FROM MR CHIPS TO SCARFACE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE MIMETIC DESIRES OF WALTER WHITE VIA NARRATOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on narratology, hermeneutics and mimetic theory, this research elucidates those desires of Walter White, the protagonist of hit *AMC* show *Breaking Bad*, that affect his story arc and influence his character transformation from protagonist to antagonist. The research shows how Walter follows Bordwell's 'canonical story format', which sees a protagonist set out to achieve goals and inevitably be faced with obstacles and conflicts along the way. It reveals how these obstacles and conflicts are inherently tied to René Girard's conception of the 'mimetic mechanism'. By the climax and final resolution of the story arc, Walter exemplifies how a protagonist grows and changes through his experiences, even forgoing his original goals.

This research shares with Heywood and Sandywell an interest in the relationship between our visual world and human perception that serves to help us better understand the human condition. This interest is also considered to further elucidate Walter's metamorphosis from protagonist to antagonist or, more aptly, from Mr Chips to Scarface. This is neatly summarised in a statement uttered by Walter: "Well that's all of life, right? I mean, it's just the constant, it's the cycle. It's solution, dissolution, just over and over and over. It is growth, then decay, then transformation."

GLOSSARY

Anagnorisis:	the moment in the story where the protagonist is struck with the realisation of how dire his/her situation is.
Coquette:	similar in formulation to the 'Other' in the double bind, who says both "imitate me, do not imitate me".
Diegetic narration:	refers to written or verbal storytelling through a particular medium; for example, a narrator who describes the events. Autodiegetic narration refers to a story being told from the point of view of the main protagonist who has, or is actively experiencing the story he/she is relaying.
Mimetic crisis:	Girard uses the terms 'mimetic crisis' and 'crisis of undifferentiation' interchangeably. It refers to the eruption of rivalry between a subject and model who have become identical, undifferentiated rivals in the pursuit of the same object. The mimetic crisis is what renders a protagonist into an antagonist.
Dandy:	A dandy is someone who is recognisable by a sort of stoic disposition which is a calculated attempt at conjuring up desires in others. The stoic or cold disposition is meant to make others believe that the dandy is wholly self-sufficient, prompting others to imitate him.
Double bind:	The double bind describes the 'the crisis of undifferentiation' as it unfolds in the 'mimetic crisis'. The double bind, otherwise described as the 'double imperative' or the 'interchangeability of antagonists' occurs when rivalry between antagonists intensifies and the characteristics which had once been distinctive to either antagonist disappear which produces two antagonists with the same characteristics.

Fabula:	All possible interpretations of the *syuzhet.*
Focalisation:	Refers to the perspective from which the narration is being delivered. In narrative, where the audience are seeing things from the point of view of a particular character, the character acts as the 'focalizer' or 'lens' through which the story is filtered.
Hamartia:	means 'error' and it is used to identify a tragic character flaw which will inevitably lead to the downfall of the protagonist.
Metaphysical desire:	Describes the path to self-sufficiency or 'the will to make oneself God'. The protagonist pursues this path in hopes of acquiring 'metaphysical autonomy' which would be a 'metaphysical accomplishment'. When the protagonist realises the goal cannot be achieved, he suffers 'metaphysical disappointment'.
Hero's askesis:	defines a situation in which the 'hero' or protagonist conceals his own desires by projecting self-sufficiency and autonomy, which attracts the desire of others. The substantiality that the 'hero' appears to possess appeals to others who feel that they lack the same quality and their attraction to or fascination with the 'hero'.
Mimetic desire:	describes a relationship of imitation which sees a subject desire what a model either desires or already possesses and either consciously or unconsciously copy the desire.
Mimetic narration:	refers to how actors use actions and words to deliver stories as characters, which viewers engage with as though they are watching the characters live out their real lives. 'Mimesis' in this regard refers to representational mimesis and is more in line with an Aristotole-Plato definition than Girard's definition of mimesis. *Syuzhet* is made up of 'mimetic narration' and 'diegetic narration'.

Mimetic rivalry:	describes how the desires of the subject and the model converge on an object and become rivals in the pursuit of the object. Rivals start to become identical, moving into a space of undifferentiation. The mimetic rivalry escalates into a mimetic crisis.
Narration:	the telling of a story through specific sensory information while the concept of 'story' exists as a result of the narration.
Ontological self-sufficiency:	describes 'metaphysical autonomy' which is the will to be self-sufficient or the will to 'make oneself God'. 'Ontological sickness' describes an occasion of 'metaphysical disappointment' wherein the protagonist realises that forms of physical gratification do not produce metaphysical accomplishment and that the goal of becoming wholly self-sufficient is unobtainable.
Paratext:	refers to empirical information delivered outside of the diegesis of the main narrative. This may include film posters, knowledge of the actors, trailers or marketing and promotional material.
Peripeteia:	an unexpected reversal of expectation that surprises participants both internal and external to the story.
Prohibition:	includes 'ritual', 'myth' and 'taboo' as institutions which human culture or society believe will inhibit the development of a mimetic crisis occurring in the future. Ritual, myth and taboo are forms of 'sacred differentiation' and are an attempt to forbid actions and behaviours which may lead to escalated rivalry.
Romanesque:	'unawareness of all mediation' which is, in other words, unconscious mimesis
Romantic pride:	is the denial of the presence of a mediator in an attempt to establish ones' own autonomy.

Sacrificial crisis:	describes an occasion wherein a community, beset with social conflict, begins to disintegrate. The sacrificial crisis is what initiates the 'surrogate victimage mechanism' wherein the community selects a scapegoat and sacrifices or enacts violence against him in an attempt to self-stabilise. The sacrificial crisis is otherwise referred to as the 'crisis of distinctions' or 'crisis of degree'.
Scapegoat resolution:	refers to the reconciliation that comes from the sacrifice of a scapegoat elected by a community. The selection of a scapegoat is referred to as the 'surrogate victimage mechanism'. If the initially polarised scapegoat becomes unavailable for whatever reason, then violence is redirected to a new victim by a process of 'sacrificial substitution'. The scapegoat, believed to have both caused and alleviated the violence is considered both benevolent and malevolent by the community. This benevolent-malevolent dichotomy is referred to as 'double transference'.
Syuzhet:	is used to identify all denoted, empirical material that forms a relevant part of narration but the narration itself is only a subset of the *syuzhet. Syuzhet* is made up of 'mimetic narration' and 'diegestic narration'.
Vaniteux:	someone who draws desires from others because he cannot draw desires from his own resources. The romantic vaniteux does not want to be a disciple of any model and wants to believe that he is thoroughly original.

CHARACTER GLOSSARY

Figure 1:
Walter White in Pilot episode, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

The protagonist, Walter White, is a chemistry teacher at a high school in Albuquerque, New Mexico who is suddenly stricken with stage four lung cancer and financially incapable of covering his impending medical bills (Restivo 2019:1).

Figure 2:
Heisenberg as the alias of Walter White, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Walter White first introduces himself by the alias *Heisenberg* in *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06).* In contrast to Walter, Heisenberg has a shaved head and dons a goatee and porkpie hat (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 3:
Mr Lambert as another alias for Walter White, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

When Walter White is revealed as Heisenberg, he flees to New Hampshire with the alias Mr. Lambert, which is his wife Skyler's maiden name (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 4:
Skyler White, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Skyler White, whose maiden name was Skyler Lambert, is the wife of Walter White and the mother of both of Walter's children, Walter Junior and Holly. Skyler is Marie Shrader's older sister (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 5:
Walter Junior White, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Walter Junior White is Walter's eldest child and only son. He is 16 years old and has cerebral palsy from birth. Walter Junior later goes by the nickname Flynn to disassociate himself from his father (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 6:
Hank Shrader, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Hank Shrader is a DEA agent for the Albuquerque Drug Enforcement office. He is the husband of Marie Shrader and the brother-in-law of Skyler and Walter White (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 7:
Marie Shrader, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Marie Shrader is the wife of Hank Shrader and sister of Skyler White (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 8:
Jesse Pinkman, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Jesse Pinkman is a former student of Walter White. He goes by the pseudonym Cap'n Cook. Jesse becomes Walter's business partner in producing and selling methamphetamine (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 9:
Tuco Salamanca, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Tuco Salamanca is introduced as the main antagonist of the first and part of the second season of *Breaking Bad*. He is a high-ranking Mexican drug dealer and is the nephew of another critical character in the series, Don Hector Salamanca. Tuco becomes the distributor for Walter and Jesse after the murder of Krazy-8 who was their original intended distributor. (Tuco Salamanca [sa]).

Figure 10:
Gustavo Fring, Breaking Bad, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Gustavo Fring, referred to throughout the series as Gus, is a Chilean-born man who owns a restaurant trade called *Los Pollos*, used to front the largest methamphetamine distribution network in the American Southwest. He negates suspicion by using his philanthropy to support anti-drug initiatives. He is the villain to replace Tuco Salmanca. (Gustavo Fring [sa]).

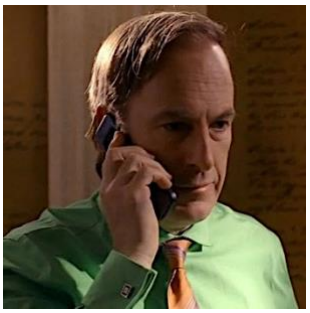

Figure 11:
Saul Goodman, Breaking Bad, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Saul Goodman is a criminal lawyer hired by Walter White and Jesse Pinkman to help cover their tracks in their illegal dealings (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 12:
Gale Boetticher, Breaking Bad, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Gale Boetticher is hired by Gustavo Fring to cook methamphetamine for his operation. Gale's high praise of Walter's product persuades Gus to hire Walter and instate Gale as Walter's lab assistant. Gale is later murdered by Jesse to save Walter's life (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 13:
Mike Ehrmantraut, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Mike Ehrmantraut is Gustavo Fring's right-hand man. He is also an associate of Saul Goodman's and occasionally does favours for Saul as a private investigator or to eliminate evidence (Gilligan 2008).

Figure 14:
Todd Alquist, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Todd Alquist is the nephew of Jack Welker. He becomes Walter's assistant when Jesse is no longer interested in cooking (Gilligan 2008).

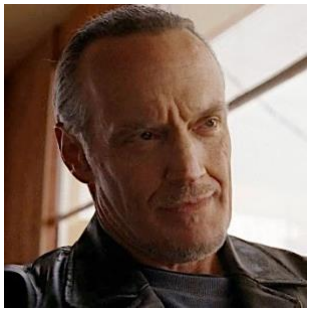

Figure 15:
Jack Welker, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Jack Welker is the uncle of Todd Alquist. Often referred to as Uncle Jack, Jack is the leader of criminal group of white supremacists with neo-nazi ideologies (Jack Welker [sa]).

Figure 16:
Eladio Vuente, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.

Eladio Vuente, referred to Don Eladio, was the Juárez Cartel leader who employed Hector Salamanca and Juan Bolsa. Steve Bauer who plays the part of Don Eladio is well known for his role in the 1983 film Scarface as Manny Ribera (Eladio Vuente [sa]).

Figure 17:
Hector Salamanca, *Breaking Bad*, 2008.

Hector Salamnca, referred to as *Tio*, is the uncle of Tuco, Leonel and Marco Salamanca. He was a right-hand man for Eladio Vuente in the Juárez Cartel. He is responsible for the murder of Gustavo Fring's partner Max Arciniega and is Gustavo's arch nemesis. He is mute and wheelchair-bound communicating only with a little bell (Gilligan 2008).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Breaking Bad in Context

George Vincent Gilligan, better known as Vince Gilligan, is an American writer, producer and director famous for his developments in the world of film television (Gelson 2019:1). Gilligan is now most well-known for being the creator, head writer, executive producer and director of AMC's television series *Breaking Bad* (Gelson 2019:1). *Breaking Bad* has since its release in 2008 reached critical acclaim and, as Restivo argues, has become a "strong cultural force in the mediasphere" to which we still make reference, to this day (Restivo 2019:1).

The acclaim was something Gilligan would not have imagined at the inception of the show, saying of his own pitch to CBS[1] that he could not help but think that the show was "the goddamn stupidest idea [he'd] ever heard" (Sepinwall 2015:69). Gilligan pitched the idea to at least a dozen networks including HBO, TNT, and Showtime with no luck until AMC decided to give the show a chance (Sepinwall 2015:69-70). Gilligan sold the idea of *Breaking Bad* by breaking it down as "We're going to take Mr Chips[2] and turn him into Scarface[3]" (Sepinwall 2015:68). The implication of this is that the protagonist of *Breaking Bad*, who starts as a law-abiding husband and father, would transform over the length of the narrative into a reprehensible antagonist by making a string of poor decisions, motivated by everyday pressures.

The protagonist, Walter White, a chemistry teacher at a high school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is suddenly stricken with stage four lung cancer and financially incapable of covering his impending medical bills (Restivo 2019:1), which is introduced to the audience in the pilot episode *(S1 E01)*. At the outset, we meet a nameless, middle-aged

[1] CBS Corporation, formerly Columbia Broadcasting System and CBS Inc, is a major American mass-media company that operates the CBS national television network in America (Erickson [sa]).

[2] Mr Chips is the byname of Arthur Chipping who was a gentle and kindly English school teacher in the novel *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (1934) by James Hilton. (Written by: The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica).

[3] Scarface is the nickname that fictional character Tony Montanna goes by in the 1983 film *Scarface*. Tony is a Cuban immigrant who takes over a drug cartel but succumbs to greed and it leads to his own undoing. There is a variety of paratext which connects the *Scarface* film to the Breaking Bad narrative.

white man inexplicably tearing through the desert in an RV, wearing nothing but socks, shoes, saggy, white underpants and a ventilator mask. There is a person slumped in the passenger seat beside him and there are two bodies sprawled on the RV floor, being violently tossed about by the driver's erratic driving. The RV swerves off the road and into a ditch. The door swings open and the driver bursts out, along with a flood of red-brown liquid. The driver flings his mask into the mesa, guffaws, and yells out a single profanity. On hearing sirens approach, he rushes back into the RV to retrieve a camcorder and begins to record a message for his wife and his son. He introduces himself as Walter Hartwell White and concludes his message by explaining that what he has done, he has done out of love for his family. All of this is stunningly abrupt and inexplicable, unfolding in the first two and half minutes of the pilot episode and prompting the audience to ask, "What is all of this about?" It stirs up questions about who this man is, what he has done, and why he has ended up where he is.

It was this stark and startling first impression of *Breaking Bad* that inspired this thesis. As the pilot progresses and we see Walter as a mild-mannered father, husband and teacher, it prompts us to question what might drive a man like him to end up in the situation we have just witnessed. Logan posits that it is helpful to explore serial television storytelling with reference to Walter because he is a malleable character from the outset whose personality and attributes shift drastically over the course of the series (Logan 2016:8). To understand any character, it becomes necessary to unpack their goals or more aptly their desires, which is why mimetic theory, which deals directly with how desire functions, is being implemented as the foundational framework for this research. Since a character's desires can only be understood in relation to their relevant contexts, it is necessary to delve into their narrative which requires the explication of narratology. Narratology is used to identify and select visual cues which are then processed and analysed through the mimetic lens.

Weeks before the scene with the RV, the sirens, and the confession on the camcorder, the pilot episode takes us back to Walter going on a ride-along with his brother-in-law Hank, an agent of the DEA[4], to a local drug bust. Hank tells Walter in the car that an

[4] United States Drug Enforcement Administration

informant gave the DEA a tip-off about a local meth[5] lab run by someone with the pseudonym 'Cap'n Cook' whose special, secret ingredient in the meth is a dash of chilli powder. DEA agents burst into the lab and arrest a suspect, following which Hank, and his partner Steven Gomez, investigate the meth lab while Walter waits outside in Hank's car.

While waiting, Walter looks out the car window to see a man climbing out of a second-storey window of the house next door to the meth lab. The man, wearing nothing but little, red underpants, tries to pull on a pair of jeans before fumbling and falling off the roof. Walter gasps and watches as a bare-breasted woman throws the man's clothing out of the window down to him before shutting the window. The man gets up and speedily dresses while on the lookout for the DEA agents. "Pinkman?" Walter says in astonishment to himself. He recognises the man as Jesse Pinkman, a former student of his. Pinkman then notices Walter and realises he now has a witness. Pinkman signals to him not to make a sound, hurriedly gets into a parked car and speeds away from the scene. As Jesse drives away from the scene the camera foregrounds the number plate which reads "*THE CAPN*" (Figure 18) and Walter realises that 'Cap 'n Cook' is Jesse Pinkman, who is both the object of Hank's drug bust and ultimately the connection that Walter uses to forge his way into the drug world.

Figure 18: Jesse Pinkman's "THE CAPN" number plate, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

[5] Meth is short for methamphetamine, a potent central nervous system stimulant mainly used as a recreational drug. Any occurrence of the word "meth" can be taken to mean methamphetamine.

What is interesting is the way in which both main characters are introduced to the audience for the first time, in their underwear. Underwear infers vulnerability and the idea of being exposed. Where Jesse's underwear is bolder and more daring (Figure 19), in contrast, Walter is wearing a pair of faded white, ill-fitted, conventional underpants that emphasise inferiority (Figure 20).

Figure 19: Jesse in red underwear, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 20: Walter in white underwear, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Walter, equipped with a better understanding of chemistry than anyone on the street, blackmails Jesse into becoming his business partner in his new venture as a meth cook. This marks the inception of a complex relationship that will ensue between Walter and Jesse, throughout the series and as Restivo (2019:1-2) argues, we will see Walter and Jesse "go through every variation of the father-son relationship". The pilot episode thus

sets up the entire premise of *Breaking Bad* with Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher, husband, and father, with a DEA agent for a brother-in-law coming to terms with stage four lung cancer; however, in an attempt to fund his medical bills and family should he pass away, becomes a meth cook.

Soon, Walter adopts the pseudonym 'Heisenberg' for his illegal dealings. The first mention of this pseudonym is in *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06)*, which Walter uses to introduce himself to drug pin Tuco Salamanca. The nickname is most likely inspired by German physicist Werner Heisenberg,[6] although this is never clearly disclosed in the series itself. *Breaking Bad* as a series, sees Walter confront impossible circumstances and prompts us as an audience to ask, "Will Walter get caught?" It follows the goals, obstacles, conflicts as well as the transformation of Walter White from protagonist to antagonist, from Mr Chips to Scarface, from Walter to Heisenberg.

1.2 Structure

In the pilot episode, Walter marvels out-loud at how fascinating chemistry is in an attempt to inspire his students. *Well, that's all of life, right? I mean, it's just the constant, it's the cycle. It's solution, dissolution, just over and over and over. It is growth, then decay, then transformation.* In hindsight, the monologue acts like an omen describing the trajectory of the narrative as Walter will transform into Heisenberg.

The analysis chapter of this thesis, which is Chapter 4, uses this quote to inspire its structure. The first subchapter is entitled *A Solution: Clear as the Blue Sky.* The title is a play on the word 'solution'. Solution may mean 'to solve a problem' or it may mean 'a chemical mixture'. Solution here refers to the chemical composition of the methamphetamine that Walter produces as both a chemical solution as well as a solution to his financial burdens. Further along in the series, the meth that Walter and his assistant Jesse produce, takes on a blue tinge since it is so chemically pure and because

[6] Werner Heisenberg is regarded one of the greatest physicists of the twentieth century. He is best known as a founder of quantum mechanics, the new physics of the atomic world, and especially for the uncertainty principle in quantum theory. He is also known for his controversial role as a leader of Germany's nuclear fission research during World War II (Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) [sa]). Although not disclosed in the series itself, it is possible that Walter chose to name himself after not just any Nobel Prize winner, but a controversial one.

of a switch up in chemical composition. The meth notoriously becomes known by its street name, *Blue Sky*[7].

This subchapter uses the pilot episode to unpack the mimetic desires of Walter. It begins to explore the details in the narrative that reveal the 'curse of the hero' as is applicable to Walter and argues that Walter is, at least at first, a masochist whose greatest desire is for ontological self-sufficiency or a god-like sufficiency. This subchapter looks to unpack those contexts that illustrate Walter's inferiority complex. Walter is facing many obstacles and taking massive financial strain, not to mention his cancer diagnosis and an unexpected second child, which poses even more financial strain.

The second subchapter, entitled *The Dissolution: A Body, a Tub and a Family Man,* takes a deeper look at mimetic rivalry, specifically by looking at the first of Walter's altercations as a result of becoming entwined in the drug business in episodes *Cat's in the Bag (S1 E02)* and *And Bag's in the River (S1 E03)*. The dissolution quite literally refers to Jesse and Walter's attempt to dissolve a body in a bathtub but also implies the dissolution of Walter's character as a respectable, family man into the notorious Heisenberg. It unpacks Walter's rivalry with drug kingpin, Tuco Salamanca, in *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06),* which sees the first introduction of Walter's alter ego, Heisenberg. With more emphasis, the subchapter unpacks Walter's rivalry with Gustavo Fring (episodes *Mandala (S2 E11), Full Measures (S3 E13), Crawl Space (S4 E11), End Times (S4 E12) and Face Off (S4 E13)*) which escalates into a 'crisis of undifferentiation' and then into a 'mimetic crisis'.

The third subchapter is entitled *Growth: The Empire of Heisenberg,* which discusses Heisenberg's reign as supreme drug kingpin running the largest meth operation in American history. It focuses on the topic of sadism which looks at Walter's transformation from masochist into sadist as the dialectical reversal of masochism (Girard 1965:184). By this point in the narrative, Walter is more Heisenberg than he is Walter; in fact, Walter becomes just a front. This chapter discusses Walter's character

[7] "Blue Sky" (also known as Big Blue, Blue Magic, Fring's Blue, or simply Blue) is the street name which has been coined for the notoriously potent and 99.1% chemically-pure crystal methamphetamine manufactured by Walter White and Jesse Pinkman (Blue Sky [sa]).

as the 'Proustian snob' as well as Girard's 'masochist' who is both blasé and arrogant. Heisenberg is seemingly untouchable, until the episode *Gliding All Over (S5 E08)*, which sees Walter's DEA brother-in-law Hank, finally discovering Walter's true identity.

The fourth subchapter is entitled *Decay: The Crumbling Legacy of Ozymandias*. This subchapter looks at the decay of Heisenberg who is found out by his DEA brother-in-law and confronted in the episode *Blood Money (S5 E09)*. The decay refers to him losing everything dear to him, including his drug empire and it also refers to his deteriorating health. This subchapter uncovers the mimetic scapegoats of Walter White, namely Hank, who is framed in the episode *Confessions (S5 E11)* and Skyler and Jesse, who are blamed for all of Walter's failures in *Ozymandias (S5 E14)*, as well as Walter's sacrificing of Jesse to Uncle Jack and his white supremacist gang. *Ozymandias* is the fourteenth episode of the fifth season of *Breaking Bad* and is the episode by which most events over the span of the entire series come to a head. The episode title, *Ozymandias*, is inspired by an 1818 poem by Percy *Bysshe Shelley* which tells of the fall of kings and empires, a tale which parallels Walter's own descent and crumbling empire. This subchapter explores Walter's *hamartia*, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* to illustrate how Walter's narrative parallels a Greek tragedy. Greek tragedy is a prominent theme in Girardian thinking, especially in his book *Violence and the Sacred* (Fleming 2004:7). The episodes *Buried (S5 E10)* and *To'Hajiilee (S5 E13)* are used to contextualise *Ozymandias (S5 E14)*.

The fifth and final subchapter, entitled *The Transformation: Mr Chips to Scarface*, looks at Walter's transformation into Heisenberg and from Heisenberg to Mr Lambert and back to Walter over the course of the entire series. The last two episodes of the series, *Granite State (S5 E15)* and *Felina (S5 E16)* explores Walter's transformation from Mr Chips to Scarface in retrospect. This subchapter is also particularly concerned with unpacking mimetic resolution, touching on metaphysical desire and the ontological sickness experienced by Walter who eventually acquires that obstacle which he sought but finds it does not ease those qualms as assumed.

In summary, the first subchapter's main focus is on mimetic desire, the second subchapter on mimetic rivalry, the third subchapter on sadism, the fourth subchapter on mimetic scapegoats as well as *hamartia*, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* and the fifth and final subchapter on mimetic resolution and to summarise, overall character transformation. However, various other concepts of mimetic theory are found in each of the subchapters.

1.3 Core argument

This research argues that where a narrative subscribes to Bordwell's 'canonical story format' (Bordwell 1985), the goals, obstacles and conflicts of the protagonist are inherently mimetically charged. In other words, if we view a canonical story format narrative through the mimetic lens, we will find that the protagonist behaves according to the mimetic mechanism and that it invariably affects the overall transformation of the protagonist from when they first set their goals to when they come to either achieve or forgo these goals by the climax or resolution of the narrative after having faced conflicts and obstacles. The core argument can be structured like a hypothesis: if a narrative subscribes to Bordwell's canonical story format, then the goals, obstacles and conflicts of the protagonist will reveal the mimetic mechanism. In line with Heywood and Sandywell's hermeneutic framework (Heywood & Sandywell 1999), this research argues that interpreting our visual world affords us a better understanding of the human condition. This research suggests that by using narratology to reveal the mimetic mechanism in narrative, we may have a better understanding of our visual world as well as our contemporary human condition. Much in line with Girard's intention behind *The Theatre of Envy,* this research is not necessarily an interpretation of *Breaking Bad* but instead a reading of *Breaking Bad* in terms of desire, conflict, violence and sacrifice (Girard 1991:16).

1.4 Aims and objectives

This research aims to uncover mimetic desire in an elected narrative through a visual studies discourse that is narratology. The research concerns itself primarily with the

desires of the protagonist, how these desires manifest, and how they are intertwined in the narrative and visual world surrounding the character. Mimetic theory, specifically desire, forms the primary lens through which *Breaking Bad* is analysed, while narratology is used to support and identify those instances which reveal mimetic theory or where the mimetic mechanism may be inferred. The research aims to bridge a gap between external mimesis in terms of representation and internal mimesis in terms of the behavioural manifestation of mimetic theory. This is addressed in more detailed when exploring the originality of mimetic theory in comparison to mimesis as had been considered by Plato and Aristotle.

To fulfil the above aim of the study, the following objectives have been identified, namely:

- To synthesise narratology,
- To synthesise mimetic theory,
- To clarify the distinction between mimesis as representation and mimesis in terms of mimetic theory, and
- To use narratology to support the exploration of the mimetic mechanism in *Breaking Bad*, as is relevant to the protagonist

1.5 Narratology and mimetic theory as a dual hermeneutic lens

This research synthesises from literature related to narratology and mimetic theory. The research takes cues from narratology in order to identify and discuss visual culture in *Breaking Bad* as is relevant to mimetic desire. In other words, it looks at *Breaking Bad* through narratology and mimetic theory simultaneously as a dual hermeneutic lens. Narratology offers something in the way of exploring ‘mimetic narration’ and ‘diegetic narration’ as external visual cues. These external visual cues are then explored in terms of mimetic theory to better understand their inferences and relevance to the internal world, and ultimately character transformation, of the protagonist.

As previously expressed, in order to explore *Breaking Bad* as a narrative, it becomes necessary to expand on narratology. According to Monika Fludernik, narratology is quite simply "the study of narrative as a genre" (Fludernik 2009:8). 'Narration' can be understood as the telling of a story through specific sensory information while the concept of 'story' exists as a result of the narration (Baboulene 2017:16-17). In other words, narration describes how *Breaking Bad* is visually unpacked while the story is what we obtain through interacting with the narration. Baboulene explains that a viewer gains access to information, in the form of narration, and must respond by playing a cognitive role in constructing the story and developing causal connections based on that information (Baboulene 2017:43). The creators of *Breaking Bad* are responsible for the narration of the series while the audience is responsible for the story.

