *mise-en-scène* characterized by an attention to detail” and “an intensification of narrative” that combines Jason Mittell’s narrative complexity and compression with Robin Nelson’s hybrid, flexi-narratives (155). To this multi-faceted definition they add their own characteristic: “non-narrative moments” (154). They believe those sequences that allow “the viewer to immerse him or herself into the world” are key to understanding *Mad Men* as a work of Quality Television (158). The scene that serves as their example of a “non-narrative moment” is simply referred to as the “pear scene,” the final scene of season four’s “The Rejected.” It is a cleverly innocuous sequence that has a surprising depth because depending on one’s personal interpretation, it can be understood in the multitude of ways outlined by Rustad and Vermeulen (153). But, more importantly, the scene functions as a moment for viewers to take in the qualities of space while they apprehend the narrative in relation to Don, who is central.

The sequence unfolds as follows: while Don approaches the door of his apartment where he lives alone after his divorce from Betty, he witnesses a conversation between his elderly neighbours. The wife slowly strides down the hall with grocery bags while her husband stands in
the doorway, asking repeatedly, “Did you get the pears?” His wife refuses to answer while in the hallway, responding curtly: “We’ll discuss it inside.” The unique beauty of the sequence for Rustad and Vermeulen lies in its lack of narrative function, as viewers never see these characters again and they have no impact on the overall story. Moreover, Don appears to be “nearly invisible” in the sequence (155), as he is off-screen for most of it, serving as a silent witness. Therefore, it is a sequence that “disintegrates” rather than develops plotlines (155). However, just because Don is watching rather than participating does not relegate him to the margins. The sequence is in fact being performed for him, as are the previously discussed flashbacks. Although the sequence does not advance the narrative, it does function to further develop Don’s character by creating a sense of the outer world in which he lives, one that is filtered through his eyes. As this chapter will go on to argue, the pace of the series often mirrors the pace of Don’s own mental processes. When he stops to ponder, so does the present narrative action. Although time does not slow down when Don watches the interaction of the elderly couple in his hallway, the sequence is not really hurried along by editing. Viewers, like Don, watch the sequence unfold and then are left to ponder its purpose.

*Mad Men* “draws as much attention to time passing as to time stilled” (Rustad and Vermeulen 158), and such an example of attention being drawn to time passing can be found in the first episode of the second season (“For Those Who Think Young”) when Don meets his wife for Valentine’s Day in the lobby of the Savoy Hotel. Betty appears at the top of the stairs while Don waits for her below, and as she descends the stairs, a slow-motion effect is employed that elongates the time it takes for her to approach her husband. String instruments playing “Song of India” build in intensity. Betty descends the stairs and Don’s gaze follows her, imbued with the ability to retard time in order for him to take in the sight of his wife. A similar slow-motion
sequence is employed in the premiere episode of season seven ("Time Zones"), one that effectively retards the pace of Megan’s walk outside of the Los Angeles airport to greet her husband. She steps out of her Porsche convertible and walks toward Don while Spencer Davis’ “I’m a Man” plays. These sequences illustrate the pace of Don’s own mentality, while also acting as pauses in the narrative for the viewer to appreciate what he is looking at: the elegance of Betty’s descent down the stairs or the simple swaying of Megan’s mini-skirt. As stated previously, Weiner believes there is “drama in absorbing information” (Herman), and in these non-narrative sequences the drama comes from the act of slowly processing the aesthetics that make Don’s external world so poignant.

