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Fag Men

Mad Men, Homosexuality and Televisual Style

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One of my perennial experiences of television culture is of being out-of-synch with it, both temporally and aesthetically. Neither a fan nor a trained critic, much of my response to contemporary program formats—my determined obliviousness to reality TV and preference for so-called quality television—evidences an attachment to the identificatory mechanisms and reading strategies developed in relation to other media, cinema most obviously but also literature. Hardly surprising, then, that one of the draws of *Mad Men* for me is the way it seems perfectly pitched to my particular form of televisual outdatedness. Not only does *Mad Men* offer visual sophistication and narrative complexity of the kind I associate with time well wasted but with its seriality condensed into the user-friendly format of the boxed-set DVD it can also fool me into thinking I remain outside the complex cultural and technological phenomenon that is television.

For instance, though I have been intermittently watching *Mad Men* in odd bouts of intensity since 2008, the year after it premiered on US package-cable network American Movie Classics (AMC), it was only when it became a critical object that I

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became aware of the multitude of carefully timed publicity tie-ins that increasingly blur the distinction between televisual text and referent: the 2008 Grand Central Subway wrap featuring larger than life images of Jon Hamm as Don Draper; the period-correct Sterling Cooper business cards handed out to Manhattan commuters beating their way to work in Don's fictional footsteps; the series launch parties staged in featured locations such as the Madison Club Lounge; the boxed white shirt DVD packaging; the series-inspired Brooks Brothers' suits; the Bloomingdale's and Banana Republic window displays; the limited edition Mattel dolls styled after Don and Betty Draper, and partner Roger Sterling and his mistress, office manager Joan Holloway; the six retro-commercials created by Unilever for Season Four; and, most recently, actress Christina Hendricks shilling for London Fog in an ad campaign based on the brand's commercial archive which featured in Season Three. All of this was news to me, as was the overall strategy required to make commercially viable a series with only thirteen 47-minute episodes a season rather than the twenty-four typical of syndicated shows: integrate commercial product placement within the storyworld, expand the franchise with promotional tie-ins and licensing deals, and maximise the connoisseur appeal of collectable boxed sets with high-concept packaging and numerous extra features.[1]

News to me as well were the official and unofficial online interpretative communities, in particular queer-media sites afterelton.com and afterellen.com, which registered the near instantaneous take up of the *Mad Men* phenomenon and tracked with enthusiasm the gay and lesbian storylines threaded through the cable episodes as they went to air, to use a figure of speech that dates me more accurately than anything in the previous paragraphs. When did television last go to air, let alone go free? Yet my metaphorical slip does nothing but bring me still closer to my object since *Mad Men* is all about the figural confusion of technological modes. A landmark program coterminous with American television transferring from analogue to digital signal, *Mad Men* allegorises another moment in television history when the medium was defined not by convergence and the commodification of the broadcast spectrum but by liveness, scheduling flow, mass-market demographics and synchronous viewing.[2] If acknowledging *Mad Men* as a dispersed media event means I can't ignore the uber-contemporaneity of the series, including its simultaneous availability across rapidly converging digital platforms cut free of

medium-specific constraints, it also reminds me that as an historical costume drama the program can never stand clear of temporal collapse and technological anachronism in the first place. As a conventionally bounded text—specifically, as a melodrama set in the 1960s—*Mad Men* is already marked by the crossed temporalities of now and then, a formal effect only heightened by the genre's forward-tending investment in sexual narrativisation, which frequently takes a retrospective cast. This is not to say that the series should be read as melodrama but that melodrama might provide the key to reading the series as television.

