

“Women Don’t Buy Suitcases”: Unpacking Liminality and Gender in *Mad Men*

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English

Over its eight-year tenure (2007-2015), AMC’s commercially and critically acclaimed 1960s period drama, *Mad Men*, follows Madison Avenue advertising aces as they navigate personal and professional conflicts at the dawn of a new decade. “The Suitcase,” which originally aired on September 5th, 2010, during the show’s fourth season, is often heralded as *Mad Men* at its best, with reviewer Alison Herman stating, “‘The Suitcase’ is the ultimate *Mad Men* episode because it’s the story of the show in miniature: flawed, difficult, and damaged people finding salvation in their work, though perhaps not enough to save them from themselves.” Many audience members shared Herman’s sentiment regarding the episode’s tight, contained nature, considering that “The Suitcase” is the closest thing the television series has to a “bottle episode.” First attributed to television creator and producer Leslie Stevens in the 60s, a bottle episode describes an installment of television that is inexpensively produced, contained to usually one setting, and utilizes as few cast members as possible (“Bottle Episode”). While the genesis of the bottle episode came from a place of frugality, its stripped down, slower pace renders it a creative device to better explore character development and character relationships. In particular, “The Suitcase” centers solely on Don Draper and Peggy Olson operating within the isolated ambivalence of a bottle episode. *Mad Men*’s writers take advantage of this format to analyze where Peggy stands at the series midpoint (the 46th of 92 episodes) and where she is heading. Because *Mad Men*’s pilot begins with Peggy’s first day at work, in contrast to the other characters established in their respective roles, audiences are able to follow the full development of her journey from lowly secretary to eventual creative director. In this way, Peggy becomes

highly emblematic of the passage of time and the ability for reinvention, “The Suitcase” serving as a major turning point in her transformation.

This series midpoint centers itself around the 1965 heavyweight boxing match between Sonny Liston and Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) with the offices of Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce (SCDP) making bets and preparing for a night out to watch the bout. SCDP employees buzz with enthusiasm, their minds already outside the office and beyond the current moment, eagerly looking forward to the evening’s excitement. In opposition, Don stays intently in the present and within the office space, throwing himself into a new ad campaign for Samsonite Suitcases. For his colleagues, the future brings fine dining followed by blood sport. For Don, it ushers forth a phone call he would much rather ignore, knowing that it will bring bad news regarding his dear friend Anna. Before leaving for the day, Peggy and the rest of the creative team put on their Samsonite pitch for Don. To highlight the strength of the suitcase, Peggy’s proposed commercial revolves around a football game with an intended celebrity cameo by quarterback Joe Namath. Once the pitch concludes, Don is displeased, and the following exchange occurs:

Don: “Endorsements are lazy, and I don’t like Joe Namath. He hasn’t even played in a professional game yet.”

Peggy: “He’s very handsome.”

Don: “And women don’t buy suitcases.”

But why don’t women buy suitcases? This paper seeks to address that very question. In “The Suitcase,” the titular object becomes an emblem of escape, signifying the reprieve of

humdrum routine and ritual. What follows is a subsequent vacation from obligation— of work, family, even the omnipresent loomings of cultural expectations. Accordingly untethered, one may step outside of themselves and their current life to play at being something else. However, this freedom is disproportionately granted to men due to the strict teleologies imposed upon women, both seen in *Mad Men* proper and the historical era it is based on. However, “The Suitcase” shows us that by embracing and inhabiting a liminal space, Peggy experiences a momentary freedom and fluidity of identity that operates against womanhood’s predetermined timeline. The experience in this space ultimately rejuvenates not only her relationship with Don, but kickstarts the rise of her role at SCDP.