The above sequences arguably fail to advance the plot, and although they only account for a mere matter of minutes of the series, they may seem to some to be a frivolous waste of time in light of episodic television narratives that must quickly develop and conclude storylines within a thirty or sixty minute time slot. The pace of television is changing, and Mad Men is a prime example of the contemporary serialized slow-burning narrative. Echoing Mayer’s argument, Nussbaum believes Mad Men stands out in our current television landscape. She sees two categories of television: “very fast shows” or “very slow ones,” with Mad Men fitting into the latter. She sees this as a positive quality, as she writes that “[t]he show’s strength is still the way it relishes lingering and withholding, pausing and fetishizing, forcing the audience to gaze at endlessly interpretable images, like that final one of Don caught in the prison bars of his own broken sliding door.” The scene to which Nussbaum refers is the final scene of “Time Zones” in which Don, unable to close his balcony door, sits outside, defeated, while Vanilla Fudge’s “Keep Me Hanging On” starts to play non-diegetically. The camera dollies away from Don to frame him within the doors, or “prison bars.” This camera movement of backing away from Don as he
sits, stares, and contemplates, is a motif often repeated throughout the series, tracing back to season one’s finale “The Wheel” that concludes in a similar manner, except Don is sitting on the stairs of his house and the accompanying music is Bob Dylan’s “Don’t Think Twice it’s Alright.” The effect of these sequences is stronger than that of the pear scene. Rather than interpreting an interaction between unknown characters that is purposely banal, viewers interpret the image of Don as he sits and thinks before them. Rustad and Vermeulen write that in the pear scene, Don is “being pulled into [his] surroundings” (158), a statement that can also be applied to the flashback sequences that literally take over his surroundings, drawing him into their performance; however, in the sequences that feature the camera backing away motif, it seems as if it is the viewer who is being pulled into Don’s surroundings, as the space that is opened up between them and Don as the camera pulls away, is one viewers can enter into intuitively. Nothing really appears to be happening apart from Don sitting and thinking. Rather than just cutting to black and concluding, Mad Men draws out certain scenes, creating time-filled moments for viewers to ponder Don and the current state of his surroundings: his inner and his outer world.

The sequences discussed above draw attention to time in that time seems to slow down, or is allowed to unfold uninterrupted. However, as much as the series is defined by time, it is equally defined by space. When art historian Elie Faure observes that: “[c]inema incorporates time into space” in that “time for it becomes truly a dimension of space” (qtd. in Turim 66), she reveals the ability of cinematic art to manipulate time within the space of the screen. Film and television narratives can compress or retard the pace of time, and furthermore, when watching film or television at home, viewers have even more precise control over the time of their media with the advent of DVRs and digital streaming technology. It becomes part of the continuous
flow of subjective experience that Bergson argued could not be measured by a clock. However, this manipulation of time is all within “the frame of space we have before our eyes” (Faure qtd. in Turim 66). Although television is temporal in that when one views a television episode, one experiences it in lived time, it is ultimately spatialized by its medium. It is in this way that Mad Men as televisual art is both spatial and temporal in nature, creating a viewing experience that probes inward into the minds and memories of its viewers. The series unfolds sequentially, yet in the mind of the viewer it exists as a memory, and he or she can take it apart mentally and reassemble it, spatialize it with words. One can tell the story of the narrative in sequence, but the source of what our words access is found in the inverted cone of memory. And it is memory that Mad Men as a narrative so brilliantly highlights while also accessing.

Joseph Frank’s literary theory of spatial form is that the modernist literature of the early twentieth-century is constructed in such a way that its readers approach it like a painting that must be apprehended “in a moment of time” (10). Similar to the time-image cinema identified by Deleuze, the modern spatial form novel is one that demands an active spectator due to its thought-provoking structure. Spatial form, despite its name, is actually more about time than space in that in order to create spatial form, narrative time is often manipulated. Frank’s theory of spatial form is thus the ideal lens from which to view Mad Men’s structure theoretically because Frank’s modern aesthetic theory is one that stresses “the relation between the work of art and the condition of human perception” (Smitten 17). Whereas modern literature slows down the reader’s pace with its “complicated by syntax, unusual vocabulary, and elaboration of images” (Mickelsen 72), Mad Men contains sequences that slow down the narrative at an aesthetic level rather than the linguistic. Shots that linger on Don and on what it is he watches draw the viewer’s attention to his mental processes in a style that is not stream of consciousness but nevertheless
subjective. By slowing down the pace and narrowing the focus to just Don in wordless contemplation, Weiner is urging the viewer to turn inwards to search his or her memory to determine what may be on Don’s mind. This mental circuit of the viewer is thus joined with Don’s as viewer and character traverse the cone of memory together.

3.2 Oscillations Between Time and Space

Television is a unique medium in that like visual art, it can be experienced all at once “in an instant” of “form and col[our] in space” as a highly visual aesthetic form (Frank 7). Yet, television is also a user of language, as it has a script that dictates the dialogue and narrative of each episode. This provides television with a “narrative sequence” that is temporal in nature (Frank 8). Space and time are just “two extremes” in “relation to sensuous perception” (10). As a work of art, *Mad Men* oscillates between these two aesthetic poles identified by Frank. The series features time-images that upend the chronology of the series, as well as sequences that effectively spatialize the narrative, both of which urge the spectator through a process of contemplation. Although these sequences only account for a small portion of the series, as I will go on to argue, its overall narrative is one that is similar to modern spatial form literature. The series is better perceived in its whole form, which it achieved after its eight year run.