As period drama what is initially distinctive and critically useful about *Mad Men* is that its historicity depends on both authenticity of style and authenticity of media, namely the actual product campaigns featured throughout the series and the diegetically recast television footage foregrounding those 1960s occurrences that we now take as definitive of the era: the Kennedy–Nixon campaign; Jackie Kennedy's White House tour; the Cuban missile crisis; the Kennedy assassination. Familiar to most of us through repeated replaying across the decades since, this public footage and the private scenes in which it plays register any number of temporal and affective displacements. Like recovered memories fictionally implanted in a seemingly originary moment, these televisual events reverberate across time and space, their near-mythic status best evidenced in their capacity to confuse world-historical and personal timelines and affects. No wonder, then, the magnetic pull I feel to a series that definitively places the rise of television in the period of my childhood, even if that depiction has next to no relation to the actual circumstance of my childhood viewing or the cultural imaginary in which it was swathed, the paucity of the New Zealand media and commodity landscape circa 1962 being as near-legendary as the abundance of America's. If this suggests the continued aptness of television as a figure for thinking about history and its representation, *Mad Men* more specifically compels me to think about television and the history of sexuality.

Unlike those experiences famed for broadening the mind, watching *Mad Men* consistently reorients me to my established academic preoccupations: sexuality and space, and their narrative entanglement. Like a number of other recent big screen texts—Todd Haynes's *Far from Heaven* (2002), Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), Tom Ford's *A Single Man* (2009)—*Mad Men* projects gay content into domestic melodrama, a classical genre in which style and image rather than

character of plot carry the burden of homosexual representation under various US censorship regimes. But in reversing this established historical precedent—specifically the mandatory closeting of gay knowledge in Hollywood films from the Production Code-era—and making explicit what was formerly registered only in subtextual or inter-textual connotation, these contemporary historical dramas, tellingly set in the 1950s and 1960s and extravagantly indebted to studio-style film-making, disrupt or expose the politically progressive frameworks that also account for their mainstream commercial success.[3]

Though it confines its gay content to minor characters and narrative arcs that phase in and out in relation to open-ended long-form needs, *Mad Men* shares a number of stylistic qualities with those feature-length films that place the operations of the sexual closet at their period heart. Like the vintage recreations of dated sexual space created by Haynes, Lee and Ford, *Mad Men* calls into play a highly stylised representation of screen space, obsessively veneering its multiple storylines with extreme fidelity to period architecture and design to the point where background detail often usurps the character interaction it would normally support, an effect not typically associated with televisual style which is more commonly thought to rely on close-framed reaction shots that underscore dialogue and unambiguously connect the plot-points of narrative. Though it is the output of numerous directors, *Mad Men* nonetheless displays a Hitchcock-like control over its single-camera recording mode as it pursues an off-kilter design aesthetic described by Mark Taylor as 'full of lines, like trajectories, that create a world in motion, generating a woozy, almost drunken hallucination of a bygone era that occasionally veers into vertigo. This feeling of disorientation marks every character and every social relationship on the series.'[4] Carefully positioning its leads within elaborate sets made for dolly work, the program succeeds in creating a cinematically realised world that sustains complex and contradictory relations between action and its spectatorial framing. As impeccably presented as the museum-quality props it places to constant visual advantage, this cinematic quality shouldn't obscure the fact that it is as television that *Mad Men* reveals its innate capacity to confound classical models of interpretation and the chronologies that often underpin costume drama. As in Richard Dyer's influential account of heritage cinema as a kind of filmmaking without strict chronological or formal limits that is marked by two related qualities,

an investment in pastness and a notable hospitality to homosexual subject matter, it is through *Mad Men*'s representation of homophobia as a thing of the past that the complex temporal coordinates of television can best be traced.[5]

The advertising creatives and account executives who occupy the blueprint-exact mid-century modern offices of Sterling Cooper all present as straight, except the beatnik duo Smitty and Kurt—one short and dark, the other tall and Slavic, both favouring turtlenecks and super-slim high-waisted pants like period Simon and Garfunkel. Ostensibly brought in to cover the youth angle on consumerism, Smitty and Kurt's real fictional purpose is to throw into greater historical relief the sexually conflicted art director Salvatore Romano (played by out actor Bryan Batt) whose hapless attempts not to be queer eventually spell his professional ruin. Handsomely kitted out in vintage sixties separates by costume designer Janine Bryant, Sal is nonetheless out of step with the time, caught up in a homosexual storyline that looks back to Cold War workplace paranoia and forward to post-Stonewall sexual freedoms, as if to make clearer his tormented exclusion from the contemporary world around him. Reinforced by a modernist acting style in which social façades intermittently drop to reveal character vulnerability, Sal is framed with mechanical precision inside a closet whose built-in obsolescence is part of its perennial appeal. Capturing the homosexual in his fast-disappearing habitat, *Mad Men* presents as a thing of the past an epistemological doublebind that continues to engage the program's viewer who, looking in on the diegetic world, knows more about the closet and its unreliable contours than the gay man understood to have suffered in its hold.