While audiences may have an implicit understanding of the relationship between suitcases and travel, Peggy and Don make it explicit in their brainstorming session, declaring that the most exciting thing about a suitcase is “going somewhere” (“The Suitcase”). In their article, “Travel as Transition: Identity and Place,” White and White help to articulate where that excitement which Don and Peggy bring up comes from— “[travel provides the] opportunity to escape from everyday life, a space for reflection (Muller and O’Cass 2001). It appears to act as a transitional time, providing an interval away from social pressures and new or different responsibilities and roles” (201). Here, space and identity become irrefutably intertwined. Settled in a given area, we define ourselves in relation to the people around us, as well as the roles we play that are ascribed by and for them. Through travel, one can remove themselves physically and emotionally from these concrete ties, not staying long enough to create new ones. Travel, then, becomes a space of great agency, of endless possibility. As a result, “new aspects of the self [can be] revealed or performed” or “aspects of oneself can be mirrored or reflected back in a new light” (White & White 207). With this understood, the illuminating aspect of travel with regards

to self does not necessarily stem from going to a particular place. The actual destination of Peggy and Don's vague "somewhere" is of little concern; what truly matters is to go somewhere, anywhere, different from where you are right now.

But this luxury of freedom is not made available to everyone equally. Don's initial comment— "women don't buy suitcases,"— implies that by not needing to pack their things to travel, women fail to experience the autonomy it allows and the fluidity of identity it fosters. Today, we can certainly look back on the 1960s as a time of liberation and social change, especially when taking into consideration the intense rise of second-wave feminism. Nonetheless, as illuminated by Stephanie Coontz in *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s*, "When it came to women [...] the laws, practices, and attitudes of 1963 had more in common with those of the first fifty years of the century than what was to come in the next twenty years" (5). The stifling social roles not only kept women in place spatially in the home, but also limited their social mobility.

One of the most prominent illustrations of the strict, grounding identities predisposed for women of the 1960s was Betty Friedan's scathing *Feminine Mystique*. The title term comes from a notion which proclaims "the highest value and only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity," a phantasmic, ethereal quality that gleans its value from being interconnected to life-giving and creation (43). When women forsake what is considered their true nature to be like men, they will encounter insurmountable discord and discontent. They will only be satisfied once they accept and embrace their feminine essence "which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love" (43). What results from these "certain concrete, finite, domestic aspects of feminine existences" is the pressure to comply with a strict, linear timeline. Milestones women are expected to strive for

punctuate this timeline, often manifesting as unyielding archetypal roles: sexually alluring girlfriend, blushing bride, supportive wife, doting mother. These roles emerge from, “culture [that] does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings” (Friedan 77). With women's basic needs overshadowed by those from whom they glean their identities, their husbands and children, they are prevented from the type of independent travel and separation necessary to explore and experiment with different aspects of the self. Thus, a physical grounding in the domestic sphere reflects an immobility of selfhood, the ultimate disablement of the identity play that leads to self-discovery.

It would be remiss to argue that in contrast to their female counterparts, men are left unscathed by culture’s demands and pressures. Still, they are certainly afforded far more leniency in how they conduct their lives and how they fit into societal archetypes, wandering off the course of expectation when needed. With particular regard to the world of *Mad Men*, Mimi White writes,

The ‘Mad Men’ distinction directly affiliates the advantages of gender, profession and class status with the right to be angry, zany, creative, manipulative and excessive. ‘Mad Men’ get to behave however they want. By contrast, the ‘Mad Woman’ label points out how women are denied claims to this same territory, even as they are fully implicated- if not trapped- within it. (151)

Throughout the course of the series, men shirk their duties, both professionally and personally, with no lasting consequence or major societal backlash. In “The Suitcase” episode, we see the rest of Peggy’s creative team stepping out of corporate professional roles to embody the states of rambunctious teenage boys— constantly playing jokes, throwing around a football, needing to be nagged about their messy office space by Joan, sniggering childishly when Don asks to speak to Peggy alone. Academic William Siska contends that this behavior of “mad men behaving as

boys” indicates a “desire to escape to a future free of the tensions and need for conformity required by corporate America” (207). Nevertheless, whatever conformity the men feel pressured to adhere to, they are in the privileged position where it need not be permanent. Peggy’s coworkers can simultaneously regress to the state of young boys while also, referring back to Siska, escaping to a future, thus leading to the joining of two separate temporalities. Meanwhile, women lack this same sort of control over perceptions of themselves and are not afforded the same indulgence of escape as their male counterparts.