The *Mad Men* narrative is one that is best understood when “juxtaposed in space” rather than “unrolling in time” (Smitten 19). Comments made by Weiner in his interview with Roots hint at this, as he criticizes fans that complain about an episode not advancing the overarching narrative quickly enough. For Weiner, it is not necessarily about the episodic payoff, and he goes as far as to describe the popular episode “The Suitcase” as “just filler” to Roots. Rather, he hopes viewers will understand that he has an overall “plan” in place. *Mad Men* demands patience from its viewers as it is best “apprehended as unity” once “the entire pattern of internal references” is
revealed (Frank 15). Brief segments, such as the flashback sequences, must be organized and interpreted in space by the viewer in order to understand the narrative in its totality.

As Frank demonstrates in his essay, although modernist literature may be concerned with expressing the subjective experience of time, the reader ultimately perceives it in space. It seems that modern conceptions of time championed by Bergson are only echoed in this literature in terms of content, not form. For Bergson, the clock, calendar, and particularly language are attempts to spatialize what is subjective and experiential and thus cannot be measured; it cannot be captured by words. As Kern notes, the “representation of time in terms of space” was a “‘bastard concept’” in Bergson’s eyes (qtd. in 45). Yet Bergson’s theories do lend themselves to creative exploration, with his concept of durée most often noted as particularly influential and as evident in the style and structure of modernist literary works that in a stream of consciousness style records the innermost thoughts of characters. As Gillies writes, during Bergson’s durée, or “frozen moments,” we enter into “an intuitive relationship with the essence of ourselves or those things that spark the moment” (Gillies 109). For example, we witness Don experiencing such a moment in season two’s “The Jet Set” when he stares at a crack in his glass while in a pool with a stranger in California. The camera lingers on him as he stares at the glass for what is in actuality only a matter of seconds, but feels longer due to the tension. Viewers wonder, what is Don thinking? And the subsequent thought process is intuitive, as viewers must search themselves for the answer.

Another example of “things that spark the moment,” can be found in the final season, when Don, at a McCann Erickson meeting, tunes out and stares out a window at the Empire State building (“Lost Horizon”). As Don enters into himself intuitively, contemplating the skyscraper, viewers, too, experience an intuitive moment as they enter into a spatial rather than temporal
relationship with the images in front of them that seem to come to a brief temporal standstill. The focus is no longer the meeting and is put, instead, on Don’s mental processes. The voice of the man talking about low calorie beer for men becomes quieter while tension builds, until Don stands up and then abruptly leaves the meeting. The sequence is pregnant with meaning and possible interpretation, as Don is pondering the tallest building in New York while sitting in a meeting at the most successful advertising company in the city. Does the great height of the building imply a great fall to come, as the series opening sequence illustrates? One possibility is that Don is contemplating the plateau he has reached, symbolized by the tower, but in the simplest sense what is happening in this scene is that Don is experiencing a moment of *durée*, a moment of detachment from the external world. His thoughts move inward and he realizes something along the lines of “this isn’t for me; I have to get away.” Viewers may not understand exactly why he leaves the meeting, but they certainly understand it to be a result of his contemplation of the Empire State Building.

As David Mickelsen explains, spatial form is about creating a subjective rather an objective sense of time passing: “[e]ven in real life, clock and calendar time are arbitrary; their regular markings rarely correspond to the variable dynamic of life’s values,” and thus in “[r]efusing this kind of distortion, spatial structures acknowledge that we are not linear in our being” (77). Therefore, spatial form expresses what is at the core of Bergson’s concept of *durée*: apprehending reality internally rather than externally. *Mad Men* attempts to mirror real life in its form that “conveys a sense of the scope of life rather than its magnificence or length” (77). Diegetically, ten years pass in the lives of the characters, but what viewers are left with is not just a sense of what life during the 1960s and early 1970s was like, but what life is like at the experiential level.
Although we cannot say *Mad Men* is completely temporal or spatial in form, like Bergson’s writing it does provoke viewers to think about their own experience of life in terms of the nature of consciousness and memory. Although *Mad Men* as a television series must conform to a timeline and schedule while also adhering to organizing principles, the essence of what it expresses about the human experience is similar to that expressed by Bergson. But whether Bergson even believed art is even capable of depicting concepts such as *durée* is debatable. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson openly discusses the concept of duration being expressed in literature in an often-cited passage that is pertinent to reiterate here:

> Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than ourselves. (134)

What Bergson refers to is the possibility of literature depicting *durée* in the form of “moments of being,” such as found in the work of Woolf (Gillies 20). However, the effectiveness of such a project is limited, according to Bergson, because language cannot spatialize what resists spatialization; that is, our consciousness is experienced in time rather than in space. As Bergson goes on to argue, “the very fact that [the novelist] spreads out our feeling in a homogenous time, and expresses its elements by words, shows that he in his turn is only offering us its shadow” (134). As grim that “shadow” may sound, it seemingly still holds some ability to deepen the reader’s understanding of the nature of his or her own consciousness. Bergson continues by clarifying that it is possible for the “[the novelist to arrange] this shadow in such a way” as to “ma[ke] us reflect” (134). A writer, as well as filmmakers and other artists, may be
able to encourage those who consume their art to “put aside for an instant the veil” that is “interposed” between consciousness and self and effectively urge them to look inward and examine the experience of their own “presence” (134). To return to the circle schema that depicts recollection reaching out into the strata of memory only to return back to the present and highlight the object which provoked the memory in the first place (Figure 1), an artist is capable of creating a mental circuit in the same manner: one that allows a deepening of thought about the present. This process is the Bergsonian intuition with which Ardoin engages (as discussed in the previous chapter). Although Bergson questions the ability of the novel to accurately imitate duration with language, he does not completely deny art’s intuitive possibilities.

Television, with its ability to combine the formations of time and space in a thought provoking manner can also bring forth the intuitive experience that “leads us to go beyond the state of experience towards the conditions of experience” (Bergsonism 27), writes Deleuze. Although like language, television shows are spatialized within their own diegetic universe contained by the screen, television too can be approached in such a way that the “condition of experience,” that is, our subjective experience of time, or “rhythm of duration” or “a way of being in time” is at least partially revealed (33). By watching Don experience seemingly frozen moments of being, viewers become aware of the “condition” of their own duration, the way they perceive, remember, think, and act. The revealing of duration in art then triggers the “method” of intuition in those that perceive it. It is then possible to “penetrate the heart of durée” which leads us “to recognize the existence of other durations” (33). Deleuze explains the main thrust of Bergson’s argument in simple terms; essentially, when one experienced a character’s way of experiencing the world due to techniques which place the viewer in the character’s mind and memory, it can result in one developing a sort of philosophical empathy, as one realizes all
people have their own unique rhythm of duration; their own way of perceiving the world. And, finally, it may provoke one to examine his or her own consciousness: one becomes a metaphysical philosopher, in short. Thus, when Rustad and Vermeulen write in reference to the pear scene that “Mad Men requires the viewer to immerse him or herself into the world” (157), what they mean is that Mad Men offers moments of duration which trigger the process of intuition or “immersion” for its viewers. And, as much as this process of immersion brings the viewers deep into the text, allowing them to identify and empathize with the characters before them, it also brings them deep into themselves, for the process of intuition is one that allows them to tap into their less accessed inner selves.

3.3  A Mirror; An Orange; A Carousel: All Turning Inward

The subjective fragments of spatial form narratives ultimately unite together in a total form that can be perceived in space as well as in time. Don is the unifying force of Mad Men. Following Frank’s conception of the modern novel, Mickelsen argues that works of modern fiction often function as “portraits of individuals” in that they turn “inward” to “expose an individual’s complexities” (70). One “pole of spatial form” identified by Mickelsen are “depictions of a state of mind,” a statement that connects to Stendhal’s formula of the novel as a mirror carried along a road (71, 78). Unlike the nineteenth-century novel that “mirrors the physical details of the environment within a continuous, progressive, linear structure” in the modern novel, “the mirror stops moving and turns inward” (78). Mad Men combines these forms, as it is a mirror that reflects the physical details of a 1960s advertising office, while also stopping at times to “turn inward” and enter the mind of its protagonist in particular. Goodlad’s claim that Mad Men’s narrative is similar to the structure of a nineteenth-century serial novel is accurate in a sense but also overlooks the series’ modernist tendencies. Mad Men’s slow progression that dwells on the
inner world of its protagonist can be seen as a televisual rendering of modern literary techniques that manipulate time. The flashbacks, the banal sequences of characters performing monotonous tasks, and the camera’s lingering on Don in moments of contemplation all work to slow narrative progression, which allow the series to be ultimately “juxtaposed in space” rather than in time (Smitten 17). That means, most simply, that the Mad Men viewer breaks from the chronological thinking of “what’s going to happen next” to the experiential thinking of “what is happening.” Rather than thinking about the future, the viewer thinks about the present as it informed by the past, as he or she has come to understand it through Don.