Though a minor character, Sal's temporal obtuseness is as crucial to setting the Madison Avenue scene circa 1960 as the meticulously sourced Eero Saarinen furniture and IBM Selectric typewriters that fill the sleek offices of Sterling Cooper. But the longevity of modernism's clean-line appeal, enhanced by the low-slung cinematography used to circumnavigate the office typing pool and executive offices, seems easier to explain than the reversal of fortune inscribed in Sal's sexual and professional careers: at the end of Season Three the closeted gay man will be sacked by his straight boss for not sleeping with the male client who comes on to him at work. This scenario is not only plausible in the *Mad Men* world, it is an indication of the program's fidelity to a process of historical transference whereby the victimised

homosexual fictionally legitimates a version of sexual tolerance and diversity of which gay men are thought to be the social beneficiaries in the unrepresented future time in which this particular story is produced (2008–). In textbook melodramatic style, the period drama sets up a contemporary viewer who, in understanding Sal's predicament, becomes collusive with a version of the past that shores up the liberal superiority of the present even as the form simultaneously puts pressure on the impulse to find sentimental resolutions for enduring social problems.[6]

Within the program's storyworld Don Draper is the characterological cipher for this distant or chronologically advanced sexual comprehension. Don regularly brokers the broader temporal viewing structure of the program, so much so that this can often seem his primary function. In his association with flashbacks and fantasy sequences, no less than when he pitches the Kodak Carousel as a visual device for engaging the past affectively, Don represents the baseline principle undergirding the narrative structure of the series: an ability to move backwards and forwards in time that always plays on two levels, the diegetic and the spectatorial. Over-sized suit that he is, an effect exaggerated by the low-angle from which the already tall (184 cm) Jon Hamm is often shot, Don symbolises the power and privilege associated with narrative perspective and vision but also lets us understand that our viewing is different from his. Don's insensitivity to others, cruelly exaggerated by his 'boundless' understanding of commodities and the feelings that attach to them, means that we are always measuring our distance from him, a task made more interesting for his not being securely held to the carefully specified temporal coordinates of the show's setting but remaining key to its other memorialising and future-anticipating representational orders. In this sense, Don is less a fictional protagonist engaged in crosshatched generic and romantic storylines that test and reveal his character than a narrative function, a role entirely in keeping with the episodic-serial open-end form of television drama.

First introduced in Saul Bass-like credits as a blank silhouette of a man, Draper, with his stolen identity and hidden past, represents the imperative to story and its ultimate vanishing point. At times he appears as little more than the psychic repository of an oedipal drama that plays out in sequences that seem visual and thematic artefacts from a different order of representation where memory and fantasy are impossible to distinguish. At other times he speaks abstractedly, as if he

were outside the fictional world, having attained the place from which the story originates in an elaborately plotted back formation. This effect is increased in series four when, having taken up journal-keeping, Don is increasingly associated with voiceover and the temporally unmarked perspective it provides on visual action. In workplace scenes, especially those that feature historical products and campaigns, Draper's dialogue, seemingly addressed to the underlings and clients who worship and resent him in equal measure, cuts through the diegesis to speak as if directly to us, his equal in understanding the political and cultural economy of advertising while everyone around him concentrates on copy. As Jason Mittell argues in his compelling account of televisual form, unlike literary realism which can provide access to a character's consciousness and memory without disrupting naturalism, the use of subjective devices such as flashbacks, dream sequences, visual fantasies and voiceover in television drama 'tend to make a program more presentational in style, calling attention to the techniques of television production and breaking away from naturalism'.[7] Insofar as these presentational effects are primarily associated with Don and his complicated relation to the past, *Mad Men* offers televisual style not just as the means of representing personal history and subjective depth but as an indication of the capacity for temporalisation itself.