Like with the corporate world, men feel a need to break free from the demands of the domestic sphere, with nearly all of *Mad Men*’s male characters occasionally stepping out of their roles as husbands and fathers. For many of the mad men, Don especially, extramarital affairs act as a small hit of temporary happiness to offset the numbness created by the dual drudgery of Madison Avenue and the suburbs that serve as home. Rachel Menken, one of Don’s earlier mistresses, confirms this to us in the season one episode “Nixon vs. Kennedy” when she tells Don, “You don’t want to run away with me; you just want to run away.” Rachel correctly asserts that Don does not truly care about a romantic relationship with her, for such a thing would bring forth its own set of attachments and expectations. Similarly, Don does not view Rachel as an independent person. She is most attractive through what she is not: life at the office and life playing husband and father in suburbia. Such thinking leaves Rachel a tool to be used in his escape.

Betty, Don’s wife, likewise tries to use an affair to evade societal trappings, but her attempt demonstrates that only men can truly relieve cultural pressure. Betty’s one-night stand is markedly retributive, as she just discovered years of her husband’s infidelity. Yet, this act pales in comparison to Don’s prior missteps, with White arguing “it hardly seems equal to the task of

squaring extramarital accounts” (152). While Don never has to worry about the physicality of his affairs, Betty only feels able to partake in her one-night stand because there is no risk of pregnancy, considering she just learned she is expecting. In addition, there is no sort of fulfillment or passion to be found in her tawdry tryst in a bar office. She visually appears distracted throughout the encounter and twice ignores her lover’s attempt to know her name. Betty’s scenes in the bar are intercut with a scene of her husband and children waiting for her return in a hotel room, a constant reminder of her identity as wife and mother. They need not wait long. Betty quickly returns to the drudgery of being a suburban housewife and mother, never referencing or reflecting on the liaison for the rest of the series. Little is gained from her affair, unlike Don, who experiences the great catharsis which escape can bring from his dalliances. White goes on to state, “women’s agency, such as it is, always comes at a price with built-in limits” (151). Thus, we are forced to confront whether Betty’s reprisal is truly a show of freedom or just further emphasis of the restriction women feel when forced to walk a linear path.

Don's backstory is perhaps the greatest indicator of man's ability to construct themselves and their identity non-linearly. Born as Dick Whitman to a prostitute mother who dies before he can know her, Dick is sent off to a farm in the middle of nowhere Illinois to live with an alcoholic, abusive father and a stepmother who loathes him. Dick finds temporary reprieve in shipping out to the Korean War, but there he makes a fatal mistake which sees his commanding officer killed and disfigured beyond recognition. By switching his dog tags with said commanding officer, Dick steps into the persona of Don Draper and gains the agency to become whatever he desires. He does not have to trudge along any semblance of a linear path or earn his milestones. Even when a coworker threatens to reveal Don’s identity, his boss, Bert Cooper, ultimately declares, “The Japanese have a saying. ‘A man is whatever room he is in,’ and right

now, Donald Draper is in this room. [...] There is more profit in forgetting this” (“Nixon vs. Kennedy”). Once again, identity becomes affixed to space and the ability to move through it. A man is able to walk into a room, declare himself whatever he wishes, and be believed. While Don’s adopted persona is met with little resistance, a woman has to fight to have her authentic identity recognized, outside of her attachments to men that leave her branded secretary, wife, and mother.