As Weiner shares with novelist A.M. Homes in an interview that took place after the series finale, without a “Dr. Melfi” to share his innermost thoughts with such as Tony (James Gandolfini) has in The Sopranos (David Chase, 1999-2007), the series had to come up with a different approach to let viewers know what is on Don’s mind. He also lists many scenes when Don “just sits” and stares, and how without specific illustration of what he is thinking about, viewers somehow know; that is, if they are paying careful attention (Homes). For example, a scene Weiner references from an episode from the second season, “A Night to Remember,” features Don participating in a Heineken meeting while his mind is obviously elsewhere (Homes). The acting of Jon Hamm ultimately contributes to this effect; nevertheless, when the camera holds Don’s face while Duck (Mark Moses) tells the clients about the dinner party Betty held, viewers are able to intuit that he is not thinking of Heineken, but Betty, who he embarrassed when she unknowingly succumbed to his marketing strategy directed at housewives. Another example can be found in the premiere episode of the series “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes:” Don lies on the couch of his office, while the camera looks down upon him from a bird’s eye view. This is another motif of the series, as time and again Don lies on the couch in his
office, and viewers must intuit what he is thinking. Sometimes viewers are provided with clues. In this instance from the first episode, Don gazes up, watching a fly’s slow but perceptible movement trapped in the ceiling light above him. He closes his eyes; meanwhile, sound fills his head. The internal diegetic noise of gunfire and explosions hints at Don’s lingering trauma from the war, which viewers will not learn of until later in the series. Thus, there is often a strong sense of ambiguity undercut by tension in sequences featuring Don in a moment of deep contemplation. This tension is key to understanding Weiner’s intended slower pace of the series.

Weiner jokes to Homes that he wasted “an hour” of his viewers’ time “watching people dial a phone,” yet the inclusion of such scenes are justifiable if there is palpable “tension.” As he tells Roots, “I’m preserving an environment where you have to enjoy that tension, and my hope is that you would watch it twice: that you would watch it not knowing what’s going to happen, and have that visceral gut experience of the suspense, and then the second time watch it and have the thematic thing overwhelm you. That’s a big demand, but we put that much effort into it.”

Much in the line of Frank’s comment that modern literature is not read so much as reread (21), Weiner also believes his series is one better appreciated after a second viewing. Upon a first viewing, viewers may be confused when they see Don lie back on the couch. One may be unable to read the expression on his face or put together the thematic portrait quickly enough to make sense of it before the next scene. However, after a second, third, or even fourth viewing, the viewer may understand the scene better. At first, the background sound may be indiscernible, or seem of little importance, but for viewers who have already discovered the horror of Don’s experience in the Korean War, this scene carries much more weight. It is no longer about the tension of what the sounds could mean, but about the pleasure in figuring out the thematic resonance that Weiner intended.
Weiner’s series is one that can hold up to repeat viewings due to its attention to detail as well as its multiple storylines and character arcs that carry over from episode to episode, and from season to season. Despite being a series that is aesthetically and cognitively enjoyable to watch multiple times, Weiner lambastes the concept of binge watching, a format to which digital networks like Netflix cater with their releasing of entire seasons of series all at once. Weiner actually praises television broadcasting for its ability to provide viewers with a weeklong space to absorb each episode before the next installment while anticipation builds. Weiner also has taken the opportunity to include self-reflexive lines of dialogue in reference to the break that for an avid fan is just too long. In the seventh episode of the seventh season (“Waterloo”), the last episode before the series took a year-long break, Pete comments to Don as they board a plane to Indianapolis for the Burger Chef pitch that “The Don Draper show is back with unscheduled interruption,” a comment in that can be understood in reference to the uncertainty of Don’s future at Sterling Cooper. But, it can also be read as an ironic, baroque quip in reference to the AMC scheduled break from “the Don Draper” show of which viewers at the time were well aware.