What mimetic theory offers is insight into how behaviours, as well as perceptions of behaviour, are shaped through mimesis (Fleming 2004:17). Mimetic theory is used to elucidate those desires of Walter White that affect the trajectory of the story and character evolution from Mr Chips to Scarface. Girard argues that people do not inherently know what they want but rather that they develop desire by imitating the desires of others (Girard 1965:12). This is what is termed 'mimetic desire' (Palaver 2011:35). Girard describes the mechanism in four distinct parts beginning with 'mimetic desire', which becomes 'mimetic rivalry', which escalates into 'mimetic crisis' and resolves with a 'scapegoat resolution' (Girard 2017:56). Each of these parts of the mimetic mechanism is explained at greater length below.

Mimetic desire describes a relationship of imitation which sees a subject desire what a model either desires or already possesses (Girard 2017:56). The model and subject exist either in the same relational domain or not at all, so have no direct access to one another (Girard 2017:57). In either case, desire is mediated by the 'Other'. A relational domain that sees proximity between the subject and model is referred to as 'internal mediation' and will lead to the eventual eruption of conflict, which is the 'mimetic crisis' (Girard 2017:57). Alternatively, 'external mediation' describes a relationship in which the subject and the model exist in different relational domains. In such a relationship, direct conflict between subject and model is not possible as the subject cannot possibly obtain what the model possesses (Girard 2017:57). In other words, mimetic desire describes

the process whereby the subject covets his model which escalates into mimetic rivalry, especially in the case of internal mediation. Chapter two discusses the mimetic mechanism in more detail.

As the desires of the subject and the model converge on an object, the subject and model become rivals (Girard 2017:57). Rivals start to become identical, moving into a space of undifferentiation (Girard 2017:57). The mimetic rivalry escalates into a mimetic crisis which Girard posits, is always a 'crisis of undifferentiation' (Girard 2017:57). The mimetic crisis attracts bystanders who attribute value to the object which they see as inciting conflict in the subject and model (Girard 2017:64). The mimetic crisis is contagious in nature, spreading to more and more bystanders until it eventually forms a community charged with conflictual energy (Girard 2017:64). Reconciliation takes place when the rage of the community members converges on a single victim, a designated scapegoat, whom they expel from the community (Girard 2017:64). This is what is known as 'scapegoat resolution'.

Narratology as a hermeneutic lens is used to identify and draw attention to the way in which the sensory information of *Breaking Bad* is unpacked. Mimetic theory as a hermeneutic lens develops causal connections using the information of narration to construct story and elucidate the behaviour of the protagonist in order to better understand their transformation. This research uses narratology and mimetc theory as dependent lens and contends that, at least for this purpose of this exploration, that neither can operate without the other. Narratology is used to put into words what the narration reveals explicitly while mimetic theory is used to make sense of what we see and what it means implicitly for the protagonist. Essentially, by using narratology and mimetic theory as layered lens, the research bridges a gap between external mimesis and diegesis in the representational sense and mimesis in the internal sense as an act of acquisition. The concepts of representational mimesis versus mimesis as acts of acquisition are discussed in greater detail in the literature review.

1.7 Overview of the literature review

What follows are a summative review of the theorists whose literature is consulted throughout the research. This summative review highlights pertinent points made by theorists and is a starting point for the succeeding chapters of the research which unpack the theories in more depth.

In accordance with the objectives above, this research consulted theories by David Baboulene, Monika Fludernik, and Greta Olsen to develop a considered synthesis of narrative and narratology. Furthermore, it developed a synthesis of mimetic theory as proposed by René Girard. Chris Fleming and Wolfgang Palaver provide a comprehensive analysis of mimetic theory, which stems from Girardian thought. To further substantiate the analysis of *Breaking Bad*, theory was adapted from Angelo Restivo and Alan Sepinwall's excerpt about *Breaking Bad* from *The Revolution was Televised*. Further than this, this research referred to actual episodes of the series, directed and produced by Vince Gilligan.

Although the literature does not develop much theory around Bordwell, what he offers is pivotal to the research as a whole. Bordwell argues that story conforms to an order of events, refered to as 'canonical story format' and it is this structure that is used as a measuring stick for the story of *Breaking Bad*, against which the mimetic analysis is applied.

Baboulene is concerned with knowledge gaps and focuses on their operation within a story (Baboulene 2017:3). Essentially a knowledge gap is a disparity of information and Baboulene argues that these knowledge gaps are foundational in all stories (Baboulene 2017:3). A knowledge gap is present where there is a participant or participants within a narrative that have knowledge that is distinct from other participants (Baboulene 2017:19). Accordingly, these gaps in knowledge activate hermeneutic responses in the receiver or viewer (Baboulene 2017:25). The significance of Baboulene's study is that it offers a neatly comprehensive understanding of narratology and provides insight into how a narrative activates an audience to produce a hermeneutic response. For

Baboulene "the aim of narratology is to discover and define systems and modes of narrative" (Baboulene 2017:206).

Monika Fludernik observes that narratives are is all around us and not just associated with literary types of narrative (Fludernik 2009:1). Fludernik believes that narratology provides us with a framework that allows us to make sense of the world (Fludernik 2009:2). Fludernik develops concepts around what qualifies narrative and concludes with the following criteria; narrative is the representation of a possible world through either linguistic or visual mediums; it contains one or several protagonists who have an anthropomorphic nature; the protagonist exists in a temporal and spatial sense and performs goal-oriented actions (Fludernik 2009:6). Fludernik explores the concept of the narrator (which is a thematically popular topic in narratology), as well as the perspective of characters and topics such as 'simultaneity' and 'anchrony', which is expanded upon in succeeding chapters (Fludernik 2009:36-44).

Fleming suggests that Girardian themes and hypotheses may open up disciplinary perspectives which may help us revise the way in which we experience hermeneutics, not unlike the aims of current trends within narratology (Fleming 2004:2). To that thought, Fleming adds that mimetic theory may be more pertinent in elucidation than in evaluation (Fleming 2004:3). Palaver, not unlike Fleming, explores the premise of mimetic theory which expands the notion of desire which invariably leads to rivalry, conflict and eventual resolution.

Girard's sources are used largely to inform this research, most prominently his work in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel, A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare, The Scapegoat, To Double Business Bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis and Anthropology* as well as *Violence and the Sacred*. The literature review unpacks Girard's biography and thinking extensively.

1.8 Outline of chapters

To recap, this research is made up of five chapters in total. The first chapter is the introduction which briefly contextualised *Breaking Bad*, unpacking the core argument and explaining the way in which a quote from the pilot episode of the series is used to break down the narrative for analysis. It also introduced the aims and objectives of the research, briefly outlining mimetic theory and narratology as layered hermeneutic lens used to analyse the series. Lastly the introduction offered an overview of the literature review. This is simply a means for introducing the authors whose work supplements the exploration of and informs this research.

The second chapter is in line with the objectives of the research, a synthesis of mimetic theory. It firstly develops a review of René Girard's work, considered the father of the mimetic mechanism and then explicates the body of terminology related to mimetic mechanism. This chapter contextualises the mimetic mechanism and unpacks its terminology so that the reader is familiar with the terms used in the fourth chapter which is the analysis chapter.

The third chapter synthesises narratology to identify visual clues which are then analysed through the mimetic lens in the fourth chapter.

The fourth chapter is broken down into subsections which have already been discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to use narratology to reveal the mimetic mechanism in the narrative and explore the ways in which the mimetic mechanism is made apparent and is responsible for the character development of Walter White from protagonist to antagonist. It explores the narrative arc from solution to dissolution to growth to decay and eventually to transformation. It unpacks specified episodes and scenes which hold particular relevance to the overall argument. In other words, visual references are discussed as long as they pertain in some way to the mimetic mechanism.

The fifth and final chapter is the conclusion which summarises the research and reiterates the observations made. It highlights ways in which the research may be limited and how it may be further expanded.

1.9 Summary

This chapter began by contextualising *Breaking Bad* as a series. Precluding this chapter is a glossary of terms as well as a glossary of characters to guide the reader through the text. Following the glossaries, the chapter breaks down the structure of the chapters to help the reader anticipate what is to come. The chapter unpacks the core argument of the research which is that where a narrative subscribes to Bordwell's canonical format that the goals, obstacles, rivalries and resolution of the characters will be revealed as mimetically charged. The research aims to bridge a gap between external mimesis in terms of representation and internal mimesis in terms of the behavioural manifestation of mimetic theory. The research intends on achieving this aim by synthesizing narratology and synthesizing mimetic theory and then superimposing or layering these synthesises to produce a dual hermeneutic lens which can be applied to a narrative. The research is focussed on exploring character transformation from when a character first sets goals to when the character either comes close to or does achieve their goals. This chapter gives a brief overview of the literature used to support arguments but the succeeding chapter offers an in-depth literature review of Réne Girard's mimetic theory and chapter three offers a slightly less in-depth literature review of narratology. The third chapter concludes with how narratology and mimetic theory form a dual hermeneutic lens before applying it in chapter four to analyse the *Breaking Bad* series.

CHAPTER 2: MIMETIC THEORY AS A HERMENEUTIC LENS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts, the first being a review of the writings of René Girard and the second, serving as an explication of the body of terms associated with mimetic theory. This chapter thoroughly develops theory around René Girard and his mimetic theory and serves as a foundation from which the succeeding chapters of the research build on and take from. This chapter answers one of the aforementioned objectives, which is to synthesise mimetic theory.

2.2 Literature review

The first half of this chapter uses Wolfgang Palaver's book *René Girard's Mimetic Theory* and Chris Fleming's book *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* to build a summative biographical sketch of René Girard (1923-2015). The research develops this biographical sketch of René Girard in an attempt to elucidate the context in which mimetic theory was born. It takes cues here from René Girard who, throughout his own analyses of literature, almost always referred to the connection between an author's life and an author's work (Palaver 2013:1). Palaver posits that these connections should not be overlooked, particularly in light a study devoted to using mimetic theory (Palaver 2013:1).

The research then delves into Girard's own observations made in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel, A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare* and *A Theory by Which to Work: The Mimetic Mechanism. In Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture* through which his analyses demonstrate observations of human nature. The literature review explores Girard's concepts in comparison to similar concepts which preceded his own, in an attempt to review innovative mimetic theory at its inception. In other words, it compares Girard's thoughts to observations made by philosophers such as Augustine, Plato and Aristotle as well as other contemporaries of Girard's time such as Freud, to discern whether mimetic theory is unique or not. Lastly, it takes a look at the scope of mimetic theory to determine whether the theory is multi- or interdisciplinary.

2.2.1 Biographical sketch of René Girard

René Girard was born on the 25th of December, 1923 in the French city, Avignon (Palaver 2013:1). Girard graduated high school and went to *École des Chartes* in Paris where he studied palaeography[8] from 1943 to 1947. The end of 1947 saw Girard earn a PhD with his dissertation entitled *Private Life in Avignon in the Second Half of the 15th Century*. Girard, in the same year, pursued a teaching career in the United States at Indiana University in Bloomington, teaching French at the university while working on a dissertation concerned with contemporary history (Palaver 2013:3-4). By 1950, Girard had earned his second doctorate with his work entitled *The American Opinion of France in the Years 1940–1943* (Palaver 2013:4). Girard emigrated to America from France in the same year to begin establishing his career in the States, most likely because American universities afforded him a "greater intellectual freedom" (Palaver 2013:4). In 1952, he moved to Duke University after Indiana University denied him tenure for not having a sufficient number of publications (Palaver 2013:4). The move to Duke University saw Girard successively publish seven articles in 1953, which led him to Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania as an assistant professor (Palaver 2013:4).

In 1957, Girard was appointed a professor of French literature at John Hopkins University in Baltimore (Palaver 2013:4), first as an associate professor, but by 1961, he was a fully-fledged professor (Palaver 2013:4). In the same year, Girard published *Mensonge romantique et vérité Romanesque* and in 1963 published *Dostoievski: Du double à l'unité* (Palaver 2013:310). While still at John Hopkins, in 1966, Girard, along with Eugenio Donato[9] and Richard Macksey[10], organised a symposium which would significantly impact how critical theory emerged in the United States (Fleming 2004:5). The symposium was entitled *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* and included papers by many, who are now considered influential thinkers, including Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Georges Poulet and Tsvetan Todoro, amongst others (Fleming 2004:5).

[8] The study of ancient writing systems and the deciphering and dating of historical manuscripts

[9] Eugenio Donato was an Armenian-Italian deconstructionist, literary critic and 'philosophical critic'.

[10] Richard Allen Macksey was Professor of Humanities and Co-founder and longtime Director of the Humanities Center at The Johns Hopkins University, where he taught critical theory, comparative literature, and film studies.

Girard taught as a professor of literature at the State University of New York in Buffalo from 1968 to 1976, and then returned to John Hopkins until 1980 as a professor of French literature and the humanities (Palaver 2013:4). During this time, he published *La Violence et le Sacré* (1972), *Critique Dans un Souterrain* (1976), and in 1978 he published both *To Double Business Bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* and *Des Choses Cachées Depuis la Fondation du Monde* (Palaver 2013:310). Between 1980 and 1995, Girard was the Andrew B Hammond Professor of French language, Literature and Civilisation at Stanford California (Palaver 2013:4). During this time, he wrote and published many successive works, arguably the most noteworthy being *Le Sacrifice*, published in 2003 (Palaver 2013:310).

This biographical sketch is meant to give some context and depth to the succeeding research which unpacks Girard's observations in his academic writings. Like Palaver, this research is fascinated with Girard's experiences of conversion which led him to mimetic theory in the first place. What follows is an exploration by Girard of the conversions that novelists Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust and Dostoyevsky endured that led them to their own theories. In the same vein, this research uses Girard's insights to better understand Girard himself. Girard argues that the novelists, in an attempt to satisfy their own search for autonomy, "base their desires on the desires of others" (Palaver 2013:8). Palaver suggests that Girard is interested in the insights of authors who reveal connections between themselves and their work, which are far greater than "superficial correlations" between the novelists and their literary figures (Palaver 2013:1). To be discussed at greater length in this chapter is Girard's appeal to invert traditional methods of literature analysis and use the literature itself as a tool of analysis.

2.2.2 Review of Girard as a literary critic

While Girard's theory works well to supplement current trends of thought in the twentieth century, it did not develop from any of the fields it now seems to inspire (Fleming 2004:3). Fleming suggests that René Girard's work did not come out of current trends in humanities or the social sciences and yet, despite this, Girard's work continues to grow in influence in cultural, social and psychological fields to develop

new hypotheses and alternative methods of analysis (Fleming 2004:2). In other words, Girard's theory remains not only relevant but also continues to inspire in a variety of fields. Girard is accredited with what some might call a 'grand unified theory' which incorporates questions around interpersonal relations, religion and culture (Fleming 2004:2). Palaver also discusses this idea of Girard's work as a 'unified theory,' in which he describes Girard's work as intention to "trace all phenomena back to one single insight or principle" (Palaver 2013:vii). In Girard's own words, mimetic theory is developed from a 'single intuition' (Palaver 2013:vii).

Girard's relationship with critical literature theory is fascinating. Girard's teaching of French literature at Indiana inspired his thinking to move far beyond literature into broader social and cultural questions (Fleming 2004:4-5). Many scholars accused Girard of being unqualified to participate in the field of comparative literature because he was essentially trained as a historian and more so because his theory pervaded the fields of anthropology and biblical analysis (Palaver 2013:4-5). Yet, Girard's shift from literature to broader social and cultural fields, was inspired by literature and by the time his first book was published, he had earned the title of literary critic (Fleming 2004:4-5).

2.2.3 Mimetic theory as multi- or interdisciplinary theory

Before deciding whether Girard's theory is multi- or interdisciplinary, it becomes necessary to differentiate between these two terms. Multidisciplinary theory draws on knowledge from a multitude of disciplines which exist in the same domain, while interdisciplinary theories are those theories which analyse and synthesise links between disciplines in different domains to form a coordinated, coherent whole. Fleming argues, and this research contends, that Girard's works are interdisciplinary since they tackle broad questions in a multitude of fields (Fleming 2004:4). Girard's doctoral studies were in history but Girard found himself irrevocably drawn to literature, particularly because he was teaching courses in French literature and encountered new worlds of text, of which he had previously been unaware of (Fleming 2004:2). According to Girard, it was never his intention to develop an interdisciplinary theory (Palaver 2013:5). It just so happened that the analyses Girard was interested in exploring were consequent of his research in diverse fields. Currently, there is a substantial body of secondary literature that uses Girardian themes to open or re-open questions particular

to different disciplines (Fleming 2004:2). These disciplines include literary theory, anthropology, philosophy, classical studies, psychology, systems theory, economics, political science, theology and musicology (Fleming 2004:2). Recently, fields such as biology, chemistry and physics have even drawn from Girardian thought to illustrate parallels between mimetic theory and their respective disciplines (Fleming 2004:2).

Girard stresses the potential of mediation to encourage literary criticisms outside of genre or thematic criticism, suggesting that it may be possible to elucidate the works through one another without dissolving the singularity of either (Girard 1965:23). Girard argues that rather than applying analytical resources to literature, literature is capable of producing in and of itself the critical resources we need for analysis (Fleming 2004:6). For example, we might read psychoanalytic theory through Proust rather than reading Proust through psychoanalytic theory (Fleming 2004:6). This alternative critical approach, situates Girard's theory outside of current accepted and widely recognised disciplines (Fleming 2004:7).

Girard argues for this inversion between literary criticisms and its objects because he believes that the inversion offers potential for greater theoretical and critical resources and that in this way, the literary work has 'greater hermeneutic and heuristic capacities' (Fleming 2004:9). Fleming suggests that what Girard offers us is an intertextual literary theory which neither relies on extratextual material in the form of theory, nor does it rely on intratextual material in the form of modes of analysis, classified as pure formalism (Fleming 2004:14). Girard's theory is then considered interdisciplinary since it is a grand unified theory which analyses and synthesises links from a plethora of disciplines from anthropology to sociology to theology to biology to chemistry et cetera.

2.2.4 Review of Girard's thinking as original

It is clear then that Girardian thought pervades many different disciplines and that Girard had a substantial impact on literary theory, but is his thinking entirely original? In terms of mimesis, it would be fair to commend Girard on redefining mimesis as it had always featured in Western philosophy but Plato and Aristotle were the first to consider the subject of mimesis (Greek for 'imitation') (Garrels 2011:6). According to Palaver, Western philosophy defines mimesis as "external mediation" or "mere artistic

representation" (Palaver 2013:37). For Plato, and Western philosophy, mimesis is preoccupied with how art, language and concepts 'imitate' or simulate reality, which is in other words, pure representation while Girard's mimesis moves past representation into acts of acquisition (Fleming 2004:6). According to Garrels, Plato's view of mimesis was that it is a twice-removed imitation of reality and in as much is a weaker, distorted version of truth (Garrels 2011:6). Plato even suggested that the arts, like plays, exaggerated aspects of reality in a way that played on an audience's emotion. This research agrees that the arts exaggerate aspects of reality in order to sway an audience and it argues that we may use these insights, further guided by using Girard's mimetic theory, to develop a deeply insightful reading of narrative. Aristotle's view of mimesis was that representation was not a poor imitation of reality but rather an extension of reality which would further knowledge and create beauty (Garrels 2011:6). Fleming, guided by Girard's perception of the function of the 'unconcious' in mimesis, suggests that mimesis instead of relying on 'representation' precludes it, especially in the case of 'self-representation' (Fleming 2004:35-37). 'Self-representation' refers to occasions of imitating despite having prior knowledge on how to imitate or even awareness that one is imitating (Fleming 2004:36).

Palaver too draws comparison between Girard and Aristotle, suggesting that mimetic theory was largely incongruent with Aristotle's concepts (Palaver 2013:36). Aristotle discussed the notion of the 'political animal' whom he argued was peaceful by nature and intent on "harmonious coexistence with others" while Girard's mimetic theory instead maintained that man's social character, by implication of desire, tends toward violence (Palaver 2013:36-37). This draws a stunning comparison to the way Augustine perceived anthropology saying, "The human race is, more than any other species, social by nature and quarrelsome by perversion" (Palaver 2013: 37). Palaver posits that Girard was substantially influenced by Augustine's concepts, especially his insights into 'original sin' and its consequences of the cohabitation of man (Palaver 2013: 37). Palaver draws further comparison between Girardian thought and Augustine's insights, arguing that both attributed the cause of interpersonal conflict and mimetic rivalry to man's inherent desire to covet (Palaver 2013: 37).

Girard was awarded the French Academy's *Grand Prix de Philosophie* in recognition of being an outstanding philosophical anthropologist of his generation (Fleming 2004:1). Girard, although not the first to figure mimesis, was the first cultural and literary theorist to emphasise the "appropriative aspects of imitation". Although inspired by Augustine, Girard is responsible for taking Augustine's anthropology and formulating a mechanism based on observation. A mechanism which would pervade fields far beyond the scope of anthropology. This research contends that Girard's conception of mimesis in the form of the mimetic mechanism proves for very original thinking indeed.

Girard, Aristotle and Plato each offer something different to the perception of imitation. Girard's mimetic theory may help us better understand imitation in terms of how we learn, how we understand intention and desire and how we develop bonds and rivals (Garrels 2011:1). But Plato and Aristotle's versions of mimesis are advantageous too since they do not dismiss the relevancy of representation in the way that Girard does. Girard's neglect for addressing representation is largely the reason this research relies on narratology as an additional hermeneutic lens. Mimetic theory lacks the ability to identify and put into words exactly those instances of narrative which infer mimetic theory. Plato's version of mimesis as a twice-removed imitation allows for the consideration of what we are actually seeing, as is the case with mimetic narration, and the chance to consider the implications of the choice of imitation. Plato's perception of mimesis is also attentive to the intention behind exaggerating aspects of a narration in order to produce a particular outcome. Aristotle's version of mimesis is very much in line with narratology and with Heywood and Sandywell's view of hermeneutics which is to say that Aristotle's mimesis, narratology and Heywood and Sandywell's hermeneutic are capable of recounting events through language in order to extend their reality and our understanding of them.

2.3 Unpacking mimetic theory

This sub-section looks at some of Girard's work, namely *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, *A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare* and *A Theory by Which to Work: The Mimetic Mechanism. In Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*. It aims to synthesise mimetic theory in line with the objectives of this research. In addition, this

research uses observations from Chris Fleming and Wolfgang Palaver to supplement the synthesis. Girard's theory is expansive and many of his concepts are developed over the course of multiple works. For this reason, Fleming is used largely in place of direct quotes from Girard to summarise the theory and offer neat, comprehensive insights.

Girard developed a theory around the central idea of imitation, exploring human desire and the relationship it seems to inspire (Fleming 2004:5). Girard explains how a subject surrenders his prerogative to choose objects of his own desire to a model so that the model 'chooses' for him (Girard 1965:1). According to Fleming, Girard argues that human desire is anchored in the relationship between the subject (who desires) and the object (desired) but that desire originates in neither one of these but rather stems from imitation of a model (Fleming 2004:5). For Girard, desire can be portrayed by a simple line which connects subject and object suggesting that where characters have simple desires that a mediator may or may not be present (Girard 1965:2). Girard argues that if an object is not sufficient in nature to satiate a desire or account for the desire it seems to inspire, then a mediator is indeed present and that it is the mediator who inspires the desire. The mediator's influence stems from above the line which connects subject to object (Girard 1965:2). This will create a triangle which sees a mediator at the apex and the object and subject at the base (Girard 1965:2). Girard demonstrates this relationship with the case of Don Quixote who desires a variety of objects along his journeys such as the barber's basin or Master Peter's puppets. However, no matter the object, the triangle remains, and at the apex of the triangle, Armadis is always present (Girard 1965:2). In simpler terms, Girard's theory, which he terms 'mimetic' or 'triangular desire' sees a subject copy the desires of a model or mediator who desire a certain object (Fleming 2004:5). Desire is then always copied and not inherent. To clarify, this triangular relationship represents 'mimetic desire' as the first part or moment of the mimetic mechanism (Girard 2017:56). Girard also offers a clarified distinction between the terms 'imitation' and 'mimetic' where imitation is intentional versus mimeticism, which usually occurs where the subject is unaware (Girard 2017:60).

For Girard, there are two ways in which desire may be mediated: internally or externally (Fleming 2004:17). Internally mediated desire describes a situation of mimesis in which the model and the subject are not separated by space, time, social or spiritual difference

and subsequently, are more likely to engage in conflict as they rival for an object on which their desires converge (Fleming 2004:19). Fleming summarises Girard's view on internal mediation as an unconscious phenomenon wherein imitations of a model are concealed as object-oriented desires through self-preservations of what the subject deems original desires (Fleming 2004:35).

Internal mediation creates what Girard terms the 'double imperative' which sees the mediator both encouraging and condemning being imitated (Fleming 2004:19). In other words, the mediator says both, "imitate me" and "do not imitate me" (Fleming 2004:19). Internal mediation produces two opposing feelings within the subject toward the model, namely utter respect and the will to submit, as well as ill will for the model, which Girard describes as 'hatred' which conceals the subject's admiration for the model (Girard 1965:10-11). For Dostoyevsky,[11] hatred becomes so intense that it explodes to reveal the double nature of the mediator who acts as both model and obstacle (Girard 1965:42). Girard describes hatred as a type of defence mechanism employed by a subject, where the subject refuses to admit to himself or to others that he admires the model, so he paints the model as mere obstacle (Girard 1965:10). The subject also inverts the chronological order of desire in an attempt to assert that his desire came first and is original and that the model is responsible for instigating the rivalry (Girard 1965:11).

Girard explains how Stendhal[12] refers to envy, jealousy and impotent hatred as 'modern emotions' suggesting that they are consequences of vanity but for Girard, they are consequences instead of imitated desire (Girard 1965:14). In essence, Stendhal and Girard are communicating the same thing - desire copied from desire breeds envy, jealousy and/or hatred (Girard 1965:41). For Girard, "all envy is mimetic, but not all mimetic desire is envious" (Girard 1991:14). In other words, envy implies that a person

[11] Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, sometimes transliterated as Dostoyevsky, was a Russian novelist, philosopher, short story writer, essayist, and journalist (Fyodor Dostoyevski [sa]). Girard references Dostoyevski throughout his book Deceit, Desire and the Novel.

[12] Stendhal is the pseudonym for Marie-Henri Beyle who is described as "one of the most original and complex French writers of the first half of the 19th century. (Brombert [sa]). Girard references Stendhal throughout his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel.*

covets an object of desire which another person possesses and this makes all envy mimetic, but there are relationships such as in an apprenticeship where the mimesis is not envious in nature. Scheler[13] discusses envy and jealousy in terms of ressentiment, arguing that envy is a feeling of impotence which renders us incapable of acquiring that which the other possesses and we covet (Scheler 1994:34-35). This means that envy and shame are inextricably tied since the envious person experiences what feels like a lack of being which produces moments of shame. In the pilot episode of the series, *Breaking Bad* we see these moments of shame for Walter especially from the unflattering underwear to being humiliated by his students at the carwash to being the punchline for his brother-in-law's toxic masculinity jokes.

Girard posits that the eruption of rivalry in instances of internal mediation is inevitable and, as the subject imitates the model, it inherently produces the phenomenon of the 'double imperative' in which there is so much symmetry between the model and subject that they become doubles of one another (Girard 2017:57). Girard discusses the way in which a writer might attempt to contradict the phenomenon of 'The Double' by differentiating the rivals so that one may be "the good" and one may be "the bad" but ultimately the rivals are nothing more and nothing less than doubles of one another (Girard 1978:41). This is especially true of the portrayal of Walter and Gustavo, whereby Walter is perceived as "the good" and Gustavo as "the bad" but as the reading progresses, we discover that they are mirror doubles, and each is as evil and sinister as the other. Rivals who become doubles, produce mimetic rivalry and Girard explains that as the tension between the rivals becomes critical, it ruptures and becomes explicit (Girard 1978:42).