Thus, the mad men of SCDP have the space and flexibility to play with predisposed roles and identity as easily as packing a suitcase and heading off for a quick getaway. Meanwhile, women don’t buy suitcases because they do not get to leave their strict, predestined path. The ladies of SCDP find themselves in a difficult bind, because, to borrow once more from Mimi White, “whether women are stereotypically complacent or willfully transgressive doesn’t make much difference. They are still apt to have the rug pulled out from under them” (152). Peggy Olson keenly feels this bind in “The Suitcase.” Set on her 26th birthday, the passage of time is a weighty presence she cannot ignore. In the very beginning of the episode, we see her receive a birthday gift from former flame Duck Phillips: a bouquet of flowers and a set of business cards. The latter bears the name of an advertising agency Duck hopes to start, Peggy branded as creative director. “The train’s leaving the station, honey. Get on board,” Duck tells her over the phone. Not only does Duck’s comment elicit a sense of urgency, of temporality, but it reminds Peggy of the linear path imposed upon women. After all, trains can only move forward. This warning too hints at the fear society imposes upon those who are perceived as slow to progress on the timeline or who are left behind completely. The flowers serve a similar purpose, time’s influence so stark and visible on their quick-to-wither petals.

Duck's proposal further complicates Peggy's position, standing at the precipice of major life changes. Her rising career chafes against a steady boyfriend, Mark, who from the beginning of their relationship has had his foot on the gas pedal (i.e.: calling Peggy his fiancé when she wasn't and pressuring her to have sex before she was ready). Later episodes of *Mad Men* will prove that it is nearly, if not outright impossible, to escape the type of gendered expectations criticized in the *Feminine Mystique*. Regardless of what they do or how they behave, women are unable to separate themselves from their gender and the forward progression it calls for, thereby permanently denying them the same identity play and sovereignty men enjoy. But by inhabiting a liminal space, Peggy exhibits a mobility of self-expression, ignoring the linear gendered timeline to explore various facets of both traditionally feminine and masculine expression.

Before unpacking how liminality functions in "The Suitcase," it is imperative to understand its foundational concepts. Liminality comes from the Latin *limen* meaning threshold. The term was first used by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his 1909 book *Les Rites de Passage* or *The Rites of Passage*. In the text, van Gennep examines that every human's life is marked by transition-- whether it be a change of place, state, social position, or age. Regardless of the distinct culture, these transitions are signified by rituals that more or less follow the same three-part structure. Van Gennep proceeds to break them down in the following way: "I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites*, those executed during the transitional stage *liminal (or threshold rites)*, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *postliminal rites*" (van Gennep 21). In other words, during a rite of passage, an individual withdraws from their former position, a separation from the way things were, essentially a soft death. What follows is a period of ambivalent limbo, neither here nor there, until the ritual finishes and the community brings the individual back into the fold, reborn into their "new"

identity. It is important to note here that the subject “is in a stable state once more and, by “is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and structural type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards,” a distinctly oppositional condition than those of the men of SDCP who are able to revert away from their assigned roles whenever they feel in need of a vacation (Turner 5).

It was this middle liminal stage that was most interesting to British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. He defines the liminal space as “a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may rise” due to its distinguishing “ambiguity and paradox” (“Betwixt and Between” 7). The subject undergoing this transitive state, the neophyte, as dubbed by Turner, is granted immense agency to “be themselves” as they become liberated from institutionalized roles and the responsibilities that stem forth from such. While engaged in the exploration this freedom allows, Turner mentions the neophyte may attempt to discern their place in the greater workings through “rite, myth song, instruction in a secret language, and various non-verbal symbolic genres such as dancing, painting, clay molding, wood-carving, masking, etc,” something which serves to situate the liminal space as an intensely creative realm (“Process, Performance, and Pilgrimage” 20).