A break as long as a year allows dedicated viewers ample time to revisit the series, to re-experience the journey before arriving at the destination. As USA Today columnist Chris Chase explains:

The odyssey of a television show takes years, which leads to an immense buildup for the endgame. It’s supposed to answer all our questions, leave no stone unturned and give us a satisfying conclusion to each of the characters we’ve cared about for so long. But that can’t be done, especially in a series as complex as Mad Men. Cerebral doesn’t go out with a bang.
Unlike a series like *Breaking Bad* that builds to a definitive end, *Mad Men* takes a more ambiguous route, implying rather than showing that Don does not abandon his advertising career. Dedicated viewers will recognize what is behind Don’s smile in the series’ final shot of him: in typical Don Draper fashion, he will go on to transform meditative transcendence at a hippie retreat into the most recognizable Coca-Cola advertisement of all time. The details of this are unseen, however, and although many loose ends are wrapped up (for example, viewers know with quite some certainty that Betty will pass away from lung cancer) in general, Don’s future is left up to viewers’ imagination, and it’s easy to imagine. Especially in Don’s case, as the series forges so carefully the nature of his personality, his strengths, flaws, and inner, darkest secrets to viewers who can imagine for themselves Don giving the pitch to the Coca-Cola executives. It is in this way that Weiner’s comment to Roots that: “What [he’s] proudest of is that even if it’s incremental, where you start in Episode 1 and where you end in Episode 13, or in this case 14, aren’t very far from each other.” The Don viewers see humming “Om” on the top of a mountain in Big Sur is certainly different, yet the same as the Don from the first episode that spontaneously pitches “It’s toasted” to Lucky Strike. Weiner trusts his viewers to make the mental connection that Don is responsible for the commercial through their understanding of Don’s overall characterization. After the airing of the final episode of the series, Weiner explained to Homes that it was conceived in response to the question: “What would really happen?” a comment that demonstrates his intention to remain faithful to the realm of possibilities of the series both as a period piece and a character study.

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8 As a story by Jay Moye published on Coca-Cola’s website clarified after the finale, in actuality the advertisement was the “brain child” of Bill Backer of McCann Erickson.
Another way to understand the overall structure of *Mad Men* is through a reference made by Mickelsen to Gottfried Benn’s image of a novel as an orange, in that it “consists of numerous segments, the individual pieces of fruit, the slices, all alike, all next to one another . . . of equal value . . . but they all tend outward, into space, they tend toward the middle” (65). Rather than “growing cumulatively” *Mad Men*’s narrative is one of “segments, going nowhere or in circles focused on a single subject (the core)” (65). This is thus the opposite of the *Bildungsroman*: “It offers a *Bild*, a picture; it portraits someone who has *already* developed, who is largely past change” (65). In its structure that tends inward, toward the core that is Donald Draper, *Mad Men* is an orange. It portrays a character who cannot change because, following Bergson’s theories, he cannot escape his past. There may be additional developments in his character, but at the core Don remains the same, echoing Kolawkoski’s summary of Bergson that “I am new at every moment but, by including the whole of my past in my present, I remain the same person” (qtd. in Gillies 17). *Mad Men* embraces this human condition in terms of its characterization, and similarly, someone who can take the time to process the work and to revisit the series will better appreciate it, according to Weiner. Therefore, the segments of the series “are carefully ordered and shaped” for that very purpose (Gillies 59).

These metaphors (a mirror, an orange) are ways to further understand and imagine narrative structure in terms of space. They are attempts to spatialize what is ultimately experienced. The series can be imagined in a multitude of ways, but what is undeniable is that the experience of *Mad Men* is one that occurs in the mind of the viewer. The finale of the series demonstrates this most poignantly. Indeed, Weiner provides his viewers with somewhat of a definitive ending: it is clear that Don will go back to New York, rejoin McCann Erickson, and pitch to Coca-Cola, but how exactly this occurs is left to up to the viewer’s imagination. Weiner
offers no last pitch to the audience similar to Don’s Carousel pitch featured in the finale of season one. Weiner thus resists bringing the series full circle back to episode one and basks in, at least, partial ambiguity while putting faith in his audience to fill in the blanks for themselves. The series continues on within their minds just as the themes that Weiner has planted will continue to grow within the viewer. It is in this way that “both artist and audience are joined in a common activity—the rediscovery of the emotions, perceptions, and impressions that prompted the fashioning of art” (Gillies 20). Perhaps the best metaphor for understanding the series is Don’s most iconic one: the carousel. Although the series is now over, viewers can still revisit and re-experience it, go “Round and around, and back home again” because television is like “a time machine” in that viewers can go “backwards, forwards” to a place “where [he or she] ache to go again” (“The Wheel”).
Conclusion