External mediation describes a triangular relationship in which 'distance' eliminates the possibility of the subject and the object coming into direct conflictual mimesis (Girard 1965:9). 'Distance' may be physical space between the subject and mediator, or it may refer to social, intellectual or spiritual disparity between the subject and mediator, which

[13] Max Scheler was a German social and ethical philosopher, who often challenged the philosophical method of phenomenology proposed by Edmund Husserl (Frings [sa]). Girard references Scheler from time to time in his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel.*

effectively works to separate them (Girard 1965:9). In other words, external mediation describes the relationship of a subject and model who do not exist in the same relational domain, where the subject cannot possess the model's object and the mediation ends up being positive in that it cannot be conflictual (Girard 2017:57).

Girard suggests that whether imitation occurs consciously or unconsciously is determined by the context and condition in which it takes place (Fleming 2004:5). Girard describes the subject as the disciple who pursues objects determined or seemingly determined for him by the model (Girard 1965:2). In these instances, a subject consciously partakes in practices of imitation such as in discipleship or apprenticeship, in which the subject actively and knowingly imitates the model with both participants in the relationship seemingly aware of the imitation (Fleming 2004:5). This relationship sees the 'hero' proclaiming aloud his desires, openly admiring and worshipping his model whom he deliberately imitates (Girard 1965:10). Girard terms this imitation either a 'mimesis of apprenticeship' or a 'mimesis of appropriation' (Fleming 2004:10). The alternative scenario sees the subject imitating desire unconsciously and believing the desires to be authentic (Fleming 2004:5). Girard believes that the subject will borrow desire from the Other but confuse it with a will to be Oneself (Girard 1965:4). Girard posits that this belief in desire, originating from the self, is what develops a false construct of subjectivity (Fleming 2004:5).

Often, the object that a subject desires, acts as a guise for what the subject truly desires. Girard substantiates that as the desire for the 'metaphysical' grows in importance, so the importance of the physical object decreases (Girard 1965:85). In relation to contemporary theories of psychoanalysis, Girard contests the notion of 'cathexis' which argues that desire is object-oriented (Fleming 2004:32). Girard argues instead that a mediator contains the original desire of an object which the subject inherently imitates (Fleming 2004:32). While cathexis attributes value to the object, mimetic theory reveals the real value to be intrinsically tied to the desire of the subject who wants to be like the Other. The object merely acts as a guise.

In *Deceit, Desire and the Novel,* Girard begins his explorations into the mechanics of triangular desire by quoting Don Quixote[14] who expresses a sentiment about the Amadis of Gaul[15] as the "perfect knight" (Girard 1965:2). Don Quixote suggests that "whoever imitates him [Amadis] best will come closest to perfect chivalry" (Girard 1965:2). Girard uses this extract from Don Quixote as a pertinent example in exploring the relationship between the model and the subject in which the subject surrenders his own prerogative to choose objects of desire for himself by adopting those of the model instead (Girard 1965:2). It is interesting to note that the object of desire in this instance is 'chivalry', which is not a physical entity but rather a metaphysical one. Don Quixote is open about his imitation of Amadis which makes this a 'mimesis of apprenticeship' or 'appropriation'. Amadis in this case is the mediator of desire. It is possible for a character to be a subject in one model of triangular desire as well as a mediator of desire in another. This overlap of models is illustrated by Don Quixote who in one triangle is the subject and in the other is the mediator coveted by his squire Sancho (Girard 1965:4), which is why Girard suggests that rather than the triangle being a single model, it may form a family of models which interlink (Girard 1965:2). This overlap of models is also the case with Walter White who in some models is the mediator as with Jesse, Gale and Todd, and in others is the subject such as with Gus. Walter White's relationships will be explored in greater detail in Chapter four. Both Don and Sancho assume that their desires come from the 'will to be Oneself', when actually their desires are borrowed from the Other (Girard 1965:2). What Don, Sancho and Walter are essentially after is the 'ontological self-sufficiency' they detect in their models (Fleming 2004:24).

Girard describes the occasion of 'ontological sickness' in which forms of physical gratification do not produce metaphysical accomplishment (Girard 1965:87). This is

[14] *Don Quixote* is one of the most widely read classics of Western literature. It was written by Miguel de Cervantes in Spanish and translated to English. It tells the tale of an aging knight who is bemused by romantic literature and sets out to find adventure with his squire, Sancho Panza (Don Quixote [sa]).

[15] Amadís of Gaul is a prose romance of chivalry. It tells the tale of Amadís, who was the most handsome, upright, and valiant of knights. The story of his incredible feats of arms, in which he is never defeated, was interwoven with that of his love for Oriana, daughter of Lisuarte, king of England (Amadís of Gaul [sa]).

especially true for Walter, who by the end of his character arc realises that physical gratification in the form of money, does not produce metaphysical accomplishment. Girard suggests that by way of transformation into someone else, we are led to believe more and more that we are becoming almost entirely sufficient and this is effectively the product of mimetic desire (Girard 1999:36). We see this in Walter who gains power over the course of the narrative transforming from Mr Chips to Scarface, believing more and more that he is entirely self-sufficient and invincible.

Metaphysical desire is endowed with what Fleming refers to as 'pseudo-masochism' (Fleming 2004:24). The path to self-sufficiency is essentially 'the will to make oneself God', argues Girard which ultimately leads to gradual self-destruction often realised too late (Girard 1965:287). We begin to explore Walter's self-destruction from as early as the pilot episode, but we only see the realisation by *Ozymandias (S5 E14)*. The masochist embarks on a journey of imitating mediators, each more powerful than the last (Fleming 2004:24). In Walter's world, these mediators are more often than not drug kingpins or violent gang leaders; the first being Tuco Salamanca, then Gustavo Fring and eventually Uncle Jack. These relationships are discussed in Chapter four. The masochist does not want something that can be easily obtained because then it is in essence useless (Fleming 2004:24). Girard suggests that the masochist is after objects which are impossible to attain or otherwise lost causes (Fleming 2004:24). Girard describes how the desire of the model becomes more valuable than the desired object and this allows the masochist to let the desired object fall by the wayside and instead direct desire towards violence against the model (Fleming 2004:26).

In line with the above-mentioned self-destructive behaviour, the masochist begins to admire those who are repulsed by him and then to deny and reject those who either do or profess to love him (Fleming 2004:26). For Walter, this means denying his wife, his children, his extended family and his partner Jesse and pursuing violent, reprehensible mediators. Girard argues that because metaphysical desire is contagious, everyone around the hero, even those who seem shocked or indignant to the hero's behaviour are affected by this contagion (Girard 1965:96-97). The nearer the mediator to the subject or hero, the more intense the contagion of metaphysical desire (Girard 1965:99). For

Girard, it is the contagious nature of metaphysical desire which acts as an important point in novelistic revelation (Girard 1965:98).

To summarise, the subject desires the object that his model desires but the physical qualities of the object play only a subordinate role to the metaphysical qualities that the subject, either consciously or unconsciously, truly desires (Girard 1965:88). When the subject or hero does come to possess the object, he discovers that the object does not transform his being and experiences metaphysical disappointment (Girard 1965:88). This metaphysical disappointment comes from the hero realising that the object to which he had attributed the power of 'initiation' to, did not actually possess any power at all. Girard goes so far as to say that metaphysical disappointment may cause such profound confusion that it may drive the hero to suicide, which is the case with Walter White (Girard 1965:88). Although he does not actively commit suicide, he does prompt Jesse to shoot him in the last episode of the series and behaves as though he has nothing left to lose. Alternatively, the hero will pursue one of two paths after experiencing this metaphysical failure (Girard 1965:89). The hero either desires a new object chosen by the original mediator or the hero opts for a new mediator altogether (Girard 1965:89). Walter demonstrates this through the arc of his story. Walter's first mediator is Tuco and the object of desire is money. When Tuco is no longer a viable mediator for Walter, Walters pursues Gus as a mediator and although money seems to be the object of desire, it is only a guise for the metaphysical object Walter truly covets, which is power.

This opens up conversation for what Girard terms 'pseudo-identification of pride' which concerns both the oeuvre of the author and the transformation of the main character within a novelistic work (Fleming 2004:14). The behaviours and attitudes of characters seem at first to develop from situations which call for justifiable acts of imitation. Later these acts reveal themselves as motivated by conflict or resentment (Fleming 2004:14). Chapter four builds on this at length but this too is the case with Walter who the audience at first sympathises with but later his motivations are revealed as driven by conflict and resentment. Characters may also pursue negative imitation by doing something that others cannot or will not do and Girard describes this as pride (Fleming 2004:14). Pride is the pursuit of distinction which is paradoxically still tied to the Other

(Fleming 2004:15). This research contends that the entire arc of *Breaking Bad* and indeed the character transformation of Walter White, hinges solely on his tragic flaw, his *hamartia*, pride.

Stendhal's use of the term 'vanity' indicates forms of copying and imitation (Girard 1965:5-6). Girard discusses vanity under the term 'vaniteux' to describe someone who draws desires from others because he cannot draw desires from his own resources (Girard 1965:6). The romantic vaniteux does not want to be a disciple of any model and wants to believe that he is thoroughly original (Girard 1965:15). Walter White is a romantic vaniteux who believes that he is original but as will be argued in the succeeding chapter, his desires are very much borrowed from models like Gustavo Fring. At every mention of vanity that Stendhal makes in his novels, whether around questions of ambition, business or love, Girard remarks that the triangle is present (Girard 1965:7). The vaniteux, who acts as the subject, admires a model and desires any object that he believes the model desires. Girard argues that the vanity allows for the emergence of the mediator as rival and the instance of rivalry calls for some sort of defeat to occur to preserve the vanity (Girard 1965:7). As desire of the subject and model converge on the object, the model takes on a double role as both model, who is admired and as obstacle or rival, who must be defeated (Girard 1965:7). For Walter, Gustavo Fring becomes his role-model-come rival and Chapter four details the way in which Walter and Gus become entangled in mimetic desire, rivalry, conflict and crisis.

Girard compares the views of Stendhal and Jean Prévost[16] on 'passion.' Girard explains that Stendhal's view of passion is that it is the opposite of vanity where the passionate person draws his desires from within himself and not from others (Girard 1965:6). On the other hand Prévost is of the belief that passion is merely desire (Girard 1965:21). Girard is more inclined to agree with the view of Stendhal and argues that where there is real desire, there will be a mediator despite whether the character is a passionate one or not (Girard 1965:21). Girard argues that in the vanity-passion opposition in novelistic

[16] Jean Prévost was a French author and essayist who died during the Resistance to the German occupation of France during World War II (Jean Prévost [sa]). Girard references Scheler from time to time in his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel.*

works, vanity is elevated as the most intense desire (Girard 1965:20). Stendhal's later works show a migration from the vanity-passion dialectic to reveal every instance of 'psychological' analysis as a revelation of vanity, which also reveals triangular desire (Girard 1965:22).

Conflict ignites the second moment in the mimetic mechanism, which is mimetic rivalry (Girard 2017:56). Girard argues that a common name given to mimetic rivalry is envy (Girard 2017:62). Envy, like jealousy, requires there to be a model at which the envy may be directed (Girard 1965:12). Max Scheler establishes envy as a feeling of impotence, arguing that if desire were contained solely by the object, then the subject would simply find a means to obtain the object or something similar, but rather the subject covets that which their model possesses by concerted opposition to the model as an obstacle or rival (Scheler 1994:34-35). Failure to acquire the object results in a feeling of impotence (Scheler 1994:34-35). Girard substantiates this argument by explaining that other objects, even those similar or identical to the desired objects, mean nothing to the envious person (Girard 1965:14). Girard posits that especially particular to the modern man is the illusion of autonomy and 'spontaneous desire' (Girard 1965:16). The modern man is incapable of "recognising his own nature" and if he were capable of recognising his inability to be autonomous, it would be completely intolerable for him to be so aware (Girard 1965:159). Girard suggests that mediation has the power within the novel to create the impression of autonomy and spontaneity at exactly the point when there is no autonomy or spontaneity (Girard 1965:38). People tend to avoid recognising, whether consciously or unconsciously, their inept imitation of others and so for Girard, novelistic genius emerges at the point where the concept of the 'autonomous' self, collapses (Girard 1965:38).

Girard introduces the term 'romanesque' which reflects our 'unawareness of all mediation' which is, in other words, unconscious mimesis (Girard 1965:16-17). Girard makes a noteworthy distinction between the categories 'romantic' and 'novelistic' (Girard 1965:17). 'Romantic' is a term for works that reflect the presence of a mediator despite not revealing the mediator (Girard 1965:17). Girard adds that both romantic and symbolist theories of desire, in some way, denounce reality (Girard 1965:87). 'Romantic pride' denies the presence of the mediator in Others in an attempt to find its

own autonomy (Girard 1965:38). 'Novelistic' is a term for works which actively reveal the presence of the mediator and this research endeavours to understand the precise way in which the presence of the mediator is revealed. Girard posits that novelistic genius emerges when what is true for Others is also true for the hero and even true for the novelist (Girard 1965:38). Girard is ultimately suggesting that there is no such thing as the autonomous self and true novelistic genius arises from the realisation that original desire does not emerge from the Others (as they too have borrowed desire), from the hero or even from the novelist himself (Girard 1965:38). Girard adds that the death of pride incites the birth of humility, which in turn produces truth (Girard 1965:38).

Almost equivalent to Stendhal's vaniteux is Proust's[17] snob. Girard describes the snob as an imitator who copies the person that he envies either for their "birth, fortune or stylishness" (Girard 1965:24). The snob only desires objects desired by others because he cannot trust his own desire (Girard 1965:24). Girard notes that 'snobbism' does not conceal the true nature of triangular desire as it draws attention to the imitative nature it implies (Girard 1965:24). This would make any novel that includes snobbism, a novelistic work as it actively reveals the presence of the mediator. For Proust, characters may be jealous or snobbish, depending on whether the mediator is a lover or a member of high society but Proust posits that love-jealousy and snobbism are identical vices (Girard 1965:25).

The Proustian snob, like Girard's masochist, is obsessed with those who refuse to accept him (Girard 1965:44). Girard attributes the arrogance of the snob to the snob thinking he is on the precipice of securing 'being' and behaving as though he has already obtained it (Girard 1965:67). However, despite indignation toward the snob, Girard suggests that we can never dislike the snob as much as the snob dislikes himself (Girard 1965:67). Snobbism incites moral judgement, but what the snob is attempting to do is escape their dislike for their own being by subsuming the being of the Other. Girard suggests that the snob and the hero might be one and the same (Girard 1965:67). The reason the snob causes indignation is because their imitation seems arbitrary or their

[17] Marcel Proust was a French novelist who wrote based on in his life in both psychologically and allegorically (Painter [sa]). Girard refers to Proust throughout his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*.

motivations seem debased (Girard 1965:69). We do not note inferiority in the snob, yet the snob does, hence the attempt to subsume the desire of others (Girard 1965:69-70). Girard suggests that where individuals are either superior or inferior to one another, there will be either tyranny or a willingness to please others, respectively (Girard1965:70). As will be explored in the analysis, Walter is both the Proustian snob and the Girardian masochist who dislikes his own being and is, to a degree, aware of his own inferiority and tries desperately to subsume the being of others.

In Proust, the desire to subsume the being of the mediator comes from the desire to live a different life from the one being lived (Girard 1965:53). In the world of the novel, a new, prestigious way of life belongs to a mediator. When this mediator coincidentally meets a subject, he makes the subject suddenly aware of a new way of life (Girard 1965:53). The subject or hero expects his being to be entirely changed by possessing the desire that the mediator has initiated within them (Girard 1965:53). Similar to Proust's snob is Dostoyevsky's hero, who dreams of assimilating the mediator's being because he aspires to possess what the mediator does and is repulsed by his own substance (Girard 1965:54).

Girard describes the 'curse of the hero' which sees the hero yearning for bigger, better things that are found outside of his immediate and mediocre surroundings (Girard 1965:56). Essentially the hero or subject places faith in a 'false promise' which does not originate from the subject (Girard 1965:56). For Dostoyevsky, the false promise is a promise of 'metaphysical autonomy' (Girard 1965:56). When the hero's faith in the promise is shattered by disappointment, it produces a violent contrast between what the hero expected and what the hero ends up discovering (Girard 1965:56). The underlying principle of the desire for metaphysical autonomy is inextricably linked to pride (Girard 1965:56). It is usually at this point in the narrative that the hero may experience ontological sickness and metaphysical disappointment.

Pride describes the temptation of man to replace God, who according to Western, Nietzschean doctrine, is dead (Girard 1965:56). Girard explains how pride swells inside the hero and effectively produces an illusion of bitterness and solidarity out of their consciousness of existence (Girard 1965:56-57). Girard says that the disappointment

that arises from discovering that the promise was false is a universal truth about experience but pride effaces this, letting each individual not only discover this in solitude but believe that they are the only ones experiencing it as well (Girard 1965:57). More and more, the audience witnesses Walter's pride and the bitterness that comes with it. The hero always turns back to the mediator to sustain faith in the false problem, hence pride always relies on a lie sustained by triangular desire (Girard 1965:57).

Desire, imaginary or not, is not determined by the subject or society but rather it is attributed to the Other by either the subject or society (Fleming 2004:21). The relationship between rivals escalates from rivalry to a mimetic crisis in a situation which sees the subject striving for differentiation, which Girard argues, effectively works to render rivals as doubles of one another (Fleming 2004:22). This mimetic crisis is the third moment within the mimetic mechanism. According to Girard, mimetic crisis is always 'a crisis of undifferentiation' which is a result of the subject and model that have been reduced to rivals and become doubles of one another (Girard 2017:57). This internal mediation then 'renders protagonists into antagonists' (Fleming 2004:22). By way of explanation, the subject sees their desires as original and denies that it is tied to a model. This phenomenon is described by the term 'hero's askesis' (Fleming 2004:24).

Hero's askesis defines a situation in which the 'hero' conceals his own desires by projecting self-sufficiency and autonomy, which attracts the desire of others (Fleming 2004:24). The substantiality that the 'hero' appears to possess appeals to others who feel that they lack the same quality and their attraction to or fascination with the 'hero' (Fleming 2004:24). Girard suggests that the hero nonetheless dreams of assimilating the mediator's being which implies a desire for absorbing the substance of the Other because of a revulsion for one's own substance (Girard 1965:54). 'Being' is mediated by those onto which we project metaphysical desire and these are the models we begin to imitate (Fleming 2004:24). This renders the object of desire merely a means by which the subject may reach the model (Fleming 2004:24). Girard substantiates that the object is merely an excuse which conceals the true metaphysical meaning of the desire (Girard 1965:55).

Girard also offers the term ‘dandyism’ which is in essence the same as hero askesis. In dandyism, the dandy is recognisable by a sort of stoic disposition which is a calculated attempt at conjuring up desires in others (Girard 1965:162). The stoic or cold disposition is meant to make others believe that the dandy is wholly self-sufficient, prompting others to imitate him (Girard 1965:162). The hero and the dandy are essentially one and the same. Girard posits that in all instances of internal mediation in novels, the dandy will be present (Girard 1965:162).

Girard introduces the notion of the ‘coquette’ which is similar in formulation to the ‘Other’ in the double bind, who says both “imitate me, do not imitate me” (Girard 1965:105). The coquette does not want to surrender themselves to the desires which they arouse but similarly still wish to provoke those desires in others (Girard 1965:105). Coquetry initiates a vicious cycle of double mediation in which the coquette provokes desire in the lover but is indifferent to the suffering of the lover, simply because the coquette is demonstrating a desire of oneself (Girard 1965:106). The lover is fascinated by the indifference because it presents itself as autonomy, a quality the lover feels he/she lacks (Girard 1965:106). Girard posits that sexual desire serves to demonstrate how impossible it is for indifference in internal mediation, to be neutral or exist outside of desire (Girard 1965:106). Success from double mediation always results from real or feigned indifference (Girard 1965:167). Indifference is linked to the dandy who feigns autonomy and indifference, effectively producing double mediation.

Girard describes a master, who after many experiences has learnt that any object which is readily available to be possessed has no value, so instead, he searches for an object which is forbidden, for a mediator which is implacable or an obstacle which cannot possibly be overcome (Girard 1965:176). The masochist is ‘a master who has become blasé’ (Girard 1965:176). The masochist desires his own failure because he has endured either continuous success or continuous disappointment (Girard 1965:176). Walter is the masochist who has endured continuous disappointment. Girard argues that metaphysical desire will always end in enslavement, failure and shame, which the masochist tries to make arrive sooner if these consequences are delayed (Girard 1965:176). The victim of internal mediation always believes that the obstacle of desire in mimetic desire which has been initiated by the mediator is an act of hostility, and

although the victim will cry out in indignation, he also ultimately believes that he deserves the punishment (Girard 1965:177). He believes he deserves the punishment because he believes he is inferior to the mediator whom he imitates (Girard 1965:177). The masochist is unlike the 'ordinary' subject. The ordinary subject is impervious to the connection between desire and downfall while the masochist is fully perceptive of the relation between metaphysical desire and unhappiness but maintains the desire regardless (Girard 1965:177). Essentially, the desire of the masochist is the desire of the obstacle (Girard 1965:177).

The masochist has so little confidence in his own self and judgement that he does not even believe he possesses the ability to distinguish a worthy mediator from an ordinary man (Girard 1965:178). He believes that the only person he is capable of accurately ascribing value to is himself, to which he ascribes absolutely no value (Girard 1965:178). Thus, the masochist tends to judge others on their perceptiveness of him, effectively rejecting those who show him forms of affection and instead, pursuing those who show him contempt (Girard 1965:178). A masochist chooses a mediator, motivated not purely by their admiration for the model but motivated instead by their resentment at the fact that the model seems worthy of imitation (Girard 1965:178). This is especially the case with Walter and Gustavo whose relationship starts off with Gustavo making it clear that he does not think Walter is good enough for him to work with. This is in the episode *Mandala (S2 E11)*, explored at greater length in Chapter four.

Girard defines sadism as the 'dialectical reverse of masochism' which sees the subject attempt to reverse his role from 'tired martyr' to 'tormentor' (Girard 1965:184). The sadist tries to convince himself that he has obtained his goal, which was to possess the being of the mediator (Girard 1965:185). For the role reversal to appear successful, the sadist must maintain the illusion of being the mediator and his victim must be transformed into a replica of himself (Girard 1965:185). Chapter four discusses Walter's reversal from 'tired martyr' to 'tormentor'.

Girard argues that desire will always end in enslavement and that enslavement is the last stage of 'ontological sickness' (Girard 1965:180). Enslavement happens when the proximity between the masochist and the mediator decreases and the subject, who at

first did not perceive enslavement as the final stage of the metaphysical process, now realises that the 'enlightenment', which the mediator seemed to possess, cannot cure the ontological sickness of the masochist. Girard suggests that the masochist is both lucid and blind, both intuitive and perverted because he is capable of perceiving the connection between internal mediation and the obstacle, and yet despite the awareness he still tries to cure his ontological illness by pursuing the obstacle (Girard 1965:179-180). On that note, Girard also remarks that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the masochist from the unconscious (Girard 1965:180).

Girard makes a bold argument in terms of metaphysical meaning against psychologists and psychiatrists who suggest that subjects actively desire "shame, humiliation and suffering" (Girard 1965:182). Girard says that this is simply not true and that no subject desires these things; instead, they desire the assumed divinity of the mediator and as a result, they are willing to or even adamant on seeking out shame, humiliation and suffering because they believe it will allow them to be freed from their current condition and assume the same divinity as their mediator (Girard 1965:182). Girard ventures so far as to suggest that the 'normal' man and the masochist have the same desires which are the desire for autonomy and a god-like self-sufficiency (Girard 1965:183).

Girard's first substantial exploration of mimetic theory came after a decade of research culminating in the publishing of *Violence and the Sacred* (Fleming 2004:7), which explored anthropology, Greek tragedy and mythology. In this book, Girard explored culture and community, devising the theory of the 'surrogate victimage mechanism' to explain how cultures and communities self-stabilise (Fleming 2004:7). Essentially, Girard argues that mimetic desire will often, if not always, lead to rivalry and conflict, especially in terms of the community who 'choose' a 'scapegoat' and carry out acts of collective violence against them to bring about cultural order. This signals the final moment within the mimetic mechanism which is the 'scapegoat resolution' (Girard 2017:56).

Girard attributes social conflict and the disintegration of culture to what he refers to as the 'sacrificial crisis' or otherwise referred to as the 'crisis of distinctions' or 'crisis of degree' (Fleming 2004:45). Girard discusses culture as a mechanism which attempts to

negate 'intraspecific' conflict (Girard 1978:90). In other words, culture uses social differentiation and established hierarchies to naturalise differentiation, subordinating certain relations accordingly (Fleming 2004:73). Girard observes that as rivalry between antagonists intensifies, the characteristics which had once been distinctive to either antagonist begin to erode or disappear, effectively producing two antagonists with the same characteristics (Fleming 2004:42). This is the 'double bind' Girard also refers to as the 'interchangeability of antagonists' (Fleming 2004:48). According to Fleming, Girard's postulation of 'doubling' suggests that conflict is not merely the result of the doubling but rather that the doubling is the essence from which the conflict arises (Fleming 2004:42). Girard suggests that it is only by an "act of collective expulsion" that a community will be able to cast violence outside of itself (Girard 1979: 151). That is to say that a 'sacrificial crisis' sees a culture, disintegrated by a string of violent reciprocities, attempt to reintroduce social order at a cultural level by exacting violence against a victim or 'scapegoat' selected at random (Fleming 2004:47).

Generally, the selection of the scapegoat is determined by cues such as "physical, cultural or mental markers of difference" which the community singles out during the crisis of degree (Fleming 2004:49). Girard argues that scapegoats are essentially not guilty of a crime, any more so than any of the members of the community that single out the scapegoat, that would justifiably warrant their sacrifice (Fleming 2004:48). If the initially polarised scapegoat becomes unavailable for whatever reason, then violence is redirected to a new victim by a process of 'sacrificial substitution' (Girard 1979:159). Fleming describes Girard's conception of the term 'surrogate victimage'[18] which acts as the mechanism that dissolves institutions in order to regenerate them (Fleming 2004:48). Two of these institutions are ritual and prohibition which Girard believes function to control conflictual desire and violence under the umbrella term of mimesis (Fleming 2004:53). Conflictual desire and violence present opportunities of both

[18] Réne Girard's concept of 'surrogate victimage' is developed and expanded through a series of Girard's works including: the first section of Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde (1978) [Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World]; 'To Double Business Bound': Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology (1978); and Le Bouc émissaire (1982) [The Scapegoat] (Fleming 2004:7). For this reason, Fleming's descriptions and insights on the concept are referred to instead of referring to Girard himself.

remembrance as well as misrecognition of social disintegration and restoration (Fleming 2004:53).

Peace and unanimity as a result of surrogate victimage, convince a community that the scapegoat, who was sacrificed, was in fact, the cause of violence and disorder and this produces in the community or mob the emergent desire to repeat the event in a controlled fashion (Fleming 2004:61). This surrogate victimage is what produces both ritual and myth (Fleming 2004:61). The community acts to prohibit actions which they believe cause violence by maintaining and replicating ritual, mythical or sacrificial events despite them being spurred by violence (Fleming 2004:61). The violence of surrogate victimage produces new sacrificial rites contained by a renewed culture, leading Girard to claim that this violence is generative, at least radically so (Girard 1979:93). Girard labels the reproduction of crisis through ritual, prohibition or myth as 'the sacred' in which case, the purpose of the sacred is to put an end to reciprocal violence (Fleming 2004:61).

Taboo or prohibition functions to prevent any escalating rivalries that might lead to a social crisis (Palaver 2013:154-155). Johnston explains that human culture or society will inhibit the development of a mimetic crisis by instilling taboos, prohibitions and laws as forms of 'sacred differentiation' to forbid actions and behaviours which may lead to escalated rivalry, or which may possibly blur the lines of distinction (Johnston 2004:4). The crimes for which the scapegoat is punished, become forbidden within the community in an attempt to emancipate the society from the same mimetic crisis reocucurring (Palaver 2013:154-155).