By the nature of their chosen field of anthropology, Van Gennep, Turner, and their contemporaries were primarily concerned with how liminality relates to human subjects and their respective cultural practices. However, the work of Marc Auge seeks to apply similar frameworks to the nonhuman, primarily that of physical spaces. In his book, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Auge defines the non-place as one which “cannot be defined as relational or historical or concerned with identity” (77-78). There, “what reigns is actuality, the urgency of the present moment” as “non-places are there to be passed

through” (Auge 103). Examples of the non-place include spaces such as airport terminals, hotel hallways, empty motorways, or a supermarket at night. Each of these spaces become alike in the uncanny, unsettled sensations they invoke, making anyone who crosses through them to feel like an interloper. Perhaps more importantly, similar to Victor Turner’s work, a person existing within one of these liminal non-places “is relieved of his usual determinants [...] he tastes for a while– like anyone who is possessed– the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing” (Auge 103). In other words, the non-committal, impermanence of non-places serves as the prime environment for the creation and experimentation of different personas.

“The Suitcase” episode’s first non-place appears in the form of the office bathroom. As otherwise stated, the members of SCDP’s female workforce are not allowed the same office ownership as their male counterparts. Heavily scrutinized as they are, it seems women have to work twice as hard to get a fragment of the respect their male colleagues receive. In consequence, they are forced to maintain a steely professional front to avoid being perceived as vulnerable and subsequently getting taken advantage of. Liminality surrounds the office bathroom because while still existing spatially within a place of business, this pocket space allows the women to shed their professional facade and the expectations, assumptions, and its accompanying responsibilities. Usually, this shedding is perpetuated through outward expressions of emotions such as crying. In an environment where appearances are everything, the purging of internal ugliness to the external world would be considered a major misstep, but in the bathroom, it can happen without ramifications, as we see Peggy do in the episode after she endures some particularly rough criticism from Don after her boyfriend breaks up with her. Moreover, if we believe Turner when he proposes that liminality is ultimately a “reflective”

experience, the bathroom achieves a similar effect by being covered in mirrors, something that forces an individual to inspect and interrogate their own visage (“Betwixt and Between” 14). When using these mirrors, the women of SCDP are suspended in a transitional state, rendered in the act of creation imperative to liminality as they make and remake themselves with cosmetics and other toiletries.

Because *Mad Men* recognizes the woman’s bathroom as a space for self-fashioning, the show uses the setting for two vital interactions Peggy experiences. When Peggy enters the bathroom, she runs into two women, Megan and Trudy, who serve to further emphasize Peggy’s liminal position through their representation of different temporal markers. Megan, a young, vivacious secretary, asks about Peggy’s plans for her birthday to which Peggy details the romantic evening in store for her with Mark. After asking how old Peggy is, Megan regards the other woman with an impressed look— “You’re doing alright, aren’t you?” As Megan leaves, a heavily pregnant Trudy enters. Following a brief back and forth of small talk about Trudy’s health during her pregnancy, Trudy fixes Peggy with a smile that oozes of condescension. “Happy birthday,” she beams. “You know, 26 is still very young.” In short, Megan praises Peggy’s place in womanhood, she has a steady romantic partner and he provides for her. On the other hand, Trudy hints that Peggy should not lose hope of achieving a husband, household, and child-to-be as Trudy herself has. As a result of these conflicting perceptions, Peggy neither succeeds nor fails, the type of paradoxical position that defines the liminal space. Both women’s place as symbolic ontological markers for Peggy continues to emphasize this liminality. As Don’s secretary, what was once Peggy’s starting position at the agency, Megan becomes emblematic of Peggy’s past. In contrast, as the pregnant wife of the man Peggy had a baby with (and subsequently gave away), Trudy acts as a representation of what could have been Peggy’s

future. This leaves Peggy suspended in the middle, illustrative of a still unfurling present. Not yet crystallized into something concrete and certain, she attempts to balance being a career woman with a serious romantic relationship.