The series as a carousel that takes viewers on a journey that can be endlessly repeated evokes the circular nature that is evident in Bergson’s description of the function of memory. As Bergson’s schemas represent, memory is formed of circular circuits of recollection that we are constantly accessing in order to bring them forth into our present. When re-watching a series, viewers enter into a circular mental process that can dredge up feelings of familiarity. This process is also imbued with certain newness, for no experience is the same as the last. As life unrolls into the future, more memories are made that can be brought into contact with the present. The function of the *Mad Men* viewer’s memory is thus twofold: the viewer uses his or her past memories to understand the series as a period piece, accessing the inverted cone of collective cultural memory, and the viewer’s own individual memory of the series further creates a highly personal and emotional viewing experience that can repeated. As chapter two’s inclusion of excerpts of Manning’s essay demonstrates, *Mad Men* has garnered critical attention as a series in which one can see him or herself. The series’ unique accessing of memory is so that personal memories blend with the memory of the series. The series itself can thus be understood as the inverted cone (Figure 2): two parallel streams of past and present, or historical and fictional, coexist, expanding alongside each other just as the serial narrative expands from season to season, while within the cone are circuits of memory that can be traversed by the viewer. The memory loops within the cone closer to the apex can be seen as the memories the viewer has of the series itself, the many internal references that build upon each other from episode to episode, and from season to season. The further away from the apex that coincides with present perception, the more personal the memories get, as they expand away from the series and into the viewer.
The continual growth of memory that the series enables is due to its very structure as a serial narrative that caters to a more intellectual viewing experience as a work of Quality Television. In today’s modern media landscape, television, which one may watch alone and at home, has become more personal and intellectual compared to movies that are a communal and entertaining experience. The experience of Mad Men is cognitively demanding, and can be met with derision, as some viewers may not enjoy the experience. In order for the series to be effective, one must open up the circuitry of his or her memory to the series. Bergson’s philosophy of intuition that is utilized by Ardoin to analyze the works of modern literature and poetry can thus be applied to Mad Men, which too is a series that once comprehended in its totality, lives on in the minds and memories of its viewers.

As I conclude this Bergsonian analysis of Mad Men, it is necessary to once again explain why Bergson offers the ideal philosophy through which to understand the series. Like many film studies scholars I imagine, I was introduced to Bergson through Deleuze, who used Bergson’s theories to explore the temporal manipulations and complexities of modern art cinema. The work of Welles and Resnais was dubbed as modernist long after the literary tradition peaked, and these modernist impulses in the form and structure of their cinema made evident the time-image for Deleuze. Similarly, it is these same modern impulses that I highlight in Mad Men. We are arguably in a postmodern era, and indeed, many have examined Mad Men in terms of Frederic Jameson’s cultural critique due to its blatant themes of consumerism as a series set in an advertising office. But, the way in which Mad Men engages its viewers is one that is radically new in a modernist sense. This thesis hopes to bring Bergson into the contemporary discourse of Quality Television through the analysis of the televisual art that is Mad Men. Following the argument put forth by O’Sullivan, the show can be viewed as a work of twenty-first-century
Modernism. Like modernist literature, Quality Television provides its viewers with a new, more cognitively demanding television experience. This thesis focuses solely on *Mad Men* but it is far from the first series to play with time and memory through the use of the flashback. Television is developing away from the conventional and increasingly experimental in its temporal and spatial manipulations. In short, television offers a mentally challenging experience. Contemporary cinema needs bells and whistles (such as 3D technology) to justify the price of the ticket and to make the experience one that is physically rewarding to the senses. But on a cognitive level, the richer experience can be found in television. I believe a shift is occurring: more and more viewers are turning to television for intellectual and emotional stimulation. This shift requires further research to better characterize, which is beyond the parameters of this thesis that only grapples with the creatively cerebral complexities of one narratively sophisticated series.