The scapegoat may be subject to 'double transference', which is the process by which the scapegoat, who seemingly causes and alleviates the violence besetting a community, is construed as both malevolent and benevolent (Girard 1985:131). Girard suggests that the stabilisation that comes about by ritual and surrogate victimage is only ever temporary because it is fragile in nature, which in turn calls for ritual to be repeated every so often to produce a new catharsis (Fleming 2004:63).

Ritual, if successful, produces a temporary distribution of power and cultural order which averts conflictual mimesis until such time that the power dynamics and cultural order of the community shift again to produce violence anew (Fleming 2004:64). Prohibition, in other words, stands as an adversary to those conditions which produce ritual. Fleming regards the difference between Girard's 'sacrifice' and Girard's prohibition where sacrifice is the prescription of sacrificial crisis as well as the action which ends the sacrificial crisis (Fleming 2004:64). On the other hand, prohibition is an attempt to prevent the repetition of the sacrificial crisis (Fleming 2004:64). The function of the prohibition is to counteract conflictual mimesis by averting any non-ritual repetitions of the crisis (Fleming 2004:65).

In summary, the mimetic mechanism is described in four parts, namely: mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry, mimetic crisis and the scapegoat resolution. Mimetic desire describes a triangular relationship which sees a subject desiring an object which a model possesses. The three parts of the triangular relationship are the subject, model and object. The object is not necessarily valuable but may hold intrinsic value. The desire may be for a metaphysical substance, disguised as the desire for a physical object. The subject imitates the model by imitating the model's desires.

Mimetic desire takes place through external or internal mediation. In external mediation, there is no imminent threat of conflictual mimesis since the subject and model are separated by some form of distance. Alternatively, internal mimesis does result in conflictual mimesis or mimetic rivalry, which effectively produces doubles, transfiguring a protagonist into an antagonist, as will be illustrated by the character transformation of Walter White. The model is both someone to be admired and a rival or obstacle to be defeated by the subject who tries to acquire the object that the model possesses. The double imperative tends to produce a mimetic crisis which is also a crisis of undifferentiation. The crisis incites in the community the will to end the violence and conflict. To do this, the community elects a scapegoat, who is an arbitrary victim and is collectively expelled or 'sacrificed' to bring about peace and unanimity. This sacrifice is what is referred to as the sacrificial resolution. The community oscillates between peace and crisis so it turns to ritual, which is the repetition of the sacrificial resolution, in times of crisis in the hope that it will stop the violence and effect peace again.

The research uses the mimetic mechanism as a hermeneutic lens in analysing the character transformation of Walter White from protagonist to antagonist. It argues that where narrative subscribes to Bordwell's canonical story format which has goals, obstacles and conflicts that these goals, obstacles and conflicts are mimetically charged. It will use the character transformation of Walter White to reveal how his goals, obstacles and conflicts are motivated or influenced by the mimetic mechanism. The following chapter synthesises narratology, used in unpacking Walter's narrative, which is then viewed through the mimetic lens.

CHAPTER 3: NARRATOLOGY AS A HERMENEUTIC LENS

3.1 Introduction

Up until this point, the research has briefly contextualised the plot of *Breaking Bad*. It has outlined the core argument of the research which is to use a dual hermeneutic lens, made up of narratology and mimetic theory, to better understand character evolution from protagonist to antagonist.

Moreover, it aims within this dual hermeneutic lens to explore and bridge the gap between a purely representational mimesis and Girard's mimetic theory. This chapter unpacks narratology in line with the objectives of the research. The synthesis of narratology will highlight the relevance of representational mimesis for successfully exploring character desire and transformation in terms of mimetic theory. The overlap of representational mimesis and mimetic theory as a dual hermeneutic lens is detailed in the discussion at the end of this chapter.

This chapter unpacks narratology first by referring largely to Monika Fludernik's work but also recounts arguments from David Baboulene, Gérard Genette, Ian Heywood, Barry Sandywell and David Bordwell to bolster the synthesis. It aims to use narratology in the fourth chapter as a conduit for discussing Walter White's desires according to mimetic theory.

3.2 Unpacking narratology

When we speak about narratology, essentially what we are referring to is the study of narrative as a genre, which begs the question, what is narrative? (Fludernik 2009:8). Gerald Prince defines narrative as the:

> recounting [. . .] of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narratees (Prince 2003:58).

Fludernik distinguishes between the terms narrator and narrate, but before looking into terminology, it may prove helpful to unpack narratology as a whole. The research does so by referring to Fludernik and Baboulene, along with others to synthesise the theory.

Fludernik explains that when we discuss narrative, what comes to mind is literary narrative such as in a novel but she argues that narrative operates as an 'epistemological structure' which helps us make sense of the world around us and so narrative, in the literary sense, may be only one branch of the theory (Fludernik 2009:1-2). Seymour Chatman argues that narrative is made up of an amalgamation of discourse and story where discourse includes several kinds of media (Chatman 1978:[sp]). This is to say that narrative, where Fludernik and Chatman are concerned, is not confined to the literary sense or to the novel but instead that narrative, as an epistemological structure, may span across a variation of mediums. Fludernik suggests that narration is a sequence of events containing a beginning, middle and end (Fludernik 2009:5). It sees suspense come from complications arising in the middle and conflict resolution by the end (Fludernik 2009:5). Fludernik notes that plots are derived from cause-and-effect relationships which she terms 'metonymic relations' (Fludernik 2009:45). Cause and effect relationships are demonstrated by pairs of adjacent actions such as provocation and challenge or attack and revenge (Fludernik 2009:45).

Baboulene discusses narration, particularly in terms of film, as sensory information which surrounds the specific telling of a story (Baboulene 2017:16). This sensory information may include things like actors, light and sound and even paratext[19] surrounding the telling of the story. Baboulene posits that narration can be broken down into four components and these are *syuzhet*, plot, story and fabula and that narration must be distinguished by narrative elements such as space, time and causal logic (Baboulene 2017:56). This chapter unpacks the narrative components (*syuzhet*, plot, story and fabula) according to Baboulene and looks at narrative criteria and narrative structure according to Fludernik. For Fludernik, the purpose of narrative is to unpack the experience of the protagonist so that viewers may delve into another world alongside the characters (Fludernik 2009:6).

Fludernik develops a list of criteria which, she argues, make up the structure of narrative. The first on the list of criteria is the presence of either a human or an

[19] Paratext refers to empirical information delivered outside of the diegesis of the main narrative. This may include film posters, knowledge of the actors, trailers or marketing and promotional material (Baboulene 2017:18).

anthropomorphic protagonist at the centre (Fludernik 2009:6). This means that the protagonist should either be human or at least exhibit some human traits (Fludernik 2009:6). The second criterion sees the interior world of the protagonist situated at the centre of the narrative (Fludernik 2009:6). Fludernik suggests that while we may not always have access to the minds of characters, narrative must always privilege the presentation of the characters' interior world (Fludernik 2009:6). To this point, Babloulene discusses the advantage that novel has over film. Novels can, without any restrictions, afford to transport the reader to inside the mind of the protagonist where the reader can fully grasp the character's thoughts, feelings and inhibitions (Baboulene 2017:39). For a film to be able to afford viewers this same privileged access to the thoughts of the protagonist, a narrator might be needed to relay the thoughts and internal dialogue of the protagonist (Baboulene 2017:41). Alternatively, and especially in the absence of a traditional narrator, film may need to employ some sort of mechanism to be able to unveil the protagonists' feelings; for example, by having the character pour their heart out to a psychologist whereby dialogue becomes the medium that reveals the character's interior world or simply by external, visual cues like facial expressions or clothing to communicate the character's internal world (Baboulene 2017:41).

The final criterion for narrative is tied to the idea of temporal location (Fludernik 2009:6). Fludernik argues that narrative requires the protagonist to be "existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense" (Fludernik 2009:6). This final criterion is what distinguishes narrative from lyric or poem (Fludernik 2009:6). To summarise, Fludernik argues that narrative follows the existence of an anthropomorphic being who is inextricably tied to a certain time and place and has memories and a past even if we do not gain full access to this past. To this Fludernik adds that narrative may be expressed as linguistic or as a visual medium or as a combination of the two (Fludernik 2009:6).

Fludernik suggests that every narrative comprises of two layers which are a) the world represented in the story and b) narrative mediation (Fludernik 2009:21). When we speak about the 'world represented', we are referring to the temporal and spatial relevance of the protagonist at the centre of the narrative. When we speak about narrative mediation,

we refer to a literary text, or to a film or television series as a marriage of visual and acoustic elements, which together form representation (Fludernik 2009:22).

More as an observation than a criterion, Fludernik discusses narrative beginning with an exposition which unpacks key information about the protagonist so that the viewer may have a trajectory to be able to successfully follow the rest of the narrative (Fludernik 2009:94). The exposition works to reveal things like setting in terms of time and space and the background of the protagonist (Fludernik 2009:94). Sometimes, as in the case of *Breaking Bad*, the exposition is not clear-cut and the audience is instead exposed through what Fludernik refers to as an etic beginning (Fludernik 2009:94). An etic beginning means that the protagonist "starts off in the thick of things", causing the viewer to know little to nothing about the protagonist from the first impression (Fludernik 2009:94). As the narrative unfolds, so does the exposition which helps the viewer become better acquainted with the protagonist.

Most times, narratives follow a chronological order, or begin with an etic opening in the form of a flashback which plunges the audience into a nonsensical summary of events that will eventually be unpacked so as to make sense of the summary (Fludernik 2009:34). A flashback may also be referred to as an analepsis, which works to recount memories of the protagonist to explain events which have been relayed to the audience. The structure of an analepsis in literary narrative is executed differently from filmic narrative. In a novel, an analepsis is signalled by a linguistic mechanism known as the 'pluperfect', which is a shift in tenses while in film, analepsis is signalled by mechanisms such as dissolving or black-and-white photography (Fludernik 2009:34).

Genette introduces the terms 'singulative', 'repetitive' or 'iterative' (Genette 1980:[sp]). A singulative event refers to an incident which is recounted only once in a narrative, a single event recounted more than once is repetitive and a series of similar events told only once are considered iterative (Genette 1980:[sp]). These distinctions are relevant since they communicate something worth knowing through the narrative. The decision to have an event be singulative, repetitive or iterative is a conscious one made by the author with a particular function in mind.

Fludernik provides a recipe for the order of components of narrative. First is the abstract which characterises the story right at the beginning, followed by an orientation which unpacks necessary background information to the audience, and then ends with what she terms a coda, which is an overview of the story (Fludernik 2009:48). Bordwell offers something similar but slightly meatier, which he terms 'canonical story format' (Bordwell 1985:35). According to Bordwell, a story starts with an introduction of setting and characters, followed by insight into the goals of the protagonist, leading onto the protagonist setting out to achieve these goals despite inevitable obstacles and conflict, which eventually results in climax and then a final resolution (Bordwell 1985:35). To this, Baboulene notes that often the climax and resolution of the story sees the protagonist either achieve more than what they had aimed at or achieve something completely different from their original goals (Baboulene 2017:98). The protagonist grows and changes with experiences that they encounter in trying to reach their goals and often, at the climax, forgo their original goal for a goal or achievement to which they did not originally aspire (Baboulene 2017:98).

This research explores Walter's goals and character growth as described by Baboulene and uses this exploration to bridge the gap between narratology and mimetic theory. In the pilot episode of the series, the audience is introduced to the setting and characters, especially the protagonist Walter White. The pilot episode also divulges the goal of the protagonist, which as has already been stated, is to make money for his family before he passes away from terminal cancer. The research explores the ways in which this goal is tied to mimetic desire. Walter inevitably encounters obstacles and conflict in pursuing this goal and the research explores this in light of mimetic rivalry and mimetic crisis. By the climax or resolution, Walter has changed by virtue of the obstacles and rivalries he has endured. The research explores this in light of the scapegoat mechanism and mimetic resolution.

As previously stated, narrative structure is made up of the narrative components story, *syuzhet*, fabula and plot and it is worth unpacking this terminology. The research first unpacks story, then *syuzhet* and fabula and briefly looks at the definition of plot. Baboulene explains that the term 'story', despite being a commonly used term in academic discourse, does not have a clear definition (Baboulene 2017:17-18). To rectify

this, Baboulene suggests a list of characteristics which define 'story'. According to Baboulene, a story is unique to every individual who engages with it (Baboulene 2017:17-18). Story is the by-product of narration which is the telling of the story (Baboulene 2017:17-18). More succinctly, Baboulene defines story as a 'phenomenological entity' which occurs in the mind of the viewer or reader who receives sensory information and interprets it (Baboulene 2017:17-18).

Bordwell describes the process of perception as developing assumptions and expectations based on schemata derived from everyday life and from engaging with forms of media (Bordwell 1985:32). According to Bordwell, a viewer is more likely to remember a story and perceive causal and temporal connections when the story centres on a goal-oriented protagonist (Bordwell 1985:[sp]). Heywood and Sandywell (1999:61) add that as incarnate beings, we are connected and exist in a specific time and place and that each person is tied to temporal and causal context which will never be experienced by another individual in exactly the same way. In other words, each viewer forms their own story as a subset of fabula according to their own everyday life and experience with the media.

Story can be broken down into the component parts '*hamartia*', '*anagnorisis*' and '*peripeteia*' (Aristotle, 335BC [1996]). *Hamartia* means 'error' and it is used to identify a tragic character flaw which will inevitably lead to the downfall of the protagonist (Baboulene 2017:26). *Hamartia*, as a tragic event, turns the protagonist's world on its side and prompts the audience to ask, "But what happens now?" (Baboulene 2017:26). Then comes the moment in the story where the protagonist is struck with the realisation of how dire his/her situation is and this moment of realisation is what Aristotle refers to as *anagnorisis* (Baboulene 2017:26). What follows is an unexpected reversal of expectation that surprises participants both internal and external to the story (Baboulene 2017:26). This reversal of expectation is what we call *peripeteia* (Baboulene 2017:26). For *peripeteia* to be successful, the story must build an expectation for the audience as the climax approaches and then have the climax twist those expectations drastically (Baboulene 2017:93).

In the 1920s, Russian formalists, Boris Tomashevsky, Viktor Shklovsky and Vladimir Propp, coined the terms 'fabula' and '*syuzhet*' and argued that all narratives are made

up of these two components (Baboulene 2017:15). '*Syuzhet*' is used to identify all denoted, empirical material that forms a relevant part of narration but the narration itself is only a subset of the *syuzhet* (Baboulene 2017:15). A large part of what makes up the *syuzhet* are 'mimetic narration' and 'diegetic narration'. Baboulene creates a distinction between mimetic narration and diegetic narration and subsequently argues that film allows for both modes simultaneously (Baboulene 2017:49). Mimetic narration refers to how actors use actions and words to deliver stories as characters, which viewers engage with as though they are watching the characters live out their real lives (Baboulene 2017:49). Diegetic narration on the other hand, refers to written or verbal storytelling through a particular medium; for example, a narrator who describes the events (Baboulene 2017:49). Baboulene (2017:49) neatly summarises this concept: "A mimesis 'shows' what happens; a diegesis 'tells' what happens".

Fabula is used to identify all possible interpretations of the *syuzhet* (Baboulene 2017:15). Since no viewer who engages with the *syuzhet* will apprehend all possible interpretations, Baboulene posits that this why we use the term story to refer to the specific and unique phenomenon that the viewer creates in in his/her mind (Baboulene 2017:15).

As an overview, all narratives consist of component parts which are *syuzhet* and narration as one component and story and fabula as the other (Baboulene 2017:51). *Syuzhet* and narration are denoted, empirical information while fabula and story are connoted phenomena (Baboulene 2017:51). A story is a subset of the fabula in the same way that narration is a subset of the *syuzhet*. Neither Fludernik nor Baboulene define plot in as many words but it can be understood as the sequence of events which make up the story of narrative.

A common discussion in narratology revolves around the idea of a narrator which goes hand-in-hand with the concept of perspective or point of view. The aim of investigating narrative perspective is to distinguish whether a story is filtered through a character, referred to as a reflector figure, or whether it is through the view of an external participant (Fludernik 2009:38). Essentially, narrative perspective tries to determine 'who sees' (perspective) and who speaks (voice) (Fludernik 2009:38). Fludernik posits that perspective may be internal (diegetic) or external (extradiegetic) (Fludernik

2009:38). Internal perspective means that the audience is restricted to the view of a single character and experiences the world from their point of view whereas the external perspective places the audience outside of the character's world altogether and denies them direct access to the consciousness and thoughts (Fludernik 2009:38).

Genette refers to perspective as 'focalisation' (Genette 1980:[sp]). In narrative, where the audience are seeing things from the point of view of a particular character, the character acts as the focalizer or lens through which the story is filtered (Fludernik 2009:36). According to Fludernik, characters are only one avenue by which we may obtain perspective or point of view (Fludernik 2009:36). This may also be obtained through that of a narrator or through a neutral participant known as 'camera-eye', which offers a removed, impersonal perspective (Fludernik 2009:36). Fludernik suggests that the concept of the 'camera-eye' and Chatman's 'cinematic narrator' may be interchangeable (Fludernik 2009:5). The cinematic narrator performs much the same role in film as that of the traditional narrator of a novel, where both serve to mediate the presentation of the story to either a readership or an audience but offer a removed, impersonal perspective from a seemingly omnipresent figure (Fludernik 2009:5).

Genette classifies narration, depending on the type of narrator, as either homodiegetic, heterodiegetic or autodiegetic, depending on the type of narrator and discusses how each narrator may be distinguished from the other. Homodiegetic narration has a first-person narrator who is an active character in the narration but is not the main protagonist (Genette 1980:[sp]). Autodiegetic narration is a story being told from the point of view of the main protagonist who has, or is actively experiencing the story he/she is relaying (Genette 1980:[sp]). Third-person narration or heterodiegetic narration refers to a narrator who is external to the story world of the narration and so is the narrator is neither a character nor a main protagonist (Genette 1980:[sp]).

Stanzel suggests that the main, defining feature of narrative is mediacy and heterodiegesis and homodiegesis fall under the umbrella term 'mediacy' (Stanzel 1984:[sp]). Stanzel argues that in a figural sense, mediacy manifests in the form of a teller who tells a story but, in some instances, where the reader engages with the story under the impression that there is no narrator, for example when the character acts as the focaliser, then mediacy is replaced by im-mediacy (Fludernik 2009:36). The character

who acts as focaliser or reflector figure gives the reader the impression that they are directly involved in the story as it plays out, experiencing it through the consciousness of the character or protagonist, which may also fool the viewer into thinking that a narrator is present. In other words, a reflector figure is a character whose consciousness acts as a filter through which focalisation takes place (Fludernik 2009:160). Focalisation, to recap, is a question of 'who sees?' (Baboulene 2017:49). Henry James very aptly terms the reflector figure a 'centre of consciousness' (cited by Fludernik 2009:160).

Fludernik argues that the transfer of traditional categories of narratology to film presents problems and she calls to rethink current narrative typologies to incorporate new media in more successful ways (Fludernik 2009:114-115). Fludernik suggests that the mention of narrative conjures up thoughts of the literary type of narrative like the novel or short stories because narratology has traditionally been a sub-discipline of literature (Fludernik 2009:1-9). Fludernik observes that narratologists' models for narratology are structuralist, consisting largely of binary oppositions, which she attributes to linguistics serving as the traditional paradigm for narratology (Fludernik 2009:8). These traditional structuralist frameworks built up of binary oppositions cannot be retrofitted to analyses of film or series and need to be modified in order to comfortably accommodate them.

Fludernik and Olsen look at current trends and discussions in narratology in an attempt to determine the ability of narratology to assess new media (Fludernik & Olsen 2011:1). New media may refer to film or television series whereas traditional media refers to the literary novel. This is done by applying narratological frameworks to narratives and media that are not literary and often fall outside the purview of narratologists referred to as transgeneric or transmedial narratology (Fludernik & Olsen 2011:2). In other words, transgeneric or transmedial narratology are those branches of narratology that extend narratology's purview to include serial television. Trangeneric and transmedial narratology is still closely linked to traditional narratology as it applies principles of narrative analysis to different genres or media to uncover narrative elements and functions (Fludernik & Olsen 2011:7).

Traditional narratology is rooted in linguistics and it is arguably this dependence on linguistics that has limited the scope of what can be analysed by narratology (Fludernik

2011:22). Fludernik and Olsen call for narratology to break free from linguistic models and move towards narrative which encompasses multimediality, surpassing the limitations of any medium (Fludernik & Olsen 2011:22). Baboulene echoes much the same argument, suggesting that narratology should move away from traditional narrative text, as the foundation for narratology, towards the hermeneutic boundary so that text may become story (Baboulene 2017:13). Baboulene adds that narratology should aim to understand the mode of any narrative, "irrespective of style, medium or agency" (Baboulene 2017:13). This research contends that transmedial or transgeneric narratology is beneficial since it expands the potential to read serial television through a hermeneutic lens and is not confined to just the literary novel.

According to Heywood and Sandywell, the intersection between hermeneutics and language may reveal complex, multi-faceted dialogues (Heywood & Sandywell 1999:3). Heywood and Sandywell argue that hermeneutics is interested in applying the sensitivities of language to image. In other words, the objective is not "to subordinate image to word" but to extend our understanding of image (Heywood & Sandywell 1999:3). The aim is not to use language to re-interpret and re-present what we see but to extend the being of what we see and ultimately to extend our own understanding of what 'being' actually means (Heywood & Sandywell 1999:5). Words reveal what is held in an image and 'bring to mind' that which is not immediately visible (Heywood and Sandywell 1999:3).

Logan addresses the shortcomings of television studies and criticism (Logan 2016:10). According to Logan, much of what is written about television is based on the idea of television as a "medium of mass communication" with roots in radio broadcasting as opposed to mediums like cinema, literature or other graphic arts (Logan 2016:10). The reason it is challenging to accurately define *Breaking Bad* in terms of narratology or in terms of contemporary television studies is due to these frameworks needing further exploration and expansion themselves. As was suggested above, transmedial narratology does host the potential to better address, criticise or analyse serial television than traditional narratology but there is work to be done to understand precisely how this would work. As will be suggested in the conclusion of this research, there is plenty

of potential to broaden this study by reviewing television criticism[20] as a framework but for the purposes of this research, the focus will be on the mimetic desires of Walter White. For Logan, a television series that organises its 'stylistic and dramatic achievements' around a particular character; leads to a more successful television studies and this is because spectators respond to human experience (Logan 2016:14-15). In much the same vein, this research focusses on the style and dramatic achievements particular to Walter White and attempts always to relay the human experience of his character to develop a successful television study.

3.3 Narratology and mimetic theory as a dual hermeneutic lens

According to Fludernik, narratives are either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, or in layman's terms, a first-person narrative or a third-person narrative respectively (Fludernik 2009:98). The homodiegesis or heterodiegesis of the narrative refers to the focaliser or reflector figure and answers the question, "who speaks?" while the term 'focalisation' answers the question of "who sees?" The focaliser or lens is referred to as a reflector figure and this gives the audience the impression that they are active participants within the narrative, living out their engagement through the lens of the character's consciousness. Since the study is rooted in visuality, focalisation is an important factor to consider. Moreover, it is important to consider not just who sees, but how they are seeing and what they take away from the experience.

Viewers compare the experiences they view with their own knowledge and experience of the world to understand narrative (Lang & Dreher 2014:4). What makes for authentic narrative and authentic characters is the inclusion of well-considered design aspects, which carry world references (Lang & Dreher 2013:7).

Syuzhet works as schemata which cue the viewer to make assumptions and develop expectations about the narrative based on their own lived experiences. Essentially

[20] Jacobs and Peacock explain that applying art criticism to serial television is problematic, precisely because of 'unity' (Logan 2016:17). While art forms are clearly defined in a single unit, serial television is an unfolding series of interrelated parts, all of which are incredibly nuanced making it difficult to arrive at a "valid and shareable interpretation" (Logan 2016:11-17).

narrative becomes filtered through the consciousness of the viewer and since no two viewers have had the exact same lived experience; their interpretations will differ. This is what we refer to in narratology as the fabula, which refers to the phenomenon of all possible interpretations of the *syuzhet*. Story is the specific and unique, in-mind experience of each viewer (Baboulene 2017:15).

The research uses narratology in the following way. Firstly, it considers Fluderniks's criteria for narrative and ensures that the narrative adheres to the criteria. It then compares the structure of the case study to Fludernik's order of structure. Next, the research assesses to see if the narrative subscribes to Bordwell's canonical story format. This is to say that the narrative divulges the goal or goals of the protagonist and the protagonist endures obstacles and rivalries in an attempt to achieve these goals. Next, the research looks into focalisation, which attempts to answer the questions, "who speaks" and "who sees". "Who speaks" refers to the protagonist Walter White who is the focaliser or reflector figure of the narrative while "who sees" refers to the audience who partake in focalisation by engaging with the narrative through the consciousness of the focaliser,

The research unpacks the design aspects and visual cues that are attributed to the authenticity of the narrative and its characters. To answer the question of "who sees" is trickier since each viewer will draw from the *syuzhet* to develop their own story which effectively produces fabula, which mean that a multitude of interpretations of the series exist based on each individual viewer's own past, lived experiences. The research cannot not possibly unpack all of the stories or offer a definite interpretation of the series as a whole, so instead it unpacks what it can of the *syuzhet* to explore it in terms of mimetic theory. It then draws conclusions about the effect that the mimetic mechanism has on the transformation of a protagonist within a narrative. Throughout the application of narratology as a hermeneutic lens the research keeps in mind the components Baboulene offers which include story, plot, *syuzhet* and *fabula*.

To recap, Fluderik suggests that the purpose of narrative is to unpack the experience of the protagonist in order to pull viewers into a character's world (Fludernik 2009:6). It is through narrative mediation that the audience engage with a combination of visual and

acoustic elements causing each of the audience to develop their own in-mind story or fabula from the experience. The sensory information is *syuzhet* and is effectively representation (Fludernik 2009:22). Representation allows the audience to become a part of the narrative and play a cognitive role in developing assumptions and expectations of the trajectory of the narrative. By exploring representation, the audience gain information on what makes the protagonist human, where they come from and what their goals and desires are. Without exploring the narrative in terms of representation, it is almost impossible to elucidate the transformation of the protagonist in terms of mimetic theory. Narratology is used to put into words what the narration reveals explicitly while mimetic theory is used to make sense of what we see and what it means implicitly for the protagonist. The succeeding chapter unpacks the *syuzhet* of a handful of episodes of *Breaking Bad* which demonstrate notable moments of character transformation. It considers the *Breaking Bad* narrative in all of the mimetic theory terminology from chapter two and all of the criteria for narratology for chapter three to develop a comprehensive reading of the narrative through the dual hermeneutic lens.

CHAPTER 4: BREAKING BAD ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first reviews *Breaking Bad* as a whole to establish that the series adheres to the structure of narrative. It then applies the synthesised narratology from the preceding chapter to a selection of *Breaking Bad* episodes, outlined in the introductory chapter. The discourse is meant to highlight explicit visual cues to explicate inferences, which are foundational in contextualising the desire of Walter White allowing for an exploration of his character transformation in terms of mimetic theory.

4.2 The structure of the chapter

The structure of this chapter has already been detailed in the introduction of this research but it may be worth revisiting here before diving into the analysis. The episodes are selected based on their relevance to Walter's character transformation. Keeping in mind that this study is in the field of visual culture studies, it draws attention to explicit visual cues in the series which symbolise or hold relevance to the mimetic mechanism as portrayed in each of the subchapters.