One could certainly argue that Peggy's in-betweenness primes her for anxiety and uncertainty, but as we know from Turner and his peers, liminality's allowances can be plentiful. In the same bathroom scene, we see both Trudy and Megan putting on gloves after washing their hands, while Peggy remains barehanded. This is significant foremost since gloves are very much so a reminder of the external. Beyond being worn outside to keep one's hands clean, their nature as adornment and accessory renders them ultimately performative. Fashion allows us to mask our interior and design the exterior we want to project out into the world. This considered then, both Megan and Trudy can be read as conscious of an external world where they will be scrutinized and saddled with responsibilities whereas gloveless Peggy chooses to forgo such considerations. Furthermore, hands are man's tools for creation. They allow us not only to build, sculpt, and manufacture, but they are integral in forging relationships. Upon first meeting, people shake hands in order to cross that barrier of initial trust, proving that they are not armed with a weapon. As the relationship progresses, hands represent stability and generosity, such as with the common maxim "to lend a hand." In this way, what free, bare hands come to represent fits in neatly with Turner's conceptions of an inherently creative liminal space, only continuing to enforce Peggy's place in a threshold state.

We see Peggy fully immersed in the creativity which liminality allows throughout the course of "The Suitcase," as her and Don's surface goal is to remain in the office until they come up with an approach for Samsonite. While in their formative act of brainstorming, the liminality of inhabiting an office space during off-hours becomes apparent. On screen, this is conveyed by

dim lighting, lingering shots of long, empty hallways, and air stilted and lacking without the routine reverberation of ringing telephones, secretaries clattering away on keyboards, and general workplace ambience. Overall, existing in a place that should not be open and operating at a certain time brings forth a strong sense of dissonance. From outside the office's liminal space, Mark calls by telephone from an opposite setting, a bustling restaurant. He feels a temporal pressure that holds little relevance for Don and Peggy (at one point, Don forsakes measures of time stating, "I don't care if you work 10 seconds if you bring me something I like."). Mark constantly asks when/if Peggy will arrive, articulating himself in binary ways of time ("a while soon or a while like I should cancel"). Peggy, however, cannot seem to stick to these standard conventions. She promises to leave in fifteen minutes, but an hour quickly passes with her barely able to register it. Time seems to lack any real significance, and thus, the rules no longer apply.

Mark's routine interruptions also serve to steer Peggy back onto the linear path ascribed to women, especially considering that he invited her family along to the birthday dinner, a sign that could be read as increasing the significance of their relationship. But just as Peggy deserts these gendered expectations, so does she desert other scripts with regard to gender embodiment, externally expressed through Peggy's constant movement between her own office and Don's. Beyond simply being gendered on account of who inhabits the space, visually the offices are indicative of separate feminine/masculine spheres. In Peggy's office, warm, welcoming orange walls house floral paintings and vibrant ad artwork. Her birthday bouquet still sits prominently on her desk, the flowers themselves a combination of pink carnations and baby's breath. In contrast, Don's space is one mostly devoid of any adornments, all dark woods and beige plush furniture. The most prominent amenities the office boasts are Don's liquor cart and his large, looming desk. Many camera shots center on the desk in an adversarial way that emphasizes the

divide between Don and whoever finds themselves on the other end. Confrontational and hypermasculine, the desk reminds us that here in his domain, Don is king. However, throughout the episode we see Peggy standing/sitting to the side of Don as opposed to across from him. Accordingly, Peggy's ability to go back and forth from these spaces and create work exhibits a freedom from the gender binary and each side's respective trappings. Such a sensation is explored in Victor Turner's work when he states, "neophytes are sometimes treated or symbolically represented as being neither male nor female. Alternatively, they may be symbolically assigned characteristics of both sexes, irrespective of their biological sex" ("Betwixt and Between" 8).