*Mad Men* makes one aware of the nature of subjective time through its depiction of and attention to Don’s mental processes. The series contains the time-image in the form of flashbacks that create indiscernibility between actual and virtual, past and present. These time-images urge the viewer to think about his or her own processes of recollection, of how memories that were once buried deep in the realm of pure memory have the ability to pop up when least expected. The unique temporality of *Mad Men* that allows for the presence of time-images can be best understood in a line of dialogue of Don’s daughter Sally. In the episode “Blowing Smoke,” Sally describes her concept of forever as inspired by the “Land-O-Lakes” butter box, with its image of an “Indian girl sitting holding a box” which has “a picture of her on it holding a box, with a picture of her on it holding a box.” This concept can be interpreted as a vision of *Mad Men* itself. As a period piece that spans the decade of 1960s, *Mad Men* can be seen as an image of the past embedded in the present. And within that image are more images of the past: Don’s past. And
these images are all embedded within the viewer’s cone of total memory that infinitely expands. Sally’s Land-O-Lakes metaphor thus captures the constant production of memories in the form of images that even when not accessed, still remain the realm of pure memory forever.

Memories can be painful, however, and as much as the series follows Don’s attempt to forget the past and move forward, this ultimately cannot be done. He avoids sharing the truth of his past with others and suffers alienation as a result of his inability to truly connect with others due to the secrets he hides. As Weiner shares in his interview with Homes, “Don likes strangers” because they do not yet know him. In failing to publicly acknowledge the memories of Dick, privately a disconnection is created within Don. In season two’s “The Mountain King,” Don tells his one true confidant Anna Draper, “I have been watching my life. It’s right there… I keep scratching at it, trying to get into it. I can’t.” Don’s description of a life he watches from the outside sounds similar to Bergson’s description of the two selves as one that watches while the other performs, while eluding a deep connection to either. Don is so caught up in running away from his past and performing the role of Donald Draper that he loses touch with his inner self. He thus falls into a liminal space, just as the series’ opening sequence demonstrates. He falls past images of his life as well as advertisements, seemingly trapped in a rabbit hole of images of a life he cannot quite “get into.” However, in the series finale when Don embraces a man who so perfectly describes the loneliness and the disconnection from life that Don himself feels, he effectively squashes this conflict of his two selves: two become one. The memories of the past that have plagued him are no longer banished to the realm of pure memory, but become an acknowledged part of Don’s active memory of the present.

When Don finds inspiration for the famous Coca-Cola Hilltop commercial, he smiles, and this smile indicates a sort of transcendence. He is no longer a man who has done nothing with his
name, as he tells Peggy on the phone shortly before this revelation (“Person to Person”). Rather, he is the name. He has become Donald Draper by accepting Dick Whitman and all the memories that come with him. This is not an act of transformation but deliverance, as Don returns to what he has always done well: finding inspiration in his surroundings. Don may be the same in the first episode as the last in terms of his personality, but emotionally, spiritually, and intuitively, a change has been occurring all along. Don is still Don, but the memories of Dick Whitman are now an accepted part of him. Memories tinged with feelings of regret and guilt will still haunt him, but they will not consume him. In accepting the trauma of his past he can return to his present passion: the creation of advertisements. Don’s final act of the series—performing yoga upon a hilltop—he is exploring his inner self. In deep thought, while humming “Om,” something strikes him and he smiles. The external world once again becomes inspiration, but it is within him that the real inspiration lies. In harmonizing his own past and present, he is able to recognize the harmonization of the community around him, leading him to imagine a commercial where something as simple as a bottle of Coca-Cola can bring people of the word together. The cynical reading of this ending is that Don turns what is a beautiful moment of self-understanding and acceptance into a commercial that seeks to profit from human sentimentality. The “Hilltop” commercial that concludes the series has the tagline, “It’s the real thing.” This has an ironic ring considering the commercial is an unreal scenario constructed for the purpose of generating profit. However, for Don it is real, as he found a real source of inspiration at the yoga retreat. Furthermore, for the viewer the commercial too is real, as it actually aired on television in 1971. Thus, memories of the series may co-mingle with viewers’ own memories of the era, especially for viewers that recognize the advertisement from their past. And for those who do not, Mad Men effectively actualizes the commercial as the product of a virtual character. Just as the experience
of the show is one that lives on in the viewer’s mind, so does the Coca-Cola commercial that unites past and present, and the historical and fictional together as one in a time-image.

Watching *Mad Men* is a way to connect with one’s inner self. One accesses memories habitually when watching the series, as one must make sense quickly of the basic inferences that give the show narrative coherence, the things one remembers automatically in order to follow a story. But the series also triggers a process of attentive recognition—one taps into one’s own memories while watching the series, and furthermore, the series becomes part of one’s own memory. The cognitively enriching experience of the series can thus have an emotional effect, as the *Mad Men* viewer does not just imagine what Don feels, but actually feels it.
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