4.2.1 First subchapter

A Solution: Clear as the Blue Sky, draws on the pilot episode to discuss Walter's desire, his 'hero's curse', his inferiority complex, his masochistic tendencies, and his search for ontological self-sufficiency. This episode considers the obstacles and problems that Walter faces and reveals what he decides is a viable solution to his problems. It explores the first part of the mimetic mechanism, which is mimetic desire, highlighting a variety of explicit, visual cues as is relevant to exploring the desires of Walter but emphasis is placed on exploring four particular visual symbols which are inextricably linked to mimetic desire. These symbols are underwear, handguns, the colour green and the notorious Sky Blue meth. The underwear is discussed as a symbol for vulnerability, feelings of lack and ontological deficiency. The gun is also a symbol for Walter's pride and ontological deficiency. The colour green is explored because of its link to greed, envy and sickness. The last of the symbols is the Sky Blue meth, which is a symbol for false transcendence.

4.2.2 Second subchapter

The Dissolution: A Body, a Tub and a Family Man uses episodes *Cat's in the Bag (S1 E02)* and *And Bag's in the River (S1 E03)* to explore Walter's dissolution as a moral, upstanding man. There are two prominent instances which infer the moral disintegration of Walter and these are unpacked in more detail later. The explicit visual cue is Walter's flashback in which he and a partner discuss the chemical composition of the human body and the other is a symbol of a broken yellow plate which infers disintegration. The episode *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06)* introduces Walter's alter ego, Heisenberg for the first time. This introduction is relevant in understanding the overall character transformation. This subchapter is most concerned with exploring the rivalry between Walter and Gustavo Fring which escalates into a mimetic crisis. The episodes which unpack and explore this rivalry are *Mandala (S2 E11), Full Measures (S3 E13), Crawl Space (S4 E11), End Times (S4 E12) and Face Off (S4 E13).* Special attention is paid to the pink teddy bear which is a recurring motif in a number of episodes in *Breaking Bad* and is a symbol which foreshadows the mimetic crisis as a result of the rivalries between Walter and Gus.

4.2.3 Third subchapter

Growth: The Empire of Heisenberg is a brief overview of the episodes *Fifty-One (S5 E04), Hazard Pay (S5 E03), Madrigal (S5 E02), Live Free or Die (S5 E01), Dead Freight (S5 E05), Buyout (S5 E06), Say My Name (S5 E07) and Gliding All Over (S5 E08)* in which Walter's dialectical reversal from masochist to sadist is revealed.

4.2.4 Fourth subchapter

Decay: The Crumbling Legacy of Ozymandias looks at episodes *Blood Money (S5 E09), Confessions (S5 E11), To'hajiilee (S5 E13), Ozymandias (S5 E14), Granite State (S5 E15)* and *Felina (S5 E16)* to explore the scapegoats of Walter White as well as Walter's decision to sacrifice Jesse. It also explores ways in which Walter's arc parallels a Greek tragedy in terms of *hamartia*, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*. There are some explicit visual symbols which are explored in terms of their inferences because of their relevance to mimetic resolution. Amongst these are the symbol of the knife Skyler uses in *Ozymandias (S5 E14)* to cut Walter, the camcorder used in the pilot episode compared

to its use in *Confessions (S5 E11),* the inscribed Walt Whitman poetry book which infringes Walter as well as the lotto ticket, from the episode *Buried (S5 E10).*

4.2.5 Fifth subchapter

The Transformation: Mr Chips to Scarface looks at episodes *Granite State (S5 E15)* and *Felina (S5 E16)* in particular, but considers the overall story arc to contextualise the overall character transformation. It unpacks mimetic resolution and touches on the topics of metaphysical desire and ontological sickness. It discusses Walter's signature bacon breakfasts as an explicit cue which infers transformation. In addition, it explores Walter's automated machine-gun as a symbol which ties him to the original Scarface character.

4.3 Narratological overview of series

Before delving into the analysis of the individual episodes, the research considers *Breaking Bad* in its entirety and discusses its adherence to the criteria of narratology, as is outlined in the preceding chapter. The first of Fludernik's criteria calls for the presence of either a human or an anthropomorphic protagonist at the centre (Fludernik 2009:6). The protagonist at the centre of *Breaking Bad* is Walter White, who is a slightly doughy, pale and mild-mannered man in his fifties. We learn from the pilot episode, which Restivo substantiates, that Walter is an underpaid but overqualified high school chemistry teacher (Restivo 2019:1). The protagonist is relatable as a husband and father, who works hard but is seemingly crushed by financial strain. The second of Fludernik's criteria calls for narrative to privilege the interior world of the protagonist in some way so that the viewer may access it (Fludernik 2009:6). We gain access to Walt's interior world in at least two ways, firstly, by way of the camcorder, which Walter uses to record a message for his family.

> Walter: *There are going to be some things that you'll come to learn about me in the next few days. I just want you to know that no matter how it may look, I only had you in my heart. Goodbye.*

The camcorder message lets the audience learn Walter's name and details and motivation for his actions, even when his actions are not yet made clear. Secondly,

viewers gain access into the interior world of Walter through flashbacks, on which the research subsequently expands.

The last of Fludernik's criteria argues that the protagonist needs to be contextually tethered to a specific time and place, or in other words have temporal location (Fludernik 2009:6). Walter White is the everyday man, dealing with modern pressures and concerns, living in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Restivo 2019:1).

> Walter: *My name is Walter Hartwell White. I live at 308 Negra Arroyo Lane, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87104.*

Fludenik posits that the protagonist should be a fully fleshed character who has memories and a past, even if the audience cannot fully access these (Fludernik 2009:6). In *And the Bag's in the River (S1 E03)*, the audience gets a glimpse of Walter's past through a flashback, otherwise referred to as an analepsis. In literary texts, analepsis is signalled by a shift in tenses but television, as explained previously, makes use of different mechanisms to make viewers aware that there is a shift in temporal location (Fludernik 2009:34). With the flashback in *And the Bag's in the River (S1 E03)*, the audience is made aware that the scenario taking place is in the past simply by Walter's appearance. Walter has a full head of hair, a beard and no glasses, explicit cues which alone are enough to lead a viewer to infer that this did not occur recently.

Fludernik's formula for narrative calls for an abstract, followed by an orientation and finally a coda (Fludernik 2009:48). The abstract is that component which characterises the story right at the beginning of the narrative and in this case, is the part of the pilot episode which sees the RV speeding through the desert landscape right up until Walter records his message with the camcorder and stands ready and waiting in the middle of the road aiming a pistol at the approaching sirens. The abstract is an etic beginning, which means it is uncontextualised during the first viewing. The orientation or exposition is that component which unpacks necessary background information. The research later divulges more of this exposition but essentially it unfolds a series of events that a viewer can follow and understand and say, "I'm starting to see how Walter went from here to there." Lastly is the coda, which is the overview of the narration. The pilot episode, as well as other episodes and seasons in the series, make use of a circular

episode where the images at the beginning of the episode are the same as those at the end of the episode. Gilligan said that "it appealed to [him] intellectually, the idea of a circular season where the beginning images are also the end images" (cited by Sepinwall 2015:91). The etic abstract at the beginning of the pilot episode is used again as the coda at the end of the episode but having seen the exposition, the visuals have now been contextualised and make more sense in the coda.

Bordwell's canonical story format can be seen in the pilot episode but can also be largely applied to the series as a whole. To recall, the canonical story format has an introduction showing setting and characters, it then unpacks the goals of the protagonist, followed by the protagonist setting out to achieve the goals, despite obstacles and conflict in the climax and eventually a resolution. The goals of the protagonist are revealed in part by a dialogue between Walter and Jesse in the pilot episode:

> Jesse: *Tell me why you're doing this. Seriously.*
> Walter: *Why do you do it?*
> Jesse: *Money, mainly.*
> Walter: *There you go.*
> Jesse: *Nah. Come on, man! Some straight like you, giant stick up his ass ... all of a sudden at age, what, sixty – he's just gonna break bad?*
> Waler: *I'm fifty.*
> Jesse: *It's weird, is all, okay? It doesn't compute. Listen, if you're gone crazy or something. I mean, if you've gone crazy, or depressed – I'm just saying – that's something I need to know about. Okay? That affects me.*
> Walter: *I am ... awake.*
> Jesse: *What?*
> Walter: *Buy the RV. We start tomorrow.*

Walter claims that he intends on making meth so that he can make money. This explicit exclamation coupled with the message he records with the camcorder for his family as well as his terminal, inoperable lung cancer, gives the audience enough information to infer that Walter's desire is to make the money for his family for when he passes away. This assumption can be confirmed by calculations Walter estimates out loud in *Seven*

Thirty-Seven (S02 E01), where he tries to make a pragmatic checklist of all the things his family would need money for in his absence:

> Walter: *Adjusting for inflation. Good state college, adjusting for inflation say, $45 000 a year. Two kids, four years of college, $360 000. Remaining mortgage on the home, $107 000. Home equity line, $30 000. That's $137 000. Cost of living, food, clothing, utilities, say 2 grand a month. I mean that should put a dent in it anyway. Twenty-four K a year, provide for say, 10 years. That's $240 000. Plus 360, plus 137. Seven thirty-seven. Seven hundred and thirty-seven thousand dollars. That's what I need. That is what I need.*

Walter's main goal is to make money for his family but his line "I am …awake" suggests that there may be more behind his decision to start cooking meth. The pilot episode repeatedly shows instances of Walter being belittled or feeling frustrated but it is Walter's ability to produce glass-grade meth, coupled with his terminal cancer prognosis that ignites within him the metaphysical desire to do and be more. Even though it is not yet clear to Walter, he is after ontological self-sufficiency. According to Logan, Walter subscribes to the idea of "theatrical superheroics" which is to say that Walter desires "extraordinary or fanciful projections" outside of his ordinary life. Walter enjoys straddling this line. It is this desire for ontological self-sufficiency and superheroics that fragments his personality or otherwise dissolves his moral standing as the narrative progresses (Logan 2016:7).

The narratological analysis considers references, symbols, colours, brands, clothing, lighting, sound, facial expressions, gestures, dialogue, action, time and focalisation, if it is in some way pertinent to the mimetic mechanism in the episode and that their purpose is to infer or communicate something specific to the audience. The inferences are unpacked according to terms of mimesis to develop a layered analysis.

4.4 A Solution: Clear as Blue Sky

The purpose of this subchapter is to explore the mimetic desire of Walter. It discusses Walter's decision to become entwined in the drug trade and unpack those circumstances which led to that decision. It uses scenes from the pilot episode to illustrate Walter's shame, which is inextricably tied to his desire and pride. It discusses the curse of the

hero as is applicable to Walter White and explore the ways in which Walter subscribes to the Girardian themes of masochism, vanity, pride, passion, desire, inferiority and pseudo-identification.

As already stated, *Breaking Bad* begins with what Fludernik terms an etic beginning which drops a viewer right in the middle of some uncontextualised chaos, before offering up an exposition which gives the viewer enough necessary information to be able to successfully follow the story's trajectory (Fludernik 2009:94). The pilot of *Breaking Bad* opens on a calm desert landscape. Cue a pair of khaki trousers drifting down from the sky. An RV drives over them at a tremendous speed. The man driving is wearing only some saggy white underpants, socks, shoes and a ventilator mask. The passenger in the RV is unconscious and is also wearing a ventilator mask through which we see his face is swollen and purple. The driver looks to the back of the RV where there are two unconscious bodies sprawled on the floor being tossed about by erratic driving. Glass is shattering and crashing to the RV floor as the RV veers violently off the road and into a ditch. The driver climbs out and puts on his shirt; he is visibly shaken and mutters to himself in a panic, "think, think, think". He rushes back into the RV, grabs a pistol out of the hands of one of the unconscious bodies on the floor and tucks it into the back of his underpants. He then rushes over to the cubbyhole, over which the man unconscious in the passenger seat is draped. The driver, who soon introduced as Walter, shoves the man off and grabs a camcorder out the cubbyhole and rushes back outside. Sirens wail in the distance as Walter begins to record his message. His first line acts as an introduction while his second line establishes his temporal location.

> Walter: *My name is Walter Hartwell White. I live at 308 Negra Arroyo Lane, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87104.*

Walter first addresses law-enforcement entities and sternly denies that his message is in any way infringing evidence:

> Walter: *To all law-enforcement entities, this is not an admission of guilt. I am speaking to my family now.*

This is the first example, and there are plenty scattered across the series, which sees Walter deny his implication in moral-wrongdoing and be inclined toward self-preservation before considering his family. Walter addresses his wife first, as the "love of his life" and his son secondly as his "big man." The message is earnest and sincere as Walter speaks with a lump in his throat and a single tear visible on his cheek.

> Walter: *I just want you to know that no matter how it may look, I only had you in my heart. Goodbye.*

Walter sets the camcorder down in the sand and alongside it his wallet showing his ID. These explicit cues infer that Walter is sure he is about to be caught by law officials. Walter draws the pistol out from his underpants, marches up to the road and stands in the middle of the road. He extends his arm outward and aims his gun at the incoming sirens. The etic beginning is sharp and abrupt, prompting the audience to want to learn more about the circumstance in which Walter finds himself. The pilot episode then begins to unpack the exposition which starts three weeks prior to the RV ending up in the ditch.

At Walter's family home, Walter is awake early and goes into a room full of products for a baby which tells us that Walter and his wife are expecting. This is new information to the audience, who from the camcorder recording, may have assumed that Walter's only family were his wife and son Walter Jr, both of whom he addresses by name in the recording. Walter climbs on a stepper machine and steps away half-heartedly, coughing hoarsely every now and again. One of the first important *syuzhets* is a plaque on the wall from the *Science Research Centre* that tells us that Walter was awarded a Nobel Prize for his research contribution to crystallography in proton radiography. It is a testament to Walter's genius, and yet we come to find that he works at a high school as a chemistry teacher.

At breakfast, Walter's wife Skyler puts down a plate of scrambled eggs for Walter. Atop the eggs are strips of bacon which are arranged to look like the number "50" (Figure 21). The bacon strips are to indicate Walter's age, and they become an important, recurring motif in the series that indicate how the timeline of the *Breaking Bad* narrative is progressing. This motif is discussed later as it reappears in other episodes. The motif

is what Genette discusses as an iterative event which is a series of similar events, each recounted once (Genette 1980:[sp]). We also learn at breakfast that Walter Jr, Walter's son, has cerebral palsy as he comes into the dining room on crutches.

Figure 21*:* Walter's birthday eggs and bacon, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

After breakfast, Walter drives Walter Jr to school and the audience learns that where Walter Jr attends high school is also where Walter works as a chemistry teacher. Walter delivers a monologue about the wonders of chemistry and tries, in vain, to inspire his students. It is through Walter's monologue that we learn that chemistry is his passion. If we refer back to *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, passion according to Proust, is desire and whether apparent or not, where there is desire there is always a mediator present[21]. Girard adds that where there is passion or desire, there is vanity (Girard 1965:20). Walter is connected to chemistry and driven by his desire and although we have not yet witnessed it, Walter's vanity will become more and more evident as he grows more confident in using his knowledge as a chemist.

[21] As far as the audience is concerned, Walter's passion for chemistry is portrayed as innate since the narrative never goes back far enough to elucidate an exact moment or circumstance that sparked Walter's interest in the field. A possible mediator might have been Walter's former college partner and co-founder of the successful Gray Matter Technologies company, Elliot Schwartz. Walter and Elliot would have been rivals for objects of desire like money, success, acknowledgement and Gretchen as a love interest. Gretchen was first the girlfriend of Walter but later marries Elliot. Walter's drive to pursue chemistry may be inspired by the envy he feels for Elliot who has acquired all of Walter's desires through chemistry as a profession. Another potential mediator is Werner Heisenberg who was a controversial scientist whom Walter uses as a model for his alter ego, Heisenberg.

Back in the classroom, a student named Chad blatantly disregards Walter by flirtatiously chattering with his girlfriend in the background. Walter berates Chad and Chad responds by obnoxiously dragging his chair across the classroom floor which effectively silences Walter. Walter is next seen at his part-time job at a carwash. Walter's boss Bogdan tells Walter to hand over his cash register duties to him so that Walter can go wash cars outside. Walter tries to protest saying, "Bogdan, no. We talked about this," but the protest is availed and Walter is next seen on his hands and knees scrubbing a red, sports car. The car turns out to belong to none other than Chad. The decision to use a red, sports car as Chad's car in this narrative infers that Chad comes from wealth and that he is obnoxious and flashy. Chad laughs at Mr White and takes a photo while his girlfriend tells a friend on the phone that Mr White is cleaning Chad's car. Obviously humiliated, Walter has no choice but to look down and scrub on. On the drive home, Walter snatches the handicap sign hanging from the rear-view mirror, throws it into the car cubbyhole and slams it shut. The cubbyhole falls open. Walter slams it shut. It falls open again. Walter tries a few more frantic times to shut it but eventually gives up. Walter drives the rest of the way home, defeated, even by the cubbyhole. The cubbyhole is *syuzhet* that infers Walter's inferiority and powerlessness.

Walter arrives home and opens the front door to a loud and unexpected, "Surprise!" Waiting for Walter is a surprise birthday party for his 50th birthday. Skyler makes her way over to Walter through the crowd and berates him in a hushed whisper for how late he is. To onlookers, it might seem like Skyler is whispering something sweet and tender but the audience is privy to Skyler's words and tone. The audience is also aware of the kind of day Walter has had to endure and this subtle reprimand from Skyler only exacerbates Walter's shame and humiliation.

A loud, blustery man at the centre of Walter's party is showing off his gun which he hands to Walter Jr to look at. This man is Hank, Walter's brother-in-law, a DEA agent. Walter is visibly uncomfortable at seeing Walter Jr hold the gun and attempts to protest but he lacks the courage and instead gives up. Walter Jr tries to encourage Walter to hold it. Although Walter is hesitant, he obliges. "Ooh," he exclaims as it is handed to him and remarks at how heavy it is. Hank follows the comment with a string of insults,

supposedly good natured but nonetheless offensive which causes everyone around Walter to laugh at him.

> Walter: *No, no, it's just heavy.*
> Hank: *That's why they hire men.*
> *[Laughter]*

Hank's comment here infers that Walter is not "manly" enough to handle the weapon. Hank goes on to say:

> Hank: *Looks like Keith Richards with a glass of warm milk, don't he?*

Hank is making a reference to a popular culture icon, Keith Richards. As Lang and Dreher argue, if the audience is not familiar with or has no knowledge surrounding Keith Richards, then the viewers' experience surrounding the phenomena will fall flat (Lang & Dreher 2013:4). The line is a joke and an explicit cue which infers a parody. Hank is suggesting that in the same way that Keith Richards, who is a rock musician, would look odd with a glass of warm milk, so does Walter with a gun in his hand. Hank's comments humiliate Walter but Walter has no choice but to suppress his shame and act as though he is not offended. It might be worth a pause here to consider the visual comparison of Walter holding the gun at his birthday party (Figure 22) versus the visual of Walter standing on a desert street with a pistol pointed at incoming sirens (Figure 23). There is already a stark contrast between Walter's timid handling of the gun at his birthday party and his put-on bravado in the opening of the episode. The gap between these two occasions is only three weeks and yet the comparison reveals a real shift in Walter's behaviour and actions.

Figure 22: Walter uncomfortably holds Hank's gun, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

Figure 23: Walter points a pistol at approaching sirens, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

Hank puts on a news broadcast wherein he is being interviewed about a drug bust of methamphetamine. The report shows an insurmountable collection of money seized by the DEA. Walter is stunned, asking Hank how much money was seized.

> Hank: *It was about 700 grand. It was a pretty good haul.*
> Walter: *Wow. Well, that's unusual, isn't it? That kind of cash?*
> Hank: *Mm. Well, it's not the most we ever took. It's easy money, till we catch you.*

It is at that moment, that Hank unknowingly plants a seed for Walter. Hank also unintentionally opens a gateway for Walter by offering to take him on a ride-along. As mentioned earlier, it is this ride-along which puts Walter back into contact with his former student and future partner, Jesse Pinkman. The day after Walter's 50th birthday, Walter is working a Saturday shift at the car wash. Walter is wheeling a large blue barrel across the car wash floor and stops to catch his breath when a woman in a bright,

green dress catches his eye. Walter has a sudden coughing fit and collapses on the floor of the carwash. The camera cuts back to the woman in the green dress climbing into her car. Neither she nor the other car wash employee notice that Walter has collapsed. This infers that Walter is mostly invisible to people. The green of the woman's dress (Figure 24) is a notable explicit cue which is thematically popular throughout the *Breaking Bad* series. It can be likened to the green apron (Figure 25) Walter dons in the pilot episode when cooking in the desert and even the *Breaking Bad's* title sequence (Figure 26).

Green symbolises greed, money, growth, envy, all of which either pertain to or are traits of Walter.

Figure 24: Woman in a green dress, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 25: Walter in a green apron, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 26: The Breaking Bad title sequence, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

It is after Walter's collapse at work that he discovers he has inoperable, stage four lung cancer and he chooses not to disclose this information to anyone, not even his wife. The next time Walter is at work at the car wash, he is seen staring blankly out of the window before going into another coughing fit. The coughing seems to unhinge Walter as his ears begin to ring and Bogdan's calling out of his name comes out a distorted, muffled noise. The auditory cues in this scene break the fourth wall, which is to say that the audience is pulled into the scene by hearing it through Walter's focalisation. Bogdan begins to berate Walter for staring instead of working which brings Walter out of his state. In this moment, Walter reclaims some power and pride as he stands up to Bogdan and begins to crassly yell into his face. Walter quits his job by profanely gestures to his crotch, telling Bogdan to, "wipe down this!"

The exposition thus far has revealed that Walter is underpaid, underappreciated by his family and students, overworked, constantly humiliated and belittled, fatally ill and under enormous financial strain. Bryan Crantson, who plays the character of Walter White, discusses Walter's outer appearance as a physical and visual manifestation that works to infer Walter's deeply seeded emotional baggage (Sepinwall 2015:75). In other words, the appearance of Walter's character had been considered at length before the series was shot in order to infer a non-threatening and powerless character, a Mr Chips if you will. Cranston says of the character that he imagined Walter should be a "little chunky" and "pale" so that he is particularly non-threatening in his sad, saggy underpants (Sepinwall 2015:75). Cranston also suggested that Walter should lead a

colourless life which costume designer Kathleen Detoro implemented when designing Walter's wardrobe (Sepinwall 2015:75). Walter's wardrobe, particularly in the first few seasons, is an unexciting mix of browns and muted greens which make Walter almost blend into his desert surroundings in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Cranston also suggested that Walter should have an "impotent" moustache which makeup artist Frieda Valenzuela worked at thinning out (Sepinwall 2015:75). An impotent moustache infers a lack of masculinity which in turn, infers inferiority. As will be discussed later, impotence is also closely tied to the concept of envy.

The pilot episode is a string of humiliating events for Walter. For example, Walter's snatching the handicap sign off of the rear-view mirror in the car implies that Walter Jr's cerebral palsy is in some way humiliating for Walter. In another instance in the pilot episode, Walter, his wife Skyler Walter Jr are at a clothing store called Family 1st clothing where Walter Jr is trying on a pair of jeans in the dressing room. The branding of the clothing store is generic acting as an explicit cue that connotes that the store is a discount store. The adversary would be a store with a well-known recognisable brand. The deliberate decision to show a discount clothing store further illustrates Walter and his family's financial strain. Skyler asks if Jr needs help from either her or from Walter to try the jeans on. "Dad," Jr replies in a resigned sigh. Walter steps into the dressing room to help. He pulls up Walter Jr's pants while Jr wraps his arms around his dad's neck. Once the jeans are on, the family of three stand in front of a mirror outside of the dressing room so that Walter Jr can check if he is happy with the fit.

A few meters away, a large boy roughly the same age as Walter Jr is mocking Walter Jr while his friends laugh on. Skyler tries to go over and confront the young man but Walter holds her back by the hand and mumbles "don't" just before disappearing out the back of the store. Skyler takes the chance to confront the group but before she can even get to them, Walter reappears at the front door of the shop. Walter's reappearance through the front door is theatrical and emphasised by the door's electronic 'ding' (Logan 2006:6). The ding is an explicit auditory cue that signals a change in circumstance. Logan likens the scene to a stage pantomime where the villain and hero are played by the same actor who has a costume change in the wings in between being on and off stage (Logan 2006:6). Walter marches over to the large boy and kicks him in

the back of his knee sending him crashing to the ground. Walter then stomps down on the young man's leg and grinds into it with his foot. Logan suggests that this scene is layered and may reveal at least two things: one, that Walter is vengeful following his encounter with his student Chad and two, that Walter is embarrassed to have a son with cerebral palsy (Logan 2006:6). Walter uses his humiliation from both sets of circumstances and takes it out on the bully in the store, and exacts his revenge in a way on the bully that mimics Walter Jr's own disability.

The incident is one of many to come which reveals Walter's pride, pride being what Girard describes as an emotion which swells inside a protagonist and bubbles over as solidarity and bitterness (Girard 1965:56-57). Walter's behaviour is an act of pseudo-identification, which is to say that the behaviour and attitude he displays seem at first to be justifiable but later, as we learn what Walter is truly capable of, we see in hindsight that his actions are motivated by pure conflict and resentment (Fleming 2004:14). This point is substantiated by Logan, who suggests that Walter's attack on the young man comes across as an "ostensibly righteous defence of moral principle and family honour with a tone of spiteful, personal revenge[22]" (Logan 2016:6). The audience sides with Walter because Walter is defending his handicapped son and it seems a moral and justifiable stance to take, but Walter is only truly acting out because he himself has endured enough humiliation and shame and as a result, begins to lash out in revenge.

Walter's actions are not truly motivated by his position as a father or husband trying to protect his family but rather by his own tumultuous, inner rage that transforms into conflict and is exacted against a perpetrator, even though the perpetrator is not solely responsible for all of Walter's problems. In other words, Walter makes the bully in the discount store into a scapegoat who is punished for some of Walter's misfortunes up until this point. Girard suggests that the selected scapegoat is not guilty of a crime any more so than any of the members of a community who might single them out (Girard,

[22] Carol Clover describes the way in which the scene is comparable to prominent American films of the 1990's wherein an ordinary, middle-aged man 'snaps' and projects an inner rage that masquerades as righteousness (cited by Logan 2016:3). Clover suggests that it is intentional to have the protagonist not be just a white male but 'an Average White Male' (cited by Logan 2016:3). For Logan, although *Breaking Bad* does center around white masculinity, he believes that viewing it through this general framework risks insight into finer nuances in the show's development.

Antonello & de Castro Rocha 2010:127). Although the bully in the store is responsible for mocking Walter Jr, he is undoubtedly not the first to do so and yet he is the first to be 'sacrificed' in the form of Walter kicking him in the back of his knee and stomping on his calf. When the bully limps out of the store, Walter smiles a small, wry smile at his family and Skyler and Walter Jr smile at Walter in astonishment. The moment of sacrifice has appeased the community (the family) and brought resolution, at least for a short while.

Further than this, it is even possible that Walter is jealous or envious of the bully's ability to walk compared to his own son's handicap. In this instance, the bully is the model who possesses a virtue which Walter Jr does not. Envy according to Scheler, is the same as the feeling of impotence (Scheler 1994:34-35). Walter's feelings of impotence stem from a string of secondary characters such as the store bully who has the ability to walk correctly when his son cannot or like Hank or Bogdan who have power. Walter may feel envious of Hank who commands respect in social circles or Bogdan, his boss at the car wash who holds power over Walter. Walter is beginning to desire these metaphysical objects which these models surrounding him possess.