This "symbolic androgyny" the liminal space provides is first demonstrated through Peggy's creative products, arguably in itself a masculine task considering she is the sole female copy-writer. A visual representation of this is created through a pointed shot of Peggy standing between the men and women's restrooms when shouldering a drunk Don. After a brief moment of indecision, she chooses the men's room, just as she chose to go into the male dominated world of advertising. With regard to her work proper, Peggy's proposals for Samsonite include the likes of dropping the suitcase off the Eiffel tower and having it crushed by an elephant. All her ideas are alike in that they revolve around ideals of strength and physicality. These traits become gendered sharply as hypermasculine due to their association with the SCDP's men's fevered interest earlier in the episode with the Liston/Clay fight.

Inversely to her masculine leanings, we see Peggy inhabit various female archetypes of the linear timeline established earlier in this paper. She literally plays the role of the girlfriend in the initial Samsonite pitch, a character that doubles as the quarterback's defender. The girlfriend archetype is invoked a second time on the phone with Duck— "I need to see you, babe [...]"

You're the last thing that made me feel good about myself." But then we witness Peggy get branded a whore, both indirectly by Don and directly by Duck ("I guess when screwing me couldn't get you anything you, you had to go back to Draper [...] We were in love. Turns out she's just another whore.") and indirectly by Don. This former point occurs when Peggy confronts Don about appropriating her idea which won him a CLIO. As previously explored, creative idea generation is closely intertwined with conceptions of identity. Ideas, then, become an extension of one's self. In effect, when Don implies that anything Peggy produces belongs to him, it feels like a violation of her own person much like how in a brothel the client ultimately dictates and profits from the exchange. The allusions to whoring are continually emphasized by Don's intent to keep emotions out of the equation, keeping conduct purely transactional—"I give you money, you give me ideas."

The whore is not part of the linear path, rather Friedan defines it as the "good woman's" polar opposite (46). If we recall that women are only permitted to move forward along the path of progress then Peggy's association with the whore would make her irredeemable, fixing her outside the norm. However, because Peggy exists in this undefined state, she retains mobility to experiment with other archetypes, as similarly demonstrated by her coworkers' seamless ability to take on boyish personas but return to being working men. For Peggy, she is able to take up the mantle of the mother. Peggy and Don are in a bar listening to the fight, they discuss the child Peggy gave up and if she ever thinks about it. Slightly later, Peggy tends to a heavily intoxicated Don as a mother would a sick child, at one point resting his head in her lap and soothing him when he begins to apologize for embarrassing her. When Don gets off a particularly difficult phone call, Peggy then rubs his back and comforts him while he cries.

Whereas it could be easy to claim that these archetypes become evidence of Peggy willingly subjecting herself to the degradation of the patriarchy, we must take into account the ease by which she passes through roles and can drop them at a moment's notice in favor of another. In "The Best of Everything: The Limits of Being a Working Girl in *Mad Men*," authors Akass and McCade explore how women of the series attempt to navigate and escape the male gaze and the dehumanization it fosters. Ultimately, they reach the verdict that "no one exists beyond laws governing sexuality and gender politics, and always remain subject to rules, prohibitions, and controls" (Akass & McCade 187). If this is to be believed, then potentially Peggy's ability to navigate outside of the rigid timeline for women could be read as a type of survivalist tool to keep her moving through this male-dominated world of corporate advertising. The archetypes become camouflage and not actual indicators of her identity.

Peggy isn't the only female character in *Mad Men* that we see operating within these archetypes non-linearly. Anna Draper, too, exists within marginal states. Anna is the wife of the original Lieutenant Don Draper and remains married to Don Draper on paper after Dick Whitman steals his identity and lives as Don. Nevertheless, in line with the unusual circumstance they find themselves in, Anna does not act as wife to Dick as society would dictate. Most notably, no sexual or romantic feelings emerge in their partnership. Simultaneously, she embodies a mother role through a natural tender, softhearted demeanor. Being the only one who knows Don's true identity of Dick Whitman, she serves as the sole caretaker of Dick and his childhood trauma, giving Don a home both physically (through temporarily escaping to her house in California) and emotionally (through allowing Don to work through Dick Whitman's baggage). Such a dynamic becomes one laden with love and profound understanding, but fundamentally defies the expectations of what we are told the relationship between a man and