More than his double identity, Don's temporal elasticity is what drives the program. On the one hand, he has the dream-like ability to engage a subjective narrative past that recesses inside itself different periods of US history—the Korean War, the Great Depression—all of them as visually replete as the objectively framed space of the present-tense action. On the other, he has the ability to tear open a gap in the historically scrupulous *mise-en-scène* and address us as intimately as a voiceover narration that is held to none of the spatial or temporal constraints of story but invites complicity with an invisible system of creative production—television—for which advertising is merely an old-fashioned beard. As Mittell reminds us at the end of his influential account of US television culture, the term 'television' means 'seeing from a distance', extending 'human vision outside its immediate spatial context'.[8] With its temporal manipulations of story and perspective, *Mad Men* bestows on Don Draper something of this televisual capacity, a time and space-shifting function significantly expanded by new modes of digital television which are, of course, conceived as a threat to those advertising models

based on televisual flow that his character is just getting to grips with in the sixties storyworld.

Where Don touches every element of story, from its symbolic depth and historical breadth to the narrational apparatus itself, Sal stands out among the ensemble of central characters as having little to no backstory to weigh him down. Limited to the Madison Avenue storyline, his character exercises little agency and is chiefly associated with reaction shots rather than the complicated montage afforded Draper. The series routinely interleaves Sal's romantic crises with the ups and downs of the Draper marriage such as when, in the Valentine's Day episode that premiered Season Two, Don's failure in bed with Betty in a Savoy Hotel suite is assuaged by watching Jackie Kennedy's White House Tour on television, an event also watched by the less amorous Sal and his newlywed wife. This paralleling of Don and Sal culminates in the episode that premieres the following season when the two men go on a business trip to Baltimore and separately experience the sexual opportunities hotel space provides. While Don coolly responds to a come-on from the TWA stewardess he met on the flight down, Sal inadvertently sets the scene for his own seduction by calling up a bellhop to fix the air-conditioning unit in his room. Taken by surprise by the sexually forward young man, Sal's homosexual initiation is quickly cut short by a hotel fire alarm that also draws Don and his illicit sexual partner competently down the exterior fire escape. Don looks in the window of his colleague's room and at a cross-cut glance both understands the scene and is seen to understand it by Sal who, fumbling around trying to get his clothes back on, still doesn't know what the hell is happening to him except that it is happening in full view of his boss.

In learning what there is to know about Sal, Don joins company with the viewer who has possessed this particular piece of information since Season One via the fictional deployment of the telephone switchboard operator who sets her sights on the debonair Italian-American after overhearing the fond conversations he has with his mother. Unlike the naive Lois Sadler, who thinks a grown man's intimacy with his mother indicates his eligibility as a husband, we take this as reliable evidence to the contrary. The series starts out making the viewer, not just the gay viewer but any viewer schooled in gay cliche, smarter than Lois and more sensitive to Sal's predicament as we watch him develop a crush on his colleague Ken Cosgrove before

marrying 'a hometown girl' in the sexual fast-forward marked out between Seasons One and Two. This elliptical handling of the sexual closet, particularly as it impacts on gay men and the straight women who oftentimes marry them in the era in which the series is set, is indicative of the program's complex representational investments in homosexuality and homophobia. When in the third season Sal's wife Kitty can no longer ignore her husband's sexual disinterestedness as it manifests in his bedroom performance—not impotence but his late night turn as Ann-Margret—the scene cuts to her face which says everything there is to say by saying nothing at all. This gesture also marks her character's visual exit from the series as if the wife of the gay man relinquished all claim to screen space and the historical period it meticulously recreates.

Although the program's gay, and later lesbian, subplots are often dropped at the point where they might be thought to be getting interesting, when homosexual recognition falls in Don's domain it becomes a defining measure of the suavely straight man who couldn't care less what a queer employee does in bed, just that he keep appearances intact. Returning from Baltimore the day after the hotel evacuation, Don asks Sal to be 'completely honest' about something before missing a beat then pitching a tagline that does double duty as tacit advice from one sexually experienced man to another as well as ensuring the matter will never be directly addressed. 'Limit your exposure', he says, thereby mandating the closet in the very act of stepping back from it, a position that is simply not available to the gay man in the world in which the story is set though it is presumed to be a possibility in the world in which that story is watched. Offering the long view the program invites all its watchers, whether straight or gay, to pull back from the closet the better to see it in historical perspective as a thing of the past.

In a further twist to this temporal distancing, Sal is unable to claim the identity plot that would normally be the gay man's due since that has already been ceded to Don. After two seasons spent among his on-screen colleagues maintaining the heterosexual facade while letting it slip for the camera, Sal finally kisses another man only to have his newly dimensioned sexuality almost immediately stubbed out by the cigarette advertising plot that inaugurates the series. No longer a latent homosexual, as soon as Sal becomes visible as a gay man within the story sphere he is suddenly vulnerable to the sexually rapacious heir to the Lucky Strike fortune. A

complete patsy in plot terms, Sal—through no doing of his own—forfeits all the workplace privileges that compensate a closeted existence: the freedom to look at other men, the freedom to sketch and direct beautiful women as versions of himself, the freedom to judge in matters of fashion and design—all freedoms embedded in his role as art director as if in acknowledgment of gay prerogative in matters of vision and style. This mode of gay being as an aesthetic sensibility, associated as it is with the look and premise of the program as creative producer Matthew Weiner has conceived it, is terminated by the roughhouse treatment Sal receives at the hands of another man, Lee Garner Jnr, the work-hard, play-hard Lucky Strike man who represents in sexual and commodity terms the drive for gratification cut free of any social responsibility. Whereas Sal's future stock as a character still remains an open question, Lee, who represents another kind of fag, remains integral to Sterling Cooper when it relaunches as Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce in Season Four, establishing in story terms at least that the recesses of the closet are for anyone to use except the man who might need it most. This retrospective inverting of the figure of the closet—its transformation from adaptive space for the screening of homosexual identity into a sign of the gay man's inability to move adeptly between public and private registers—is worth tracing as it evolves across the series since it reveals the epistemological as well as stylistic pay-off of this televisual refurbishment for everyone else.

Already marked as ethnically different from his WASP co-workers, Sal's first sustained encounter with another man involves coded verbal exchanges quietly transacted across the white linen tablecloths of the Roosevelt Hotel, its recent restyling the ostensible reason for design-focused Sal accepting the client's invitation to a drink. But, however delicately Elliot, the Belle Jolie cosmetics executive, frames the invitation to gay sex, Sal remains unable to cross the threshold between acknowledging a desire and acting on it. In refusing Eliot's invitation to his private room, Sal reiterates his preference for the melodramatic logic of the closet where he can still make good purchase on oblique dialogue and vintage props, such as the period-perfect crystal brandy snifter around which the two men's hands touch in a visual tableau of the sexually ineffable.

Whereas the atmospheric deep-field of the Roosevelt dining room provides a throwback space in which Sal can nurture a disavowed desire under cover of a

professional relationship, the technologically advancing nature of the Sterling Cooper workplace proves his undoing. Sal's subsequent encounter with the tobacco magnate breaks any number of the sexual and spatial protocols associated with closeted conduct and communication. Newly charged with directing television commercials, an expanding arm of the Sterling Pryce portfolio, Sal loses face as Lee—an aggressive swinger without attachment to the antique forms of the sexual past—calls him 'Sally' in front of other staff. Alone with the client inside the state-of-the-art editing suite, one of the few glassless interior spaces available within the otherwise remarkably transparent Sterling Cooper offices, Sal stonewalls Lee's sexual pass as if to make clear that the thing he is struggling with is not repression but the imminent collapse of the elaborate double-framework that maintains his homosexuality as an open secret, something inadmissible to other characters but relentlessly disclosed to the program viewer who is perfectly placed to appreciate the historical accuracy of the portrayal.

No longer balancing sexual acknowledgement outside the scene with sexual discretion inside it, the art director's domain collapses in on itself since, unlike the scene in the Baltimore Hotel, there is no Don to subjectively take up the burden of keeping these spaces separate by being seen to look in from outside. Simultaneously over- and under-exposed, it is only a matter of time before Sal is let go from Sterling Cooper, an action that sees him transported the short distance from Madison Ave to Central Park where he is framed in a glass telephone booth lying to his off-screen wife that he is working late before—as his online fans like to imagine—heading across to the Rambles. Whether or not our imaginations follow him into the park, Sal is now redundant to a series that has effectively taken the traditional operational field of the gay man—the closet, with its complex layering of social and sexual identity, and its aesthetic corollary, the complex layering of visual and verbal mannerisms—and conferred it on his supposed opposite. This transference is evident not just in the casual ease with which Don passes for someone he is not but at the level of style, which is where most of *Mad Men*'s business actually takes place. Coolly exempt from the small-minded forms of homophobic impulse bestowed on his some of his early-sixties colleagues, Don takes full possession of the dual identity and stylistic sophistication of the homosexual without ever having to acknowledge that legacy. Like the advertising industry for which he is the larger-than-life

standard bearer, Don has the ability to reframe experience, and specifically gay experience, as if it were part of a more general cultural repertoire, one that reaches historically backwards and forwards at the same time. That is his chronological function, as is made clear in his character holding almost exclusive rights on narrative flashback and fantasy sequences. This complex retro-fitting, by which homosexual style and experience is marked for cultural obsolescence in association with gay character and simultaneously absorbed into the present-tense sophistication of a series that fetishises a vintage *mise-en-scène*, makes *Mad Men* a compelling temporal mediation of the representational aftershocks of the twentieth-century closet.[9]

This referral of gay knowledge in both its affective and aesthetic registers onto the straight man is less interesting in its thematic and characterological pay-off than in its uncanny reflection of recent developments in queer television theory. While previously associated with gay characters and storylines the trope of the closet, with its perverse capacity constantly to refigure relations of secrecy and disclosure, has now become associated with the medium itself. This argument is worth restating in the critical vicinity of *Mad Men*. The increasing density since the late 1990s of gay, lesbian and queer sexualities embedded in characters, celebrities and real-life informants across a diverse range of program formats (news, talk-shows, sit-coms, soaps, drama and reality TV) is currently forcing a rethink of the interpretative strategies that queer critics bring to television. Numerous queer-branded critical collections have expanded their emphasis on textual readings and the politics of visibility to include an attentiveness to interpretative communities outside academia, but the field continues to be driven by the twin impulses of critique and fanship that have always marked subcultural studies.[10] Against this tendency toward business as usual, Amy Villarejo has outlined an apparatus-based methodology for generating an account of television's queer effects. 'If attachment, inspiration, attraction, recognition, desire, and identification have largely been seen as the motors of queer investments in television-as-spectacle,' writes Villarejo, 'I wish to reintroduce the partially abandoned, rusty apparatus and its history into critical practice.'[11] Mindful of different national histories of television and the different forms of cultural studies that have grown up around them, Villarejo insists on the need for queer scholars of television to gauge their critical interventions in an ever-

expanding neoliberal landscape that engages media policy, regulatory frameworks and technological convergence.[12] The end of free-to-air analogue broadcasting, in particular, provides the final global signal that television—once thought 'a domestic medium and, as such, closely associated with the home, the family, the quotidian; in other words, the heteronormative'—continues to have a highly complicated and contested relation to the public domain and the constant enmeshing of private and commercial concerns.[13]

Constantly engaging newly penetrable thresholds of privacy and publicity, television as a system can seem a lot like the system of sexual secrecy and disclosure that operates in the vicinity of the closet. Lynne Joyrich makes a similar point when she argues that in cross-implicating vision and comprehension, the logics of television are persistently entangled in 'the contradictions of knowledge and sexuality by which we—gay and straight; on the screen, behind it, or in front of it—are simultaneously placed and displaced'. Understood as a continuous medium that extends from the politics and practices of production to those of reception, television 'marks out an area for both the commodification of sexuality and its surveillance and policing.'[14] As such, television emerges as a technologically advanced form of the sexual closet as defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who, in a series of literary analyses, memorably identified the closet as the spatial figure through which sexual knowledge has been intensified, transacted and disavowed since the late-nineteenth century. In an updated preface to the 2001 essay in which she first put forward her account of the televisual closet, Joyrich has recently emphasised the continued inescapability of these epistemologies and, in particular, the impossibility of producing a form of critical knowledge that stands entirely clear of them. In not knowing better than television, and in not knowing in advance what it has to say about queer anything, Joyrich shifts debate away from the politics of visibility to an engaged encounter with the mediated levels of sexual understanding tele-culture inaugurates.

In identifying the heterosexually rapacious Don Draper as the queer carrier of narrative complexity and style, I am likewise insisting on the 'paradoxes, spiralings, and double movements' through which queer knowledge emerges in the televisual field.[15] The televisual closet comprised by *Mad Men*, which includes everything from its old-school melodramatic textuality and serial form to its newly-minted celebrity

matrix and commercial franchisability, continues to offer what the closet as an epistemological figure always has: a heady mix of authenticity and irony, the lure of interpretative sophistication, a sense that things aren't always as they seem. If none of this gives me a clear handle on television, at least it puts an end to my thinking I am somehow outside it or would ever want to be.

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—NOTES

[1] Though a package-cable product, *Mad Men* reveals many of the narrative conventions associated with premium cable as typified by HBO and Showtime series that screen without advertisements. As Jason Mittell identifies, US television drama is now divided between two distinct formats: broadcast (or package-cable) and pay-TV (subscription or premiere cable). Beyond price, this delivery distinction makes little difference for the increasing number of viewers who access programs via aggregators or DVDs, but from the production side it matters in ways that impact on narrative and style. Network drama is still dictated by schedule: each series requires over fifteen hours of story per year broken into 22 x 42 minute episodes timed for ad-breaks and conceived with reference to seasonal audience surges and dips as well as target demographics and sponsorship constraints. The seasons for cable series are typically shorter (perhaps ten hours in total), more flexible internally with serialisation encouraged so that storylines and characters develop across time not just within the constraints of the episode. If network television drama is necessarily formulaic, notes Mittell, in cable drama innovation is at a premium, although across time this too can become formulaic. What is distinctive about *Mad Men* is the way it hybridises many of the forms, styles and temporalities associated with otherwise divergent delivery modes. For more on the way formatting innovations create new narrative possibilities for long-form television see Mittell's blog *Just TV*, <http://justtv.wordpress.com>.

[2] In redeploying the forms associated with one kind of cultural production in the era of another, *Mad Men* conforms to Andrew Ross's definition of technological camp. Andrew Ross, 'Uses Of Camp', in his book *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture,* Routledge, New York, 1989, pp. 135–70.

[3] See, in particular, D.A. Miller's critique of *Brokeback Mountain* for its capturing of the homosexual closet for heterosexual use via the self-congratulatory mechanisms of liberalism and sexual tolerance. D.A. Miller, 'On the Universality of *Brokeback Mountain*', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 3, 2007, pp. 50–60.

[4] Mark Taylor, 'The Past isn't What it Used to be: The Troubled Homes of *Mad Men*', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, vol. 51, no. 9, 2009, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009>.
[5] 'Heritage cinema could be used … as a vehicle to explore issues of history, but its main impulse is towards appreciating the things of the past and telling stories of what it was like to live among them. In this perspective homosexual heritage cinema is about envisaging homosexual men among the attractions of the past.' Richard Dyer, 'Homosexuality and Heritage' in his book *The Culture of Queers*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 206.
[6] In a review of season one, Mark Greif pinpoints the series' self-congratulatory perspective on the social and political landscape of the 1960s although he specifically exempts its representation of sexual minorities from this charge. Mark Grief, 'You'll Love the Way It Makes You Feel', *London Review of Books*, 23 October 2008, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n20/print/grei01_.html>. More recently, in a lengthy discussion of the series' engagement with melodrama, Brenda Cromb argues that the way the show flatters the progressive politics of the audience doesn't preclude it from increasing the viewer's emotional response to events understood as historically complex. Brenda Cromb, '"The Good Place" and "The Place that Cannot Be": Politics, Melodrama and Utopia' in *Analyzing Mad Men: Critical Essays on the Television Series*, ed. Scott F. Stoddart, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 2011, pp. 67–78. Though differently valuing the series, both critics agree that the political perspective it assumes derives from the present. In this context it is worth recalling Dana Luciano's recent discussion of the more complex chronopolitics engaged by Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven*, which also revisits the past through the form of domestic melodrama*.* Dana Luciano, 'Coming Around Again: The Queer Momentum of *Far From Heaven*', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2–3, 2007, pp. 249–72.

According to Luciano, in his unironic allegiance to the style of Douglas Sirk's late-Hollywood films, Haynes sidesteps unabashed nostalgia and arch parody, the two critically recognised stances associated with mainstream cinema's relation to its own past, and instead operates in the space of borrowed time. Though the film narrates its story about a marriage rent apart by the emergence of the husband's repressed homosexuality in forward-tending screen time, the 'outmoded feel of its melodramatic pacing and style' unsettles through the 'intimate response' it generates in contemporary audiences more familiar with the disruptive sequencing techniques that form a mainstay of new queer cinema. Luciano goes on to explore how the film's formal belatedness, its perverse 'play with developmental trajectories, chronology, and periodicity evokes the queer subject's oblique relation to normative modes of synching individual, familial, and historical time' (p. 250). Extravagantly embedded in a recreated fifties world, the story of closeted homosexuality is, in Haynes' rendition, primarily the story of queer spectatorship, which is not something that radiates out from the omniscient perspective of the sexual present (as it might be thought to do in *Mad Men*) but a mode of attachment subtended by the very element on display —melodramatic form, with its historically dated capacity to fuse sexuality and cinematic style. Characterised by the coexistence of irony and empathy, distance and closeness, and marked by the rejection of narrative in favour of detail, this anachronistic

mode of queer attachment renders the spectator 'particularly receptive to the ambivalent promise of melodrama's momentum—to feeling, at once, the melancholic force of its emotional foreclosures and the compellingly textured friction that might incorporate affect otherwise'. Luciano argues that Hayne's film might be considered a formal experiment in adapting this form of queer retrovision, which comes instinctively to those of us who learnt most of what we know about homosexuality from classical cinema, for general use:

> Hayne's painstaking reproduction not only of the form but the feel of the period film bespeaks a desire to (re)activate the potentiality of a minoritarian spectatorial angle of vision by refracting it onto the audience as a whole, rendering queer temporality not as an actualized truth but as the possible effect of an exploratory process of displacement. (p. 253)

[7] Jason Mittell, *Television and American Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, p. 221.

[8] Ibid., p. 412.

[9] As Kate Lilley demonstrates elsewhere in this volume, Don's creative capacity to mainstream queer perspectives as part of a more generic modern feeling is also evident in his season two encounter with Frank O'Hara's *Meditations in an Emergency* (1957) which, on the back of the series, re-entered the cultural conversation in association with his character. Kate Lilley, 'Mediations on Emergent Occasions: Mad Men, Donald Draper and Frank O'Hara', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 18, no. 2, September 2012, pp. 301–15.

[10] See, for example, Thomas Peele (ed.), *Queer Popular Culture: Literature, Media, Film, and Television*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007; James R. Keller and Leslie Stratyner (eds), *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 2006; Kim Akass and Janet McCabe (eds), *Reading the L Word: Outing Contemporary Television*, I.B. Tauris, New York, 2006; Kim Akass and Janet McCabe (eds), *Reading Six Feet Under: TV to Die For*, I.B. Tauris, New York, 2005; and Rebecca Beirne (ed.), *Televising Queer Women: A Reader*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008.

[11] Amy Villarejo, 'Ethereal Queer: Notes on Method' in *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics,* ed. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, Routledge, New York, 2008, pp. 48–9.

[12] A similar call for a political economy of television is made in Samuel A. Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television*, I. B. Tauris, New York, 2009.

[13] Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, 'Introduction: The Pleasures of the Tube' in Davis and Needham (eds), p. 6.

[14] Lynne Joyrich, 'Epistemology of the Console' in Davis and Needham (eds), p. 16.

[15] Ibid., p. 19.