When Walter witnesses the drug bust on the news broadcast, it incites the curse of the hero or the hero's askesis (Girard 1965:56). Walter sees things that are atypical to his own every day, mediocre surroundings and it ignites in him the desire for bigger, better things. The hero's curse describes the protagonist's longing for what Dostoyevsky refers to as 'false promise' which sees the hero place their faith in the promise of metaphysical autonomy, which they may never acquire (Girard 1965:56). The idea of making money on the back of his chemistry knowledge gives Walter a false sense of security. It makes Walter believe he can use what he has to solve his own problems and become self-sufficient. Girard argues that the will to become self-sufficient is equivalent to the will to make oneself God, and that this path will inevitably lead to gradual self-destruction, which is often realised too late (Girard 1965:287). This is the case with Walter who comes more and more undone as the series progresses. Girard explains that the hero dreams of assimilating the substance of the Other because his own substance is revolting to himself (Girard 1965:54). Walter feels shame, impotence, inferiority and humiliation and he longs to possesses feelings other than these.

Similar to the hero's askesis is dandyism (Girard 1965:162). The dandy appears stoic and wholly self-sufficient and encourages others to imitate him to subsume his being. In this narrative, particularly the pilot episode, the dandy appears to be Hank Shrader. Later, as the narrative unfolds further, we explore how Walter subscribes to the profile of a dandy. The first impressions of Hank paint his character as obnoxious, crass and even racist and the audience may be inclined to dislike him, especially when compared to the mild-mannered Walter White. At Walter's own birthday celebration, Hank is the centre of attention. He is a respectable law official and embodies the idea of typical masculinity. Walter's decision to go with Hank on a ride-along is an attempt at imitating or copying those actions of Hank's which afford him the virtues of bravery, respect and masculinity. Hank invites Walter on the ride-along by teasing that Walter needs "a little excitement in [his] life." This renders Walter a vaniteux, which is to say that Walter imitates Hank and draws on his desires because he cannot draw from his own desires (Girard 1965:6).

If Walter desires these virtues, then Hank becomes a model for Walter to imitate. Imitation indicates vanity according to Stendhal (Girard 1965:5-6). The emergence of vanity renders the mediator a rival and eventually the rivalry will call for some sort of instance of defeat in order for vanity to be preserved (Girard 1965:7). This particular rivalry begins in *Blood Money (S5 E09)* and subsequently resolves by the episode *Ozymandias (S5 E14),* which is discussed in greater detail in a succeeding subchapter.

The coda is the overview of narrative and the coda of the pilot contextualises the etic beginning the audience has seen of the RV in the desert. Jesse attempts to get Krazy-8[23] to peddle the glass-grade meth that he and Walter cooked together but his plan goes horribly awry and instead, Jesse is forced to take Krazy-8 and Emilio Koyama to Walter and Jesse's cook site. Emilio recognises Walter from the drug bust, in which Hank's team arrested Emilio, and assumes that Walter is DEA. In the panic, Jesse tries to run away from Emilio and Krazy-8 but ends up tripping and smashing his face on a rock, knocking himself unconscious. This contextualises the unconscious passenger in the speeding RV and the audience now understands why the face behind the ventilator mask is purple and swollen. Krazy-8 and Emilio decide to kill Walter and Jesse but Walter

[23] Domingo Gallardo Molina, commonly known by his nickname Krazy-8, was a meth distributor formerly associated with Jesse Pinkman and Tuco Salamanca. He was also the cousin of Emilio Koyama.

bids for their freedom by offering to teach Krazy-8 his meth recipe in exchange for their lives. Walter begins to demonstrate to Krazy-8 how to cook his recipe inside the RV when Emilio joins them, smoking a cigarette. Walter pleads with Krazy-8 to make Emilio get rid of the cigarette and Emilio obliges by resentfully throwing the cigarette out of the RV window and inadvertently starting a wildfire behind the RV. During Walter's demonstration of the recipe, he grabs a jar labelled 'red phosphorus', holds his breath and throws the powder into a saucepan causing an enormous burst of flames. It causes a distraction which allows for Walter to escape. Walter would later explain to Jesse that he had created phosphine gas:

> Walter: *Red phosphorus in the presence of moisture and accelerated by heat yields phosphorus hydride. Phosphine gas. One good whiff and ...*

Walter's sentence, which trails off, infers that phosphine gas is fatal. The audience now has context surrounding the two unconscious bodies on the RV floor in the abstract. Walter fetches the unconscious Jesse, puts a ventilator mask on him and puts him in the RV before driving off in a panic to get away from the growing wildfire. Cut to Walter standing in the middle of the dirt road with his pistol aimed at the approaching sirens ready to take on whatever comes his way. Walter begins to break down and pulls the gun up to his chin and pulls the trigger. Nothing. The gun fires a blank and Walter lets out an anguished cry to the skies. It seems that not one thing is going to plan for Walter, not even his attempt at suicide is successful. So, Walter tries to fix the gun with shaky hands, only to have it fire a few meters away from him. Startled, Walter decides by this point that his only choice is surrender so he lowers the pistol and stands in the middle of the road sobbing with arms open. It turns out that the sirens are not law officials but rather the fire brigade en route to extinguish the wildfire that they had accidentally started. The audience now has all the information necessary to bridge what Baboulene refers to as a knowledge gap and contextualise the abstract via the exposition and the coda.

To summarise, the pilot reveals Walter's passion for chemistry and according to Girard, passion in the vanity-passion dialectic is in fact, always only intense desire (Girard 1965:21). This is to say that although the goal for Walter is to make money for his family, his desires are far more deep-seeded. The pilot episode allows us to explore the

first moment of the mimetic mechanism in the narrative, mimetic desire. What Walter truly desires is to be a chemist and by this he aims to achieve self-sufficiency. Walter is constantly left to feel humiliated and shamed and these feelings manifest in solidarity and bitterness, which in turn produce pride (Girard 1965:56-57).

Walter's behaviours are pertinent examples of pseudo-identification in that his actions seem at first justifiable but in hindsight are revealed as motivated by conflict and resentment. Consider the way in which Walter treats Walter Jr's bully or the murder of Domingo. Both of these characters become scapegoats for Walter. Walter suffers tremendously with feelings of impotence and it seems too that those around him exacerbate these feelings. Impotence is always tied to envy and jealousy (Scheler 1994:34-35). Walter desires to be something other than what he is and he feels trapped by his circumstances; however, when he sees the drug bust on the news, he dreams of bigger, better things initiating the curse of the hero or the hero's askesis. Walter longs to prove that he is self-sufficient but this promise of metaphysical autonomy is effectively only a false promise. The first model for Walter is Hank, who seems to possess respect and masculinity in a way that Walter does not. To preserve vanity, Walter needs to defeat Hank as a rival and this plays out in later episodes. Walter's solution to his problems, which is to synthesise methamphetamine, inevitably offsets the dissolution of his moral character, discussed in greater detail in the succeeding subchapter.

4.5 The Dissolution: A Body, a Tub and a Family man

This subchapter examines the dissolution of Walter White as a moral, family man. It looks at Walter's conflict and rivalry with meth peddlers, Krazy-8 and Emilio Koyama, as the catalysts for Walter's initial dissolution as a moral man *(Cat's in the Bag (S1 E02)* and *And Bag's in the River (S1 E03)*. It briefly explores the conflict between Walter and drug kingpin Tuco Salamanca by referring to the episode *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06)* which acts as the first introduction of Walter's alter ego and pseudonym, Heisenberg. It focuses on the rivalry between Walter White and drug kingpin, Gustavo Fring which spirals into a mimetic crisis and sees Walter and Gustavo

become undifferentiated rivals locked in a nail-biting face off in the finale episode of the fourth season of the series.

Following on from the *pilot* is the episode *Cat's in the Bag (S1 E02).* The phosphine gas effectively kills Emilio but not Krazy-8, whom Walter and Jesse keep locked in Jesse's basement using a bicycle lock around his neck. With Krazy-8 subdued, Walter and Jesse turn their attention to Emilio's body still in the RV. Walter tells Jesse that their best option to get rid of the body is through chemical disincorporation, which means to dissolve the body in strong acid. Jesse wants no part of the disposal process, until Walter points out that they are fifty-fifty partners and that if he decides not to dispose of Emilio's body, it becomes his responsibility to dispose of Krazy-8, who is still very much alive in the basement. Walter and Jesse decide to flip a coin to decide who will take which responsibility and Jesse ends up with the responsibility of disposing Emilio's body, leaving Walter with the responsibility of killing Krazy-8. Walter sends Jesse out to the shops to buy hydrofluoric acid and a polyethylene container which will be used to dissolve Emilio's body. Jesse phones Walter to tell him that the container is flimsy and he is sure that hydrofluoric acid will eat right through the plastic but Walter assures him it will not. Meanwhile, Walter is at Jesse's house trying to build up the courage to put an end to Krazy-8. Walter first practises with a kitchen knife stabbing at the air, and then a hammer and then considers a revolver but ultimately decides on a plastic bag. This infers that Walter's intention is to asphyxiate Krazy-8 with the bag. Notably, the plastic bag is the least violent and gruesome of the options Walter is exploring, which reveals to the audience how uncomfortable Walter is with killing a man. Walter tries to sneak in and put the bag over Krazy-8's head without Krazy-8 even waking up but Krazy-8 is conscious and instead confronts Walter. Walter drops his plastic bag and makes a dash back upstairs. Krazy-8 pleads from the basement for some water. Walter obliges, and also makes Krazy-8 a sandwich and brings him a bucket, toilet paper and hand sanitiser.

Walter still displays some humanity, albeit distorted, considering Krazy-8 is still chained to a pole with a bicycle lock around his neck. Walter notices that Krazy-8 does not eat the crusts of the sandwich he makes for him and it is noticeable that each sandwich Walter prepares for Krazy-8 there onwards has the crust cut off. It shows

consideration and acts as a cue that implies that Walter still maintains a degree of humanity. Walter cannot bring himself to kill Krazy-8 and leaves him in Jesse's basement while he returns to his home life as a husband and father and to his day job as a school teacher. Jesse gets fed up with waiting for Mr White and decides to dissolve Emilio's body with neither Walter's guidance nor advice. Instead of using a polyethylene container as instructed by Walter, Jesse puts the body in the bathtub and pours in the hydrofluoric acid. When Jesse tells Walter what he's done, Walter is stunned knowing that the outcome can only be a bad one. Walter and Jesse go into the hallway, directly beneath the bathroom on the second floor. The camera pans to reveal a patch on the ceiling, dripping blood and brown liquid onto the hardwood floor beneath. The ceiling then comes crashing down abruptly, along with a torrential downpour of organs, bones and blood.

While Walter and Jesse clean up Emilio's remains, Walter picks up Emilo's jawbone and it causes him to have a flashback, otherwise referred to in narratology as an analepsis. Walter is much younger in the flashback and seemingly intimate with a woman with whom the audience is not yet familiar. Together Walter and the woman discuss the elements that make up the human body. Walter writes down the metrics on a white board. According to Walter, the human body broken down by chemical element is:

- Hydrogen: 63%
- Oxygen: 26%
- Carbon: 9%
- Nitrogen: 1.25%
- Calcium: 0.25%
- Chlorine 0.2%
- Phosphorous 0.19%
- Sodium 0.04%
- Sulfur 0.050002%
- Iron: .00004%

Walter's equation cannot account for 0.111958% of the makeup of the human body. Walter remarks that it seems like something is missing, saying, "There has got to be

more to a human being than that." His speech here is contrasted with the visual of Walter pouring Emilio's liquid remains into the toilet and flushing them. The contrast is a commentary on how human beings are at once so much more than just elements since they are moral and 'autonomous', but at the same time can just as easily be reduced to nothing but liquid, simply broken down into the elements. The dissolution of the bath tub and Emilio's body are symbols for the character dissolution of Walter. The analepsis builds on this as a symbol by provoking questions around morality and the human soul.

Walter cannot bring himself to kill Krazy-8 and rather tends to him by bringing him food and drink. On one of his trips down to the basement, Walter has a coughing fit and collapses on the stairs. He crash-lands at the bottom of the stairs, shattering the plate and spilling the food he had brought for Krazy-8. When Walter eventually comes to, he confides in Krazy-8 that he has cancer. Walter collects the plate shards and goes upstairs to throw them away and make Krazy-8 another sandwich. When Walter returns, the two begin conversing and Walter learns that Krazy-8, whose real name is Domingo, is the son of the owner of Tampico Furniture. The store is locally famous for a television commercial that has aired for 30 years in Albuquerque. Walter and Domingo even sing the lyrics of the commercial together and share a little chuckle. Walter tells Domingo that he is sure that the crib that he and his wife bought for his first born was purchased at Tampico's Furniture. Domingo and Walter have bonded in a way and Domingo uses this to prompt Walter to let him go. Walter breaks down and decides he must let Domingo go and that he does not have it in him to kill Domingo. Walter goes upstairs to get the key for the lock around Domingo's neck and throws away a beer can before heading down again. When Walter throws the can away, he sees the shattered plate in the trash and something occurs to him. He takes the shards out of the bin, clears the counter and begins piecing the plate back together to see that there is a sizable shard missing. This implies that Krazy-8 may have taken one of the glass shards and is likely to use it as a weapon.

Walter is now wary of setting Domingo free. Walter stalls unlocking Domingo while asking him questions to gauge whether Domingo will retaliate or not, once he has been set free. Domingo senses Walter's trepidation and reaches into his pocket to pull out the

plate shard. Walter, knowing full well Domingo's intention, pulls back on the bicycle lock and uses all his strength to strangle Domingo. This is Walter's second murder, Emilio being the first. The murder of Emilio may have seemed justifiable, if considered an act of self-defence and so, although despicable, the audience still sympathises with Walter. While Walter strangles Domingo, he repeats over and over again the words, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." Again, the audience may deem the murder justifiable as an act of self-defence and in defence of his family. Earlier in the episode, Walter is seen with a list of reasons not to murder Domingo and a single reason for doing so. Under the column heading "let him live" Walter writes, "It's the moral thing to do," "he may listen to reason," "post-traumatic stress disorder," "won't be able to live with self," and "murder is wrong." Under the column heading "kill him" is one single reason, "he'll kill your entire family if you let him go." The audience may deem the murder justifiable since Walter is doing it to protect his family. However, if one considers that Walter also had the choice to turn himself in to the authorities, it becomes clear that his decision was not moral or justifiable and that it stems from a place of conflict and self-preservation. The shattered plate symbolises breakage and gives the idea of something once whole now broken down and is a metaphor for Walter's moral disintegration (Figure 27).

Figure 27: The broken plate, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Following the murder of Domingo, Walter is seen parked on a bridge looking out at the passing cars below. The same analepsis from earlier in the episode plays again in Walter's head. Walter cannot account for 0.111958% of the makeup of the human body and remarks at how something must be missing. The female suggests that it may be the human soul. Walter mistakes it for a joke at first but upon seeing her stoic face, realises she is being sincere. He walks over to her and leans in close, as though he might kiss her and says, "There's nothing but chemistry here." It is a polysemic phrase, meaning it infers more than one thing. On the one hand, it argues that humans are pure chemistry and that the soul does not account for the makeup of a human. On the other, it speaks to the romance between Walter and this woman. This analepsis reveals that Walter has had a powerful love interest before Skyler. Although we know Walter loves his wife, the marriage could be described as 'passionless' which is starkly contrasted with this other relationship which is full of sexual tension (Sepinwall 2015:76). Walter's opinion that the soul is not a part of a person, acts as commentary foreshadowing Walter's moral disintegration to come. In other words, there comes a point in the narrative where it is true for Walter that he has become soulless or otherwise remorseless.

Following Walter and Jesse's failed attempt at having Krazy-8 distribute their meth for them, they find a new kingpin by the name of Tuco Salamanca. Since the deaths of Krazy-8 and Emilio, Walter wants nothing to do with the actual trading of meth anymore for fear of more unintended bloodshed. Walter tells Jesse that he wishes to remain a silent partner who handles the chemistry side of the operation. Walter and Jesse discuss their need for a distributor and although Jesse brings Tuco into the conversation, he is not sure that Tuco is a viable option. Jesse tells Walter how dangerous Tuco is and that it is too risky but Walter loses his temper and screams at Jesse to "grow some fucking balls." Walter abuses Jesse in much the same way he is often abused by Hank, by insulting his masculinity and inferring some sort of lack or insufficiency.

Jesse arranges to meet with Tuco to give him a tester of the last batch that he and Walter cooked together to try and convince him to buy their product in bulk and distribute. Tuco is immensely impressed with the product but when Jesse names his price, $35,000, Tuco tells him that the deal is a consignment and that he will not pay Jesse

upfront. Jesse tries to snatch back the bag of meth and run but is stopped by Tuco's henchmen at the door. Tuco fills a sack with money and the audience anticipates that Tuco will pay Jesse after all but instead Tuco reverses the expectation and begins to senselessly beat Jesse with the bag of money which puts Jesse in hospital. When Walter finds out, he realises that he is to blame for Jesse's state because although Jesse had warned him of the risk, he had not listened.

Due to the chemotherapy treatment, Walter begins to lose his hair so he decides to shave his head entirely. The shaved head is an important visual cue which signals a definitive moment in the character metamorphosis of Walter into Heisenberg. Walter then goes to see Tuco with what appears to be a bag of meth. He demands $50 000 from Tuco stating that $35 000 is for the stolen pound of meth and $15 000 is to pay for Jesse's suffering. Walter tells Tuco that his name is Heisenberg and this is the first time the audience is introduced to Heisenberg as Walter's alter ego. Heisenberg has a different appearance to Walter and he, unlike Walter, is not a pushover. Instead of being submissive the way Walter usually is, Heisenberg feigns enough confidence to appear dominant. Walter is a dandy in this situation, as someone who feigns autonomy and indifference. As Girard argues, the dandy feigns a stoic disposition in order to make others believe that he is wholly self-sufficient (Girard 1965:162). Walter takes out some of the supposed crystal meth and throws it at the ground causing a massive explosion and blowing out all the windows in Tuco's office. The explosive material is fulminated mercury. Tuco is stunned but impressed and says to Walter, "You got balls, I'll give you that." This comment circles back to the insult Walter had earlier hurled at Jesse ("Grow some fucking balls"). It is possible that Walter was speaking to himself instead of Jesse when he said this, in an attempt to bolster his own confidence. The reason this episode is fundamental to the overall argument is that firstly, it introduces the audience to Heisenberg. It gives the audience visual cues such as the bald head as a marker to signify the change in character. Secondly, the episode illustrates Walter's propensity for violence. Walter told Jesse that he did not want any more violence or bloodshed but instead of letting the incident with Tuco go, he goes out of his way to threaten Tuco. Walter may have taken abuse on the chin but Heisenberg will not. It wins Tuco's respect and he and Walter come to an agreement that Tuco will buy in bulk from Walter and will pay up front. In the episode, *A-No-Rough-Stuff-Type-Deal (S1 E07)*, Walter

dons a porkpie hat when meeting Tuco at a junkyard to do a business deal. The porkpie hat becomes Heisenberg's signature and infers the shift from Walter's character as Walter to his alter ego as Heisenberg. Walter and Jesse sell their product to Tuco from the episode *Crazy Handful of Nothin (S1 E06)* onwards and by *Grilled (S2 E02),* Tuco is killed off by Hank Shrader.

Following Tuco's death, Walter and Jesse are yet again without a distributor. They hire Saul, a sleazy lawyer who has a connection and arranges a meeting between Walter and Jesse and a mysterious businessman who is able to peddle meth in bulk. Walter first meets this cautious business man in *Mandala (S2 E11)* at a fast-food restaurant called *Los Pollos Hermanos*[24]. Walter sits in a booth, waiting for the businessman to show. Jesse arrives late, for which Walter berates him. Not only is Jesse late but he is also high, agitated and acting erratically. He leaves a few minutes later. Walter waits behind patiently but the businessman never shows. Walter complains to Saul that his contact did not show but Saul assures him that the businessman was there. Walter returns the next day to *Los Pollos,* the same restaurant, and waits there the entire day, until it dawns on him that the businessman might be the well-kempt, unassuming manager at the restaurant. This man is Gustavo Fring, the owner of *Los Pollos Hermanos*. Walter asks for five minutes of his time, asking why he had not introduced himself to Walter the day before. The manager smiles politely and assures Walter that he has mistaken him for someone else.

> Walter: "*I was told that the man I would be meeting with is very careful. A cautious man. I believe we're alike in that way."*

The manager's face shifts from a courteous smile to a stone-cold, stoic face.

> Gus*: "I don't think we're alike at all, Mr White. You are not a cautious man at all."*

Walter's comment to Gustavo, suggesting that they are similarly cautious, reveals Walter's vanity. As *vaniteux,* Walter believes himself to be thoroughly original (Girard

[24] Spanish for The Chicken Brothers, referring to Gustavo Fring and his partner Maximino Arciniega (Los Pollos Hermanos [sa])

1965:115). He believes he is a careful and clever prior to meeting Gus, but as the episodes progresses, we see increasingly the ways in which Walter covets Gus. Walter tries to subsume the metaphysical autonomy that Gus seems to possess. Both Gus and Walter are after power, making power the desired object in the mimetic triangle. Walter is the subject and Gus is the model who possesses the object which Walter desires. As Girard argues, vanity initiates rivalry since the subject begins to view the model as someone to be defeated (Girard 1965:7). Walter can only preserve his vanity by defeating his model.

In *Mas (S3E05),* Gus reveals to Walter a state-of-the-art meth lab located beneath an industrial laundry business which he owns. It is Walter's dream lab and Walter is assigned an assistant named Gale Boetticher. Walter is in awe of the lab and appreciates having an apprentice who has an irrevocable love for chemistry that matches his own. Gus offers Walter three million dollars for three months of his time. Walter has seemingly achieved the bigger and better things which were, at the beginning of the series, beyond his own mediocre surroundings. When Walter began his operation with Jesse, his goal was to make $737 000 dollars to help his family cover all their expenses should he pass away of cancer but even when he far surpasses this amount, he can never seem to bring himself to bow out of the trade. This new set of circumstances is what Girard terms a 'false promise' in which the hero seemingly reaches his goals and is on the brink of obtaining metaphysical autonomy (Girard 1965:56). Walter has everything he had wanted; security, money, a state-of-the-art lab and an apprentice who sustains his pride. It is not long before Walter finds that what he expected and what he is experiencing are at odds with one another and the contrast effectively shatters Walter's faith in the false promise and produces violent disappointment (Girard 1965:56). Walter is experiencing what Girard describes as ontological sickness which means that the physical gratification does not produce metaphysical accomplishment (Girard 1965:87).

Gale's unfailing admiration for Walter's methods is contrasted with Jesse's indifference to Walter's genius. This is in line with Walter's masochistic tendencies, which see Walter deny those who admire him and instead pursue obstacles. Gale's imitation of Walter is a mimesis of apprenticeship or mimesis of appropriation in which Gale explicitly wants to learn from Walter and both Gale and Walter are aware of the

mimesis. The relationship between Walter and Gale is internally mediated since Walter and Gale exist in the same relational domain and are not separated by time, space or a social disparity. This is to say that conflict is inevitable between Walter and Gale. For Gale, the mimesis is a mimesis of apprenticeship so Gale feels no malevolence toward Walter and the relationship is a positive one but for Walter, the mimesis produces a crisis of undifferentiation, leading Walter to believe that Gale should be killed or he himself may be at risk of losing his job as a cook for Gus. Walter's relationship with Gale perfectly exhibits the double imperative which says, "imitate me but don't imitate me." Walter rejects Gale as someone who admires him but the admiration also sustains his pride. The rivalry between Walter and Gale is actually between Walter and Gus but Gale operates as a sort of placeholder for Gus under Gus's tutelage. Gale and Walter are rivals where the object of desire is to have work and earn money. The object of desire for both Walter and Gus is power. Walter is the model in one triangle where Gale is the subject and yet in another triangle, Walter is the subject where Gus is the model.

Jesse's arrival into the super-lab introduces a string of problems that disrupt the calm between Walter and Gus. Jesse is grieving the loss of his friend Combo who had become entangled in a turf war and was shot by 11-year-old Tomas. Tomas is employed by two drug-slingers who also happen to work for Gus. Jesse attempts to kill the dealers who called for Combo's murder but not before confronting Gus about how unethical it is to use children in the underground world of drug slinging and murder. Jesse's plan to kill the two drug dealers goes horribly awry. He goes out into a dodgy neighbourhood in the middle of the night and as he draws his gun he is visibly shaky and nervous. As the drug dealers draw their own weapons, Jesse realises he is not only outgunned but lacks the nerve. Just then a car comes screeching down the street and ploughs through the dealers. Jesse looks on in shock and horror. Walter climbs out the car and steps over a limb dangling out from under the car. The other dealer, bloodied and injured, crawls along the street to reach his revolver but Walter gets there first, picks up the revolver and shoots the dealer point blank in the head. Walter looks up at Jesse:

> *"Run,"* he says.

It is a scene that is violently contrasted with Walter's previous interactions with a gun. In the pilot episode, Walter is extremely nervous of Hank's Glock and is not sure how

to use Krazy-8's revolver when he tries to shoot himself. By *Full Measures (S3 E13)*, there is no hesitance on Walter's part. He picks up the gun, aims and shoots the gang member in the head. Cranston recalls his thought process when preparing for this scene, saying that he had pictured Walter in somewhat of a panic but Gillian had pictured Walter on a different trajectory entirely (Sepinwall 2015:94). Cranston had pictured Walter shaken and nervous doing what he could to protect Jesse, but Gilligan had the scene cut so that Walter appears in control and is not in any way hesitant in his decision (Sepinwall 2015:94). Gilligan wanted to ensure that people could see Walter as an equal rival for Gus. Sepinwall refers to this as the moment where Walter takes "a big step on his journey from everyman to supervillain" (Sepinwall 2015:94).

Walter's actions save Jesse's life but enrage Gus and Walter's only saving grace is his ability to cook for Gus. Gus rehires Gale as Walter's assistant and prompts Gale to learn Walter's recipe. It is Gale's "fastidiousness" to learn that alarms Walter and Walter realises that once Gale knows the recipe, Walter will become expendable. Although Jesse is the one who has caused chaos and disrupted the peace in the community, it is the unassuming Gale who gets killed. Gale's murder is a result of the surrogate victimage mechanism. What takes place is a sacrificial crisis wherein the culture of the community, now disintegrated by a string of violent instances, attempts to stabilise itself by exacting violence against a single participant or scapegoat who is selected at random (Fleming 2004:47). Gale becomes the scapegoat and his sacrifice brings about peace and stabilisation for the community. As previously mentioned, the scapegoat is not guilty of any crime that would justifiably warrant his sacrifice over any parties who single out the scapegoat (Girard *et al* 2010:127). This is something Walter is aware of.

> Walter: *"All right, let's talk about Gale Boetticher. He was a good man and a good chemist and I cared about him. He didn't deserve what happened to him. He didn't deserve it at all."*

The surrogate victimage mechanism tends to dissolve institutions and then regenerate them (Fleming 2004:48). In this case study, the super laboratory acts as the institution. A while after the death of Gale, Walter begins to chafe at the idea of having a boss and it causes him to become erratic and unstable. Gus fires him and forbids him to see Jesse who is instated as head cook. The original institution which saw Walter as the head of

the super laboratory has been dissolved and is regenerated with Jesse as the head of the laboratory. In other words, the surrogate victimage mechanism is demonstrated by the dissolution of the institution with Walter in charge and is regenerated with Jesse in charge of the institution.

In *Crawl Space (S4 E11),* Gus has Tyrus and another henchman drag Walter out into the desert, tie him up and put a black sack over his head. This is where Gus fires Walter and threatens him to never again approach Jesse.

> Walter: *"Or else you'll do what?"*

Walter knows that if Gus were to kill him that Jesse would not cook for Gus, so Walter calls his bluff. Gus informs Walter that he is going to "deal with" Hank, inferring that he is going to have Hank killed. Walter begins to protest and beg but Gus is relentless, delivering one of *Breaking Bad's* most iconic threats:

> Gus: *"If you try to interfere…this becomes a much simpler matter. I will kill your wife. I will kill your son. I will kill your infant daughter."*

Walter has lost his leverage and tries to make an escape plan. Walter convinces Saul, their lawyer, to make an anonymous tip to the DEA to buy Hank some time before Gus can get to him. He then goes home to collect money and move himself and the family to a new location with new identities. Walter discovers that the money he had stored in the crawl space beneath his house is almost all missing. Walter changes course from flight to fight, and builds an explosive device which he intends to use to kill Gus. Walter and Gus are now engaged in mimetic rivalry. Walter needs to find a way to plant the bomb, as well as to communicate with Jesse again and convince him to be his ally.

Walter first plans to plant the bomb underneath Gus's car but Gus, being as cautious a man as he is, suspects his car may be a trap and decides not to use his car. Walter must find another way to lure Gus and plant the device to kill him. Walter needs Jesse as an ally and the only way he can convince him of doing this is by turning Jesse against Gus. Walter poisons Brock, the son of Jesse's girlfriend Andrea, and convinces Jesse that it was Gus who poisoned Brock. Walter meets with Jesse and begs Jesse to think of at least one viable place, without any surveillance, that he could plant the bomb to kill

Gus. Jesse is just about to make a suggestion when he is interrupted by two police agents who want to question Jesse about Brock. When Jesse is being held in an interrogation room, Saul comes to his aid and Jesse lets Saul know about Casa Tranquila, which is an old age home where Hector Salamanca is a resident[25]. Saul passes the information from Jesse on to Walter. At first Walter is annoyed as the information seems not "particularly fruitful" but when Walter figures out that Gus and Hector are enemies as opposed to old, business associates, Walter finds himself an unlikely ally, since it was Walter and Jesse who led to Hector's nephew Tuco to being killed in *Grilled (S2 E02)*. Walter pays Hector a visit at the old age home, offering him "an opportunity for revenge" on Gus. Walter plants the bomb on Hector's wheelchair with the final step in his plan being to lure Gus to the old age home. He does so by getting Hector to notify the DEA office giving the illusion that he is an informant selling out Gustavo and his meth empire. Gus's henchman buys into the illusion and lets Gus know of Hector's whereabouts, which is exactly as Walter had planned.

Walter, Gus and Hector have a few things in common, but a notable one is that they all have at least one instance where they inflict harm on a child, which is taboo. In Girardian terms, Walter and Gus and Gus and Hector have become mirror images of one another. The rivalry between either two antagonists has intensified so that the characteristics which had once been distinct to either antagonist begin to disappear and

[25] In episode *Hermanos (S4 E08)*, Gus took Jesse there and witnessed the way in which Gus taunted the man with the news that he had killed the last of his surviving family members and associates. *Hermanos (S4 E08)* is the episode that gives context to the rivalry between Gus and Hector. Gus and his partner Max are pitching a new super-drug to a cartel leader named Don Eladio and his men because they want to work with the cartel. The super-drug in question is pure methamphetamine, which Max describes as more addictive than cocaine. Don Eladio dismisses the pitch and questions Gus and Max's disrespect for the cartel by handing out samples of meth. Max pleads for forgiveness which become more desperate. Suddenly a gunshot rings out. The piercing noise causes Gus to bring his hand up to his ear; he is in shock and covered in a fine spray of blood. Gus turns to see Max with blood squirting out his head and behind him stands stoic Hector with pistol in hand. Gus and Hector lock gazes. Hector's gaze is indifferent while Gus's gaze changes from shock to blind rage as he lurches forward to attack Hector. Juan, one of Don Eladio's henchmen, grabs Gus and holds him back before forcing him to the ground at the edge of the pool to face Max's lifeless body. Hector stands on the back of Gus's neck and in a voice laced with menace says:

Look at him. You did this to him. Now, look at him.

produce antagonists with the same characteristics (Girard 1979:159). This occurrence is otherwise referred to as the interchangeability of antagonists. Consider Gus's use of children in the drug empire *(Half Measures S3 E12)* and relentless indifference at threatening to murder a baby (*Crawl Space S4 E11*) compared to Walter's choice to poison Brock with Lily of the Valley flowers (revealed in *Face Off (S4 E13)* and Hector teaching his nephew a lesson by almost drowning him (*One Minute S3 E07*). Each of these antagonists show malevolent behaviour towards innocent children. Gus is inextricably tied to Hector in much the same way that Walter is tied to Gus, by desire and means of idolatry which ultimately leads to mimetic rivalry, and inevitably develops into violence. Gus and Hector are rivals in the same way that Walter and Gus are rivals.

Every time Gus comes to see Hector, he tells Hector to look at him as this is a play for power. Hector does not submit to Gus's request until *Face Off (S4 E13)*. Walter's plan works and it prompts Gus to visit Hector in the nursing home. Gus seated in front of Hector has the lethal injection poised, ready to make Hector pay for killing Max and for supposedly ratting out their operation to the DEA.

Gus: *"Last chance to look at me, Hector"*

Gus looks up to see that Hector has finally met his gaze. Hector's face seems full of remorse and the expression stuns Gus who finally gets what he has been after. The remorseful gaze means that Gus has won. But Hector's face changes from one of seeming remorse and sorrow to an anguished scowl as he begins dinging away madly at his little bell. Gus is taken aback for a second. The camera tracks downwards from the bell to the bottom of Hector's wheelchair fitted with Walter's bomb. Gus realises, screams and pushes out of his chair to escape but it is too late, the bomb goes off. The contents of Hector's room explode out into the hallway and an alarm begins blaring. Gus walks out of the room, stands in the doorway and adjusts his tie. Two nurses run down the hallway but stop at the site of Gus. The camera orbits around Gus to reveal what is left of him. He is missing an eye, his jaw is gone and his shoulder is blown off. He finishes adjusting his tie, as the last tick of a meticulous man, and falls to his knees, dead. The explosion effectively kills Gus, Hector and Tyrus.

Figure 28: Gus after the explosion, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 29: The pink teddy bear, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

The title *Face Off (S4 E13)* implies a situation of confrontation. The conflict is between Walter and Gus but Walter uses the feud between Gus and Hector to blindside Gus and negate the consequences of their own feud. The title also refers to the surprise twist which sees Gus with only half a face left (Figure 28), not unlike the pink teddy bear[26] (Figure 29) which makes its first appearance in *Seven Thirty-Seven (S2 E01)* and features very prominently throughout Season two. The teddy bear is a symbol which foreshadows Gus's death. The teddy bear and Gus are both missing an eye and have one side of their face charred. Following the explosion at the old age home, Skyler phones

[26] The pink teddy bear makes numerous appearances throughout the series in subtle ways. It can be spotted in the music video "Fallacies" performed by Jesse's band, "TwaüghtHammër"; in Jane's bedroom wall mural; in one episode stuck in a tree and potentially as a blurry, foreground detail in a Hi-Lo market (Pink Teddy Bear [sa]).

Walter to ask about his involvement. Walter's reply is simply, "I won". Walter has defeated his idol-come-rival, Gus, and now he needs to replace his mediator with a new model in order to obtain new desires.

In summary, Walter encounters a series of obstacles and becomes engaged in various forms of rivalry and conflict in his pursuit of his goal or desires. Increasingly, the morality of his character is dissolved and broken down as is symbolised by the dissolved bathtub, the liquid remains of Emilio and the broken plate. In all instances of conflict, Walter's first concern is self-preservation. Walter tries to compensate for his feelings of lack and impotence by possessing the being of 'the Other', which is usually the drug distributer that Walter uses (Krazy-8, Tuco or Gus). When Walter dons the pseudonym 'Heisenberg', he is transforming himself into the Girardian dandy. Walter feigns indifference and autonomy to appear more dominant and self-sufficient than he truly is. Walter begins at this point in the narrative to truly expose his propensity for violence.

When Walter meets Gus, he believes he is a cautious businessman just like Gus and this moment in the narrative reveals Walter as vaniteux. Walter progressively tries to subsume the being of Gus and possess the metaphysical autonomy that Gus seems to inherently have. Walter's vanity inevitably incites the second moment in the mimetic mechanism, mimetic rivalry. Gus gave Walter everything he wanted and Walter seemed to achieve his goals, but what Walter experiences and what he had expected are at odds causing Walter metaphysical disappointment and ontological sickness. Walter displays his masochistic tendencies by turning away from those who admire him, such as Gale, and pursuing those who do not such as Jesse and Gus.

The third moment of the mimetic mechanism is the mimetic crisis, which is a crisis of undifferentiation. There are two notable mimetic crises, one is with Walter and Gale and the other with Walter and Gus. With Gale, the internal mediation takes place in the form of a mimesis of apprenticeship or appropriation. Walter is the coquette in the model who simultaneously wants and does not want Gale to imitate him. Walter fears that when Gale learns his formula, it will make the two of them undifferentiated and Walter will become dispensable to Gus. The only way Walter can keep his position is by turning Gale into a rival who must be defeated.

Walter and Gus also illustrate a double bind which produces antagonists with the same characteristics, otherwise known as the interchangeability of antagonists. Walter defeats Gus, following which he must pursue new obstacles and replace Gus as mediator. The character who was once Walter has dissolved to reveal Heisenberg, once a victim and martyr and now a sadist. In the following subchapter Walter's transformation from masochist to sadist as he grows his drug empire is discussed.

4.7 Growth: The Empire of Heisenberg

The fifth and final season of *Breaking Bad* is considered to be split into two parts, often referred to as 5A and 5B. In this research, 5A is viewed in relation to the growth of the empire of Heisenberg, while 5B explores the decay of Walter. The transformation of Walter's character in retrospect is addressed in the succeeding subchapter. This subchapter looks at the transformation of Walter from the martyr he might have been considered in the pilot episode to the tormentor he becomes. This is otherwise referred to as sadism which is the dialectical reverse of masochism (Girard 1965:184).

With the death of Gustavo, Walter goes into business with Mike, one of Gustavo's right-hand men and Jesse and takes the lead on the operation. Because he had killed Gustavo who was his model, mediator, rival and double, Walter believes he has earned the position. A sadist tries to convince himself that by obtaining the goal he had set out to achieve, he possesses the being of the mediator (Girard 1965:185). Such is the case with Walter who believes that his defeat of Gus means he now possesses the power which Gus had possessed. In order for the role reversal to appear successful, Walter must maintain the illusion that he has subsumed his mediator's being by turning a victim into a replica of himself. Walter's decision to act as though he is in charge is attributed to his arrogance. This arrogance is due to Walter subscribing to the virtues of the Proustian snob, who when on the precipice of thinking that he has secured 'being', behaves as though he has already obtained it (Girard 1965:67). Mike, is not fooled by Walter and he makes this apparent. Mike aptly sums it up with the line, "Just because you shot Jesse James don't make you Jesse James." The implication is that even though Walter killed Gustavo, it does not make him Gustavo.

By *Say My Name (S5 E07)*, Mike and Jesse are determined to get out of the meth business and stop working with Walter. They arrange a business deal without Walter in an attempt to sell the entire operation to a man named Declan. However, the deal goes sideways when Walter finds out, intervenes and negotiates a new deal on his own terms. When Declan buys into Walter's idea, Walter insists that Declan refer to him as Heisenberg using the line, "Say my name." At first Declan feigns indifference but eventually submits to Walter and calls him Heisenberg. Walter is now Heisenberg and demonstrates the expanse of his power. The deal that Walter arranges with Declan buys out both Mike and Jesse. Mike uses shares from his cut of the money to pay off the nine associates of Gustavo Fring who are now in jail. The money is to keep them from talking to the police. Walter is not happy with the arrangement and insists Mike divulge the names of these men[27]. Mike tries to flee the country once the DEA realises his involvement with Gustavo's operation but Walter, in his rage at Mike's refusal to reveal the names, shoots Mike in the stomach. Walter immediately regrets the decision realising he could have asked another acquaintance who also has the names. Walter's new assistant Todd, who has come to replace Jesse, helps Walter dispose of Mike's body. It is never shown how but the audience has witnessed enough to venture a guess that the body was dissolved.

Walter does manage to get the names of the incarcerated men and what he orchestrates truly illustrates the ruthlessness of Heisenberg, a character fully transformed from a martyr into a tormentor. Walter works with Jack Welker, referred to in the series as Uncle Jack since he is the uncle of Todd. Jack is also a gang leader to neo-Nazi supremacists and a man who has several connections to the Aryan Brotherhood in various prisons. Jack is approached by Walter who wants the incarcerated men killed, simultaneously across the three prisons since the DEA are onto them as leads and want to question the men. Walter wants to afford the DEA no time whatsoever. Uncle Jack tells Walter that what he is asking for cannot be done since the logistics would be too

[27] It is in *Hazard Pay (S5 E03)* that Walter learns of Fring's incarcerated associates. This episode contains a pertinent scene from the 1983 film *Scarface* wherein Scarface kills people with an automatic rifle. Walter asks out loud, "Everyone dies in this movie, don't they?" The scene is an important but nuanced link that ties Walter's character arc to *Scarface*. The scene also foreshadows not only the orchestrated prison murders but the mass murder of the Nazi group in the season finale. Walter kills the entire Nazi group using an automated machine gun which parallels *Scarface*.

complicated, but in true Proustian-snob fashion, Walter is indifferent to Jack's complaints and insists he "figure it out." Uncle Jack does figure it out and the nine men along with a tenth, the lawyer who was responsible for depositing money for the men, are killed in the space of two minutes across three different prisons. The prison killings are brutal and violently visual.

The killing scenes are contrasted with scenes of a calm Walter who stands in his living room looking down at his wristwatch as the seconds tick by. The watch is an important if not slightly overlooked symbol that describes Walter's story arc. In the pilot episode, Walter takes off his watch and lays it by his wallet and camcorder as a symbol of submission and surrender. The watch is a Casio CA-53W described as a watch from the 80's, suited to a nerdy high school teacher (Lind 2020:1). In the episode *Gliding All* Over *(S5 E08),* it symbolises the exact opposite. It is an extremely expensive watch symbolising power and meticulousness.

Walter is now a sadist, who reduces those around him into replicas of his former self to make them victims. Walter fully subscribes to the notion of the Proustian snob who is arrogant, believing he holds more power than he truly does. The way in which Walter has Gus's former associates murdered truly illustrates his cold, stoicism as a tormentor. Walter is no longer the tired martyr and masochist who suffers shame, humiliation and impotence; he is now Heisenberg a sadist and tormentor.

4.6 Decay: The Crumbling Legacy of Ozymandias

Blood Money (S5 E09), relates back to *Bullet Points (S4 E04),* an episode that speaks to the ego of Walter. When the genius of Heisenberg is at risk of being accredited to Gale Boetticher, Walter's ex-laboratory assistant, Walter cannot stand it and inadvertently convinces Hank that who he thinks Heisenberg is, is in fact not. Walter would rather risk being caught by the law than have someone else take credit for his work. *Blood Money* (*S05 E09)* shows Hank leave Walt's bathroom, stunned after having realised that Walter is probably Heisenberg. Hank walks out carrying Walter's copy of *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass*, with the inscription:

> *"To my other favourite W.W. It's been an honour working with you. Fondly G.B."*

The inscription is a dedication from Gale Boetticher to Walter. Gale was the chemist, more specifically a crystallography X-ray specialist, who had worked as Walter's assistant in the state-of-the-art meth lab that Gus owned. It is actually by Gale's appraisal of Walter's meth that Gus even considers taking Walter on to cook for him in the first place.

It is in *Bullet Points (S4 E04)* that Walter learns that Hank is looking into the murder of Gale, whom Hank believes is Heisenberg. Gale's lab notes, which were collected from Gale's apartment following his murder, are an eclectic mix of what Hank refers to as "crazy crap". Amongst Gales notes of the meth synthesis and sketches of the lab are a recipe for vegan s'mores, top ten recumbent bicycles and tips for indoor composting, as well as a note which reads:

> *"To W.W. My star, my perfect silence"*

Hank jokingly suggests the W.W may be for Walter White to which Walter responds by mockingly putting his hands up and saying, "You got me." The gesture on Walt's part is mock but the admission of guilt is true since the dedication truly is for Walt. However, Walter throws Hank off course leading him to believe that W.W stands for the poet Walt Whitman. Later at dinner, when Hank discusses what a genius Gale Boetticher is, Walter's pride gets the better of him and rather than letting Gale remain a scapegoat, Walter begins to challenge Hank that who he thinks is Heisenberg may in fact not be Heisenberg after all. This is what Girard refers to as pseudo-masochism where Walter, as the protagonist, is determined to fulfil a path that leads to self-sufficiency or in other words, the "will to make oneself God" so much so that he will risk being found out (Girard 1965:287). This unravelling undoubtedly leads to gradual self-destruction which is realised too late (Girard 1965:287). Yet again, it is an instance which reveals Walter's harmatia, his pride.

The depiction of Gale as a character is a particularly interesting one. It is Restivo's opinion that Gale is presented less as a unified character and more as an assemblage of bizarre and incompatible traits (Restivo 2019:23). For example, Gale's motivation for cooking meth reveals that he has a libertarian ethos about life and yet in his home, is the book the Fundamentals of Marxism-Lenism (Restivo 2019:23). Libertarianism and

Marxism-Lenism are two opposing dogmas. Gale is also a vegan, hookah-smoking, tea perfectionist. All of these bizarre traits act as markers of cultural difference and it is usually these markers that a community will use in order to single out a scapegoat (Fleming 2005:49). The representation of Gale emphasises the cultural markers of difference between himself and other characters, causing him to stand out as an obscurity, one whom Walter must expel from the community in order to restore balance. Although Gus wanted Walter killed for having executed two of his employees, it is the unassuming Gale who is murdered. Gale is the sacrifice in the mimetic crisis and he becomes the scapegoat for Walter.

Going back to *Bullet Points (S4 E04)*, Hank prompts Walter to watch a DVD along with Walter Jr, that is part of the evidence collected from Gale's apartment. The DVD shows Gale, "sporting a tan travel vest, a neckerchief and a fanny pack", karaoke-ing along to Peter Schilling's song *Major Tom Coming Home*, against a video backdrop of outer space along with Thai subtitles (Another unexpected stateside reminder of Thailand: Gale Boetticher's karaoke performance: 2013). Again, emphasis is drawn to Gale's cultural markers of difference which cast him as an obscurity outside of the community. The performance is nonsensical, quirky, and even likable for its pure obscurity. Hank and Walter Jr's laughter indicate that Gale is essentially a joke. The portrayal of Gale is meant to create an extreme contrast between himself and Walter. Hank says of the meth, that he assumes Gale cooked, that it is the finest quality meth any one has ever seen, which is pure testament to Walt's genius. But it is not Walt who gets the credit, it is the guy with a potato-clock in his apartment and a recipe for vegan s'mores alongside his lab notes. As a prideful man, this enrages Walter and instead of letting Gale remain the scapegoat, Walter prompts Hank to keep looking into the case. Walter thus actively participates in his own destruction because as with everything, Walter is driven by pride.

Sepinwall discusses the Walt Whitman book as evidence which a careful drug lord, something Walter claims to be, would have thrown out because it is incriminating (Sepinwall 2012:98-99). However, for ego and pride, Walter keeps the book in his own bathroom inscribed with Gale's appraisal. Restivo also believes that the book speaks to Walter's arrogance as he fails to see the book as evidence, even when the book goes

missing, Walter does not immediately suspect that he may have been caught (Restivo 2019:19). Restivo notes the emphasis that is put on the book by foregrounding it in the shot (Restivo 2019:19). When Hank reads the inscription, an analepsis or flashback takes him back to the scene from *Bullet Points (S4 E04)* where Walt jokingly admits his guilt. The realisation is debilitating for Hank. As he leaves the bathroom, he takes the book with him as evidence, slipping it into a bag. In the background there is inaudible conversation between the family and Walter and as Hank pulls open the door, the first thing the audience hears is Marie, Hank's wife and Skyler's sister, exclaim jokingly to Walter:

> *"You are the devil"*

The line is said mockingly but perfectly describes what Hank is trying to process. The line is significant since it foreshadows what Hank and Marie will really feel towards Walter when they fully uncover the truth about him.

As Hank drives home and tries to process the information, the visual and audio cues in the scene work to elicit for the audience those same feelings that Hank is experiencing. Marie talks to Hank about Europe but her voice turns into muffled background noise and the music is edgy and uneasy. The camera work is from Hank's point of view, as if we are seeing what he sees and it is shaky and unstable, sometimes even blurringly out of focus. Marie's voice is just barely audible over Hank's shallow breathing as she tries to ask if Hank is okay. Hank smashes through a white picket fence and bursts out of the car heaving and holding his chest. As he tries to catch his breath, the camera swirls around violently with everything is out of focus. The camera work and sound are so disorientating, it is as though the audience is experiencing the attack with Hank.

The rest of the episode sees Hank comb through evidence he has collected about Heisenberg. He begins by comparing Gale's handwriting in the lab notes (Figure 30) with the dedication inside Walter's copy of *Leaves of Grass* (Figure 31), almost letter for letter and the camera zooms in on Hank's hand as he points out each letter so that the audience too is privy to seeing that they are in fact written by the same person. These details are so important that the shots fill the frame entirely.

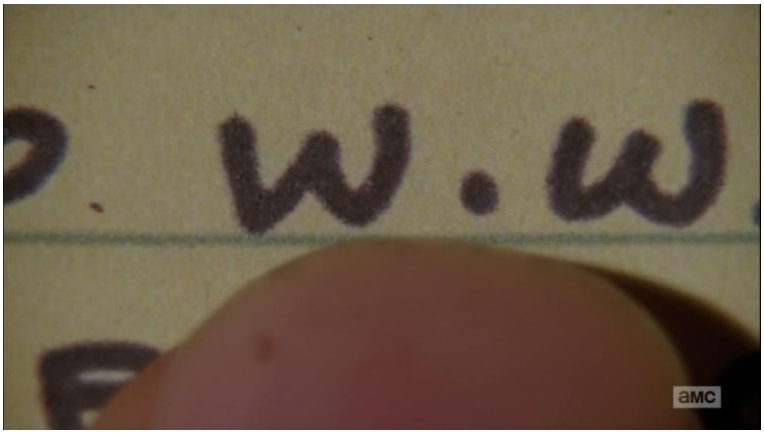

Figure 30: Gale's handwriting in his lab notes, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

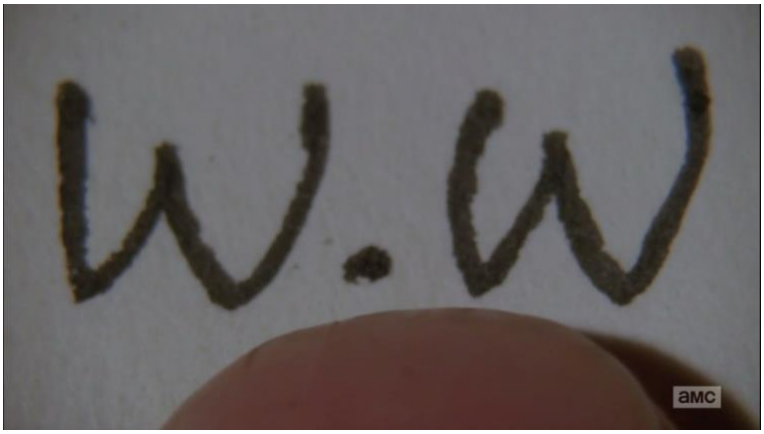

Figure 31: Gale's handwriting in Walter's copy of Leaves of Grass, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

As Hank works his way through all the evidence he has collected, trying to make sense of it all, the audience is looking on already in the know as to how most of the pieces fit together. From Gus Fring and *Los Pollos*, back to Jesse's The Cap'n number plate, to dead Tuco, to Gale, to CCTV footage of Walter and Jesse stealing a barrel of methylamine from a warehouse, we see Hank connect the dots. The final shot of the montage sees Hank look at a photocopy of a pen illustration of the infamous Heisenberg. The shot first focuses on Hank before shifting focus to the photocopy of the illustration showing a man wearing a porkpie hat and sunglasses. The porkpie hat and sunglasses first make an appearance in *A No-Rough-Stuff-Type Deal (S1 E07)*, as Walter dons the alias Heisenberg when conducting drug deals. The porkpie hat symbolises Walter's transformation from mild-mannered Walt to the arrogant and cold Heisenberg.

The song that plays while Hank digs through the evidence is *Wordmule* by Jim White. 'Wordmule' is a slang definition which describes a person, usually one in the drug trade who only speaks through others and is rarely ever seen (UrbanDictionary [sa]), which very aptly describes Heisenberg and how he has managed to remain unseen by Hank despite many, sometimes very blatant clues. The reason Hank never suspects Walter is because it is deeply ingrained in his mind that Walter is spineless and that he's not a 'real man'.

When Walter discovers his copy of *Leaves of Grass* is missing, he begins to suspect that someone may be tracking him and has his suspicions confirmed when he finds a tracking device tacked to the bottom of his car, not unlike a tracking device Walter knows Hank used to track Gus Fring. When Walter inspects his car, he is wearing a robe over a white vest and saggy, white jockey shorts. The underwear is reminiscent of the pilot episode. In *Blood Money (S5 E09)*, when Walter is in his underpants and finds the tracking device, he is in much the same position as he was in the pilot episode , with the underwear symbolising vulnerability as it represents a part that is private or hidden and is now being exposed.

Following Walter's finding of the tracking device, he confronts Hank. The conversation between Walter and Hank is strained and consists mainly of small talk as neither wants to reveal what they know about the other. Hank barely makes eye contact with Walter. Walter, still playing the part of an ignorant, innocent man confronts Hank about the tracking device. Hank, now steady and unspeaking, closes the automatic garage door behind Walter.

The scene resembles an old Spaghetti Western as Walter and Hank stand on opposite ends of the garage looking at one another, engaged in a standoff. The standoff is similar to a Mexican standoff, a popular trope used in Spaghetti Western films such as the film *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Walter and Hank are at a stalemate where neither can safely retract. While Walter is dressed in whites and beiges, colours that communicate peace and purity, Hank dons a red sweater symbolising aggression or anger. Hank punches Walt in the face, sending him crashing into the boxes of evidence. As Hank punches Walter, the scene plays out using two different camera shots cutting from one to the other so abruptly that it communicates to the audience the speed and ferocity of

the punch. Hank finally gets to confront the notorious Heisenberg and threatens to put him "under the jail". But Walter tells Hank that his cancer is back and that he would never see the inside of a jail cell. Hank stares at Walt incredulously:

> *"I don't know who you are. I don't even know who I'm talking to."*

Walter responds:

> *"If that's true, if you don't know who I am, then maybe your best course... would be to tread lightly."*

Walter's response is a veiled threat, he is stoic and cold, not unlike Girard's dandy whose disposition is meant to make others believe that he is wholly self-sufficient or otherwise invincible. Walter has always been weak and non-threatening in Hank's eyes but Heisenberg, on the other hand, commands respect. When Hank had denounced Walter's masculinity at his own birthday party in front of family and friends in the pilot episode, it cast Walter out of the social group, effectively producing in Walter the will to prove his self-sufficiency.

Figure 32: Walter and Hank in a standoff, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Walter has managed to evade the law thus far as no evidence ties him to any of the crimes, besides the money. Hank reaches out to Skyler and pleads with her to testify against Walter but she is tight-lipped. Walter assures Skyler that since he has been found out, he will turn himself in only on the condition that she promises to keep the money for his children. Skyler is the one who assures Walter that although Hank has his suspicions, he has no solid evidence. Hank and Jesse despite having been enemies, are mutually bonded by their interest in taking Walter down. However, Jesse records a statement for Hank and although Gomez, Hank's partner, believes Jesse, he reminds Hank that there is no concrete evidence.

> Hank: *"Yeah, well, no weapons, no bodies, no working lab. Just the word of one nut-job meth-head against Mr Rogers-Has-a-Lung-Tumor."*

Hank's inference here is that the DEA will not believe Jesse, who has a reputation for selling and using drugs, over Walter who is a seemingly normal, suburban dad and respectable teacher. Mr Rogers is a reference to Fred McFeely Rogers, an American television host, producer and Presbyterian minister. Walter masterfully charades around as a Mr Rogers or Mr Chips, allowing him to cast off suspicion and evade the law. Sepinwall says that Jesse's character by design is a "clownish meth cook" but as the narrative progresses, a drastic role reversal sees Jesse transform from a "low-rent crook" to the "conscience of the series" (Sepinwall 2015:87).

Hank and Jesse devise a ploy to convince Walter that Jesse has found the money buried in the desert and is about to set it a light *(To'hajiilee S5 E14).* It is in the earlier episode *Buried (S5 E10)* that we see Walter in the desert burying his fortunes. He uses a GPS tracker to reveal the exact co-ordinates, which he memorises and then smashes the tracker. He later records these co-ordinates on an innocent looking lotto ticket[28]. Hank and Jesse do not really know the location of Walter's money but Walter, believing Jesse is about to destroy it all, drives into the desert a blind rage, inadvertently leading Hank, Jesse and Gomes to the spot. Hank, Gomes and Jesse assume that Walter is apparently

[28] If an audience member were to wonder if these coordinates were real or not, they would discover that they are actually for the Albuquerque Studios where most of *Breaking Bad* was filmed (O'Neal:2013:1).

alone in the desert. Unbeknownst to them, Walter has called Uncle Jack and given him the co-ordinates, wanting him and his gang as backup. A close-up of Walter, shows him hiding behind a rock with a single tear rolling down his cheek. He realises that he has been caught and that there is no way out. This is the moment known as *anagnorisis*, the moment in which the protagonist realises how truly dire his situation is (Aristotle, 335BC [1996]). Walter finally comes out of his hiding place, letting his pistol fall to the floor. Hank slaps on some handcuffs resulting in a proud moment.

In the earlier episode of *Bullet Points (S4 E04)*, when Hank and Walter discuss Gale's lab notes, Hank remarks how badly he wanted to be the one to catch Heisenberg and slap on the handcuffs. Hank refers to the 1971 crime-thriller *The French Connection*, saying that he would be like Popeye Doyle waving goodbye to Frog One. Walter responds saying that Popeye never actually got to catch the bad guy. The same is true for Hank who catches the bad guy but ultimately does not get the chance to see it through. While Hank is arresting Walter, Walter glares at Jesse and spits the word "coward" at him through clenched teeth.

The following episode *Ozymandias (S5 E14)* takes the audience all the way back to the pilot episode where Walter and Jesse are doing their first cook together in the RV. After lecturing Jesse on reactions, Walter leaves the RV, pulls off his apron to reveal his pudgy, pale belly and his 'tighty-whitie' underpants and heads up a dune to make a phone call, practising a fake excuse as to why he will be home late that evening. The scene showing Skyler answering the call, foregrounds a knife block in the scene (Figure 33). Even when Skyler leaves the kitchen, the camera stays intent on the knife block. During the call, Walter and Skyler chat about a family weekend away and they discuss the name of their unborn daughter. Back to the present scene, Walter then fades away, as does Jesse as well as the RV and in its place two cars fade in. The fade works to show a time lapse from Walter and Jesse's first cook to current scene.

The two cars belong to Todd, Uncle Jack and the Nazis. A close-up of a hand plugging up a gushing gun wound zooms out to show Hank, wounded, badly outgunned and not far from him, his partner Gomes lying in the desert dust, fatally wounded. In true AZAC Shrader fashion, Hank does not give up and crawls along the ground to reach a rifle but his efforts are kerbed when Uncle Jack steps on his arm, saying "Simmer down there,

sparky". It is a sarcastic quip considering how slow the wounded Hank is crawling. When one of the Nazis finds Hank's DEA badge, Hank's fate is sealed. All power lies with Uncle Jack which revealed by the camera angle which is tilted up at Uncle Jack, as though the audience were on the ground with Hank, looking up at him.

Walter tries to save Hank by bargaining with Jack, he offers Jack eighty-million dollars if Jack spares Hank his life. Walter pleads with Hank to promise he will let it go and not turn in their operation to the Feds. Hank is not a man who begs, neither is he a man who would let it all go and everyone in the scene knows Hank will not come out alive except for Walter who is in denial.

"Do what you're gonna do -"

The words have hardly left Hanks' lips when the gunshot rings out. The noise is the audience's cue that Hank has been shot, since the audience is not shown the shooting up close. The camera cuts to visuals of the desert as the sound of the gun echoes through the mesa. Walter collapses, paralysed with shock and grief. It is a moment that humbles the great Heisenberg. Walter lays handcuffed and crying on the ground. According to Girard, humility comes from the death of pride (Girard 1956:38). The death of Hank, although devastating, ensured that Hank stayed true to his character even until the very end[29]. Walter, despite many irredeemable acts across the span of the season, proves through his pleading with Jack that he is willing to sacrifice his money for his family but it is too little, too late. Grief-stricken Walter sacrifices Jesse to the Nazis but not before confessing to Jesse that he had watched Jane[30], Jesse's girlfriend die and although he had the ability to save her, he purposely did not. He chooses this moment because he cannot accept any responsibility for his actions and needs somewhere to direct his rage (Sepinwall 2015:103). Writer Wally-Beckett says it is a moment of pure, vile retribution (Sepinwall 2015:103). Walter's decision to tell Jesse about Jane is an

[29] Writer of *Ozymandias (S5 E14)* Walley-Beckett said when the cast got the script, actor Dean Norris who plays Hank, called her up and said, "Thanks for my death, motherfucker. It's great" (Sepinwall 2015:106)

[30] Jane was Jesse's girlfriend and landlady and a recovering heroin addict (Sepinwall 2015:87). In the episode *Phoenix (S2 E12)*, Walter tries to prompt Jesse to stop using drugs. Although Walter cares deeply for Jesse, it is outmatched by Walter's own need for self-preservation. When Walter tries to shake Jesse awake, it causes Jane to roll on to her back and asphyxiate on her own bile. Despite being capable of helping, he does not because Jane had threatened to expose him to his family.

example of sadist behaviour, as described by Girard (Girard 1965:184) where he attempts to reverse his role from victim to mediator and so transform Jesse into the victim. In other words, Hank's death leaves Walter feeling powerless so he must reduce Jesse to victim to regain some of his power.

Uncle Jack and the Nazis recover all Walter's money using the co-ordinates and take five of the six barrels of cash, leaving Walter with one and then burying Gomez and Hank in the hole.

Marie, under the impression that Hank has Walter in custody, forces Skyler to tell Walter Jr the truth. Walter Jr is infuriated and tells Skyler that her having kept this from him makes her just as bad as Walter. Skyler was, at first, opposed to Walter's illegal activities but eventually began to launder the money for Walter. Girard explains that this is because metaphysical desire is contagious so even though Skyler was both shocked and indignant at learning about what Walter was doing, she could not help but be affected by his behaviour (Girard 1965:96-97). When Walter Jr, Skyler and Holly, Walter's baby daughter, arrive home, they find a strange, distressed truck in the driveway with a barrel on the back. Inside Walter is frantically packing suitcases and urging the family to come with him so that they can start over, dismissing questions about the arrest and about Hank. When Skyler discovers that Hank is dead, she realises that she needs to protect Walter Jr and Holly from Walter. She draws a knife from the knife block (Figure 34) that featured at the beginning of the episode. Wielding the carving knife, she holds Walter Jr back and demands that Walter leave. Walter insists Skyler put the knife down, making false promises that they will be safe. Writer Walley-Becket and actress Anna Gunn playing Skyler, conferred on set and chose to add the line, "Don't say one more word" in response to Walter who constantly lied and told stories, causing chaos and avoiding blame (Sepinwall 2015:104). Walley-Beckett says that last-minute additions on the set on *Breaking Bad* were rare but that that line was so powerful that they wrote it in (Sepinwall 2015:104).

Walter assumes Skyler is bluffing and tries to take the knife away but instead she slashes his hand. Walter lunges at her out of rage and the two become entangled in a struggle for the knife, rolling across the living room floor. The camera tracks the movement and the audience is immersed suddenly and violently in the momentum of

the scene. The camera moves to show the struggle from above, completely out of focus giving the feeling of disorientation and uncertainty. Walter pegs Skyler down, his one hand on her chest and the other holding the knife. Until this point, Junior had been passively standing in the hallway pleading with his parents to stop but he lunges at his dad, tackling him off Skyler. Junior puts his arm out to protect Skyler while Holly begins to cry in the background. Walter bellows in indignation:

"What the hell is wrong with you?! We're a family!"

The camera pans back to Skyler and Junior in the living room. Skyler has Walter's blood on her sleeve, she is crying and tightly clutching Junior's arm while Junior takes a protective stance in front of her. Both of them are breathing heavily with Holly still wailing in the background. After a seven second pause, Walter says again:

"We're a family…"

Figure 33: The knife block in the foreground of Skyler and Walter's cal, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screenshot by author.

Figure 34: Skyler goes to take a knife from the knife block to use as a weapon, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

This time it comes out as a weak, hushed whisper as Walter looks at his family and realises that this is no longer true. In a last-ditch effort to save what is left of his family, Walter grabs Holly and her diaper bag and leaves while Skyler runs after him into the street, desperately pleading with Walter not to take her. Walley-Beckett explains that Walter is not punishing Skyler by taking Holly but that Holly is all that he has left (Sepinwall 2015:105). In the scene where Walter changes Holly's diaper, the script relied on Holly's innocent expression to convince Walter that he had made a mistake but instead, the infant actress floored directors and writers by playing right into the moment and repeatedly crying out the word, "Mama" (Sepinwall 2015:109). Holly repeating the word again and again is strongly contrasted by Walter's line:

> *"Say, 'Da-da'. 'Da-da'. You say, 'da-da?'"*

Walter realises that Holly needs her mother, so he leaves her at a fire station, but not before phoning Skyler first. "You stupid b*tch!" he yells into the phone. Walter goes on to say that Skyler has no right to discuss anything he has done because he built his empire himself, with nobody else. The insult is jarring but the call is not without purpose. Walter makes a point of absolving Skyler of her involvement because he is sure that the police are listening to the call. One last time, Skyler asks Walter what happened to Hank and the question makes Walter choke back tears. Walter pauses briefly, regains his bravado and replies gruffly:

> *"You're never going to see Hank again. He crossed me. You think about that. Family or no. You let that sink in."*

Tears stream down his face and with quivering hands he ends the call and destroys his phone, which infers that he was aware that the call was being traced by police and that his intention was ultimately to absolve Skyler.

Hank being killed is the *peripeteia* of the story, which is to say that it is the instance which reverses the audience's expectations which were set up by *To'hajiilee (S5 E13)*. The audience was sure that Walter was caught out, that the law and moral justice had finally prevailed, only to watch the Nazis wipe out Hank and Gomes on a whim and take Jesse to be their prisoner.

Walter had originally intended for the Nazis to kill Jesse but when Jesse had become unavailable, a process of sacrificial substitution takes place and a new scapegoat is chosen against which violence is directed. Although Walter should be angry at Uncle Jack, he directs his rage at Jesse so that Jesse too becomes a scapegoat. *Ozymandias (S5 E14)* sees Walter lose everything, his wife and children, his brother-in-law, his partner Jesse and almost all of his money. The episode is named after a poem by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley written in 1818 which details the inevitable fall of kings and empires.

> *My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:*
> *Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!*
> *Nothing beside remains. Round the decay*
> *Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare*

Walter ends up alone on an Albuquerque hillside with a barrel of money and no one who loves him. As a masochist, Walter ascribes little value to himself and believes that he deserves punishment, even if he cries out in indignation when it occurs (Girard 1965:177). Walter's masochistic tendencies have effectively caused him to desire and pursue obstacles and push away all those who showed Walter love and affection (Girard 1965:177-178).

To summarise, Walter has been on a path of self-destruction for quite some time and it is at this point in the narrative that we see Walter lose everything, his family, his money and his empire. Walter is incapable of ever taking blame or admitting fault and in turn he turns those around him into scapegoats. The contagious nature of the mimetic mechanism also means that those surrounding Walter have become implicated in ways they did not deserve. A very obvious scapegoat is Gale who is marked as an obscurity by a set of cultural markers of differentiation. Walter's other scapegoats are Hank, Jesse and Skyler. The fourth and final moment of the mimetic mechanism is the scapegoat resolution which sees Walter sacrifice Jesse to the Nazi gang.

4.8 The Transformation: Mr Chips to Scarface

After the happenings in *Ozymandias (S5 E14)*, Walter disappears to New Hampshire, going by the pseudonym Mr Lambert. Walter is all over the news and all law officials are on the lookout for him. Walter remains isolated in a cabin in the snowy mountains with no contact with the outside world. Walter's family home in Albuquerque has become a tourist attraction of sorts and Skyler and the children now live in a small apartment while Skyler works part time as a taxi dispatcher *(Granite State S5 E15)*. Walter, not wanting everything he has done to have been for nothing, attempts to mail what remaining money he has left to his family. He phones Walter Jr who now goes by the name Flynn and tells him that money is on its way. Flynn goes into a blind rage, saying over and over again:

> *"You killed Uncle Hank! You killed him."*

Before ending the call, Flynn yells into the phone:

> *"Why won't you just die already? Just…just die!"*

Defeated after Flynn hangs up, Walter phones the police asking to speak to the investigator in charge of the Walter White case revealing to the operator that it is Walter White phoning. He leaves the phone dangling, knowing that the DEA will follow up and find him at the bar. It seems Walter has finally turned himself in. He orders a drink while he waits and happens to see Gretchen and Elliot Schwartz on the television doing

an interview. Gretchen is Walter's ex-girlfriend and Elliot his ex-business partner and college science partner.

Walter and Elliot had won a Nobel prize for their contribution to a study on proton radiography and subsequently started a company afterwards called Gray Matter Technologies. Walter however accepted a buyout from the company following a hiccup with his then girlfriend Gretchen due to feelings of inferiority around the wealth of her family. Elliot and Gretchen married sometime after Walter's departure. Walter harbours resentment and bitterness around the entire scenario.

The interviewer is curious to know if the $28 million-dollar grant made by the Gretchen and Elliot Schwartz Foundation for drug-abuse treatment centres is a publicity stunt to disassociate Gray Matter Technologies from Walter White. Elliot goes on to say that Walter made no contribution to the founding of the company, besides the name. The camera foregrounds Walter's tightly clenched fist as he grows more and more enraged. When sheriffs show up at the bar, guns cocked, they enter to find nothing. The only trace of Walter is his half-finished drink on the bar top. The half-finished drink is a symbol for Walter leaving things in Albuquerque half-finished.

Felina (S5 E16) comes after Walter has reported himself to authorities, which sees police search New Hampshire high and low. Walter uses this as a distraction to return to Albuquerque. Walter climbs into a car and attempts to start it with a screwdriver he finds in a cubbyhole alongside a Marty Robbins biggest hits cassette tape cover. The song that plays when Walter starts the car is titled *El Paso*

> *I saddled up*
> *And away I did go*
> *Riding alone in the dark*
> *Maybe tomorrow*
> *A bullet may find me*
> *Tonight nothing's worse*
> *Than this pain in my heart*

The song foreshadows Walter's fate wherein he will be struck by a stray bullet. The song also parallels Walter's story as it is about an outlaw who returns to where he

committed his crimes, despite the risk of being caught. The song tells the tale of a cowboy who falls in love with a 'Mexican girl' named 'Feleena[31]' (Solomon 2013:1). For love and out of jealousy, the cowboy kills a man who shares a drink with this Feleena and then realising what he has done, flees to New Mexico (Solomon 2013:1). The outlaw cowboy decides to return since he misses her so much despite the threat of either death or being caught (Solomon 2013:1).

Following the interview on TV, Walter pays Gretchen and Elliot an unexpected visit. He obtains their address by assuming the identity of a New York Time's writer, David Linn. When Gretchen and Elliot arrive home, engaged in some meaningless banter about takeaway food, they stroll right past Walter's shadowy figure. Walter lets himself in after them and closes the very grand doors of their home. Walter closing the doors symbolizes that Gretchen and Elliot now have no way out of the situation about to unfold. Walter wanders through the home nonchalantly looking at framed pictures until eventually Gretchen sees him and screams, which beckons Elliot over. Walter makes Gretchen and Elliot collect the money he has left in his car and stack it on their coffee table. Walter insists that Gretchen and Elliot give the money to his son in the form of an irrevocable college trust since his family wants nothing to do with him and it would be seized by the government if he tried to give it to them himself. Walter very explicitly tells Gretchen and Elliot that they are never to add any of their own money to Walter's.

Walter: *"They use my money, never yours."*

Walter's insistence on the Schwartz's using his money and not their own comes from a place of pride.

Just before Walter leaves, he looks out into the back garden and signals. Red sniper dots appear on Gretchen and Elliots' chests. Walter informs Elliot and Gretchen that he has paid the "two best hit-men west of the Mississippi" to keep an eye on them and make

[31] There are theories, especially manifested by fans, that the difference in spelling between Feleena and Felina may be attributed to the fact that Felina works as an anagram for "finale" and Felina is the final episode concluding the series. Another of the theories is that Felina could be read as elements from the periodic table, which is a popular motif in Breaking Bad appearing especially in the title sequence. Fe is iron, Li is lithium and Na is for sodium so the composite Felina could stand for "blood, meth and tears," (Solomon 2013:1), putting a Breaking Bad twist on the popular saying, "blood, sweat and tears" which means "hard work"

sure that they follow through on their promise of getting the money to Walter's family. A small nod from Walter and the sniper dots disappear. When Walter leaves, Skinny Pete and Badger run out of Gretchen and Elliot's garden and hop into the car just before handing back to Walter their penlight lasers. This tells the audience that there are in fact no snipers keeping tabs on the Schwartz pair, but they are motivated by fear alone to carry out Walter's request. A conversation with Skinny Pete and Badger reveals that blue meth is still being sold on the market and Walter figures out that Jesse is still alive, despite Uncle Jack having promised to kill Jesse.

In *Felina (S5 E16),* Walter is sitting at a Denny's having breakfast; the scene is already a familiar one to the audience since it was shown as a prolepsis in *Live Free or Die (S5 E01).* Walter takes his streaky bacon and tears it into little pieces and then puts these back together in the form of a "52." When the waiter asks Walter what happened, he tells her in a flat tone, "It's my birthday." The bacon numbers are a recurring motif in *Breaking Bad* which work well to communicate a timeline to the audience. Further than that, they are indicative of Walter's relationship with his family at the current moment.

The first appearance of bacon numbers is in the pilot episode. Skyler puts down a plate of scrambled eggs with bacon strips on top that form a "50" (Figure 35). As she places the plate down, she plants a kiss on Walter's cheek. It is a sweet moment that shows that Skyler cares about Walter. The next occurrence of the bacon numbers is in Season five, in *Fifty-One (S5 E4).* Skyler places a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon in front of Walter with no numbers present. Walter Jr insists that Skyler make the bacon numbers for Walter and Walter supplements the sentiment with, "It is kind of a tradition." Begrudgingly, Skyler stands up and creates the numbers for Walter. Skyler is trying to oblige Walter Jr so that he does not suspect that things are drastically wrong with the Whites' marriage. The scrambled eggs take up considerably less of the plate than the year before and the numbers are thrown on, without all the love and craft from the year before (Figure 36). The last motif of bacon numbers is the "52" (Figure 37) that Walter makes for himself in *Felina (S5 E16),* where he is alone and has no one who loves him anymore.

Figure 35: Walter' breakfast for his 50th birthday, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

Figure 36: Walter' breakfast for his 51st birthday, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

Figure 37: Walter' breakfast for his 52nd birthday, *Breaking Bad*. 2008. Screen shot by author.

The camera begins to pan through a dark, colourless apartment while a phone rings in the background. It is the new White residence. The audience sees Skyler smoking a cigarette in her kitchen, picking up the call to hear Marie's news about Walter. Marie warns Skyler that Walter is in town and that he might be after Skyler or Flynn. Skyler thanks Marie and ends the call as the camera pans to show Walter already standing in the middle of her kitchen. Skyler lights another cigarette. The cigarette is a symbol for Skyler's own downfall caused by Walter. Skyler is found out in *Breakage (S02 E05)* for smoking while pregnant. She admits that she smoked three and a half cigarettes and chucked the rest and that she is ashamed of herself but by *Felina*, she has fully submitted to chain-smoking. In other words, the cigarettes are a cue which infer shame at first and resignation by the end - Skyler has given up and lost all hope.

Walter gives Skyler the lotto ticket with the coordinates for Hank and Steve's burial site and tells her to trade the information for a deal with the prosecutor. Walter then divulges something that Skyler and the audience probably never imagined Walter acknowledging to himself, let alone admitting out loud.

> Walter: *All the things that I did, you need to understand—*
>
> Skyler: *If I have to hear one more time that you did this for the family—*
>
> Walter: *I did it for me.*

The admission catches Skyler completely off guard as she stares up at Walter in disbelief.

> Walter: *I liked it. I was good at it. And … I was…really. I was alive.*

Walter's last wish is to see Holly. He strokes her hair while she sleeps in her cot while tears well in his eyes. Skyler looks on with tears in her own eyes, and Walter leaves silently. Walter watches from a distance as Flynn makes his way from the school bus and into the house. It is Walter's final goodbye to his family.

Walter arrives at Uncle Jack's house under the pretence of teaching Jack a new way of cooking meth which does not need methylamine. Walter is driving a Cadillac Sedan Deville which is a renowned gangster car, often making appearances in the American

crime drama series *The Sopranos*. One of the Nazis frisks Walter before they go inside, discovering only Walter's keys and wallet on his person. Jack tells Walter that they are not interested in what he is offering and are just about to kill him when Walter calls Jack out for partnering with Jesse. Uncle Jack takes this to be an insult and demands Todd bring Jesse to show Walter that Jesse is no more than a slave to them, far from being an equal partner. Walter and Jesse see each other again for the first time since *Ozymandias (S5 E14)*, where Walter not only demanded that the Nazis kill Jesse but also tortured Jesse with the information that he could have saved Jane and did not. Without warning, Walter tackles Jesse to the ground. Walter pushes the button on his car remote, setting off the rifle he has rigged to a mechanical arm. Bullets tear through the side of the house knocking out almost every single one of the white supremacist gang, save for Todd. Jesse strangles Todd to death with his shackles while Walter picks up a handgun to confront a wounded but still alive Uncle Jack.

Uncle Jack thinks he is indispensable to Walter since he knows where Walter's money is.

> Jack: *You pull that trigger, you'll never—*

Walter fires the shot right through Jack's head and the blood seems to splatter right on the screen. This is referred to as "breaking the fourth wall" which is a technique which engages the viewer in a way that makes them seem part of the scene; it is as though the viewers are pulled into the gore of the shooting (Sepinwall 2015:91), a popular tactic used throughout *Breaking Bad*.

Walter slides the handgun over to Jesse which Jesse picks up and points at Walter with tears in his eyes. Walter tells Jesse to shoot him because it is what Jesse wants. However, Jesse, tired of the torture and manipulation tells Walter that if he wants to die, he can do it himself. Jesse throws down the handgun, finally free of the physical chains the Nazis put on him and of the mental ones that Walter had inflicted. It is a scene that strongly contrasts that of *End Times (S4 E12)*, which also saw Jesse point a gun at Walter. In *End Times (S4 E12*), Jesse wants to shoot Walter because he has harmed Brock but Walter manipulates Jesse into believing Walter is not capable of such a thing. In *Felina (S5 E16)* Jesse can no longer be manipulated into doing what Walter wants

him to do, instead he gets to decide for himself what he wants. Jesse drives off in an El Camino. A wounded Walter staggers off to see the meth lab. He has a tiny smile on his face as looks at the equipment. He picks up a ventilator mask, not unlike the one he wore in the pilot episode when he cooked up the first ever batch of Sky Blue and the song *Baby Blue* by *Badfinger* begins playing:

> *Guess I got*
> *What I deserved*
> *Kept you waiting there*
> *Too long, my love*
> *[…]*
> *Didn't know you'd think*
> *That I'd forget*
> *Or I'd regret*
> *The special love*
> *I had for you*

Through the doors of the lab, a string of police cars can be seen approaching from a distance. Walter places his hand fondly on a large boiler, as he slips off a smear of blood. All along, Walter's love was for cooking meth. The camera gets an aerial shot of Walter, dead on the floor with a tear running down his cheek (Figure 39). The camera zooms out to show his whole body, the shot is very similar to that used in *Crawl Space (S4 E11)*, which sees Walt lying on the floor laughing maniacally as the camera gets higher and higher (Figure 38). Cranston said of the moment in *Crawl Space* that Walter White died in that moment and from his ashes rose his true inner self, Heisenberg. *Felina*, is then the ultimate death of Heisenberg, the real Walter White.

Figure 38: Walter laughing manically in the crawl space beneath his house, *Breaking Bad*. 2008.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 39: Walter dead on the floor, *Breaking Bad.* 2008.
Screen shot by author.

The transformation of Walter White from the pilot episode through to the series finale, *Felina (S5 E16),* reveals Walter's pseudo-identification of pride. Fleming (2004:14) describes how a character's actions and behaviours seem at first to be motivated by justifiable, external circumstances which call for imitation. When we first meet Walter, he is overqualified but underpaid; he is suddenly stricken with inoperable, stage-four lung cancer despite never having smoked (Restivo 2019:1); he has a son with cerebral palsy, an unexpected baby on the way and he works a humiliating second job at a car wash often having to wait on his own students (Sepinwall 2015:86). Walter's character is introduced as "the identifiable suburban dad under enormous pressure" (Sepinwall 2015:86). Sepinwall substantiates that although Walter's methods are shocking, the audience can understand what drives Walter (Sepinawall 2015:86).

Walter lies to himself from the pilot episode until the finale, believing always that his actions are motivated by love for his family when in fact they are motivated by his love for cooking meth and spurred on by his own selfish pursuit of pride and self-sufficiency. As Fleming argues, pride is the pursuit of distinction. Walter's downfall or *hamartia* is his pursuit for distinction, for respect and self-sufficiency (Fleming 2004:15).

4.9 Core theoretical insights

By using narratology and mimetic theory simultaneously as hermeneutic lenses, the research has been allowed to explore the relationship between representational mimesis in the form of *syuzhet and* develop subsequent fabula by applying mimetic theory. In other words, the dual hermeneutic lens bridges the gap between what is represented and seen and what is communicated and understood in terms of imitative behaviour driven by desire. Not only does the dual hermeneutic bridge the gap, it reveals the way in which they reveal the interdependent nature of narratology and mimetic theory in developing a successful reading of a character transformation. The *syuzhet* functions to communicate inferences and these inferences are read through mimetic theory which is then transcribed into this research. This shows that visuality as a form of representational mimesis extends the value of mimetic theory and that language, as Heywood and Sandywell suggest, extends the value of both representational mimesis and mimetic theory.

The analysis has shown that visual symbols are capable of communicating intricate, nuanced and layered concepts pertinent to mimetic theory. To demonstrate this, consider again the use of the colour green. It is *syuzhet* which very quickly communicates the concept of greed and envy. In order to uncover the concept of greed and envy in terms of mimetic theory requires more effort. This is to say that representational mimesis should not be dismissed, as Girard dismisses it, as a failure to to understand imitation. Girard is of the belief that representational mimesis is a failure since it does not consider the function of desire within imitation but this research demonstrates that the different views of mimesis, according to Girard, Plato and Aristotle, need not replace one another and need not be mutually exclusive either. Where each of these philosopher's versions of mimesis overlap, it produces a lens that

allows for a truly insightful interpretation of a character, more specifically a character's transformation. The golden thread for this research is mimesis. *Breaking Bad* has actors and a set which imitate reality, this is mimesis in the way Plato figured it as a twice-removed imitation of