woman should look like. More pertinently to the episode at hand, it is Anna's death that hounds Don throughout "The Suitcase." Don knows that when he finally makes the call he has been avoiding, he will learn Anna has passed. Yet, by refusing to pick up the phone, Anna remains in a state stuck somewhere between no longer living but not quite dead. According to Turner, death is a hallmark of the liminal space. Specifically, he writes, "the symbols that represent [the neophyte] are, in many societies, drawn from biology of death, decomposition, catabolism, and other physical processes that have a negative tinge" ("Betwixt and Between" 6).

Death and its allowances become present earlier in the episode when Peggy and Don leave the office to go to a diner. A diner's liminality stems from the following factors: it is usually a stopping point on a journey, it exists outside of conventional operating times, and diners are fairly uniform wherever you go in America. This type of environment lends to Don and Peggy forgoing their professional facades to open up candidly about and connect over death— Don watched his father die and saw men die overseas during the Korean War, while Peggy watched her father have a fatal heart attack. Only through confronting death head on are Peggy and Don able to move forward, as this acts as a sort of death of their past, paving the way for a new present. The noted nods to familial figures lost leaves a space for where new relationships can flourish, creating the opportunity for Peggy and Don to deepen their connection.

Just as an acknowledgment of death spurs a marked change for Peggy and Don's relationship, so does it spur forth the final aspects of rites of passage, and with that, Peggy's crystallized identity. More specifically, when Don finally confronts the reality of Anna's death and hangs up the phone, he realizes that Peggy overheard the entire thing and explains that "someone very important to [him] died." Peggy asks who it was, to which Don responds, "The

only person in the world who really knew me.” In reply, Peggy tells him that this isn’t true. Here it is important to note that imperative to the liminal state are the roles of authority figures (“Betwixt and Between 9). As such, Peggy can look at Don and say she knows him because throughout their time together, while left in an impressionable transitive state, Don has started to view her as a protege and to shape her in his image. But perhaps more importantly, we see Peggy assume Anna’s role for herself. Such a role is a nontraditional one, both embracing and forsaking archetypes in equal measure. Above all, though, it looks beyond the facetious exteriors society would have people erect to favor authentic connection and understanding— *I see you. You see me.* With this new identity solidified, Peggy exits the liminal space.

Come the next morning, in a reversal of the opening scene, Don seeks Peggy’s approval on a Samsonite idea, using imagery from the Liston/Clay fight the night prior. The uncanny timelessness from the night before is banished when Peggy tells Don “I think you have to know the photo,” as this grounds Don and Peggy back into the course of history and the course of time. But standing shoulder to shoulder with him, Don playfully offended at her reticence towards his ideas, demonstrates Peggy’s ascension to a new role which van Genneep would call aggregation, the postliminal rite, his third and final step of the rites of passage. Peggy has resituated herself back into the structure of SCDP, only now she has ascended to someone worth getting feedback from. We also see her relationship with Don solidify into one of transparency and understanding, beyond that of a boss and his underling. Don holds Peggy’s hand, and they exchange a look, devoid of any sexual tension, if anything, to say thank you. The episode fittingly ends on a threshold, Peggy asking if Don wants his door open or closed. Don’s reply not only helps us to believe that he and Peggy no longer have to keep barriers up around each other, that they breached a level of respect, perhaps even a type of love, that transcends typical definition. But

perhaps more so it harkens to the fact that Peggy will not be closed in by limitations prescribed to women through an arbitrary timeline. Rather, solidified in her new identity as worthy, creative, able to stand shoulder to shoulder with one of advertising's heavy hitters, open doors portend an open avenue of future possibilities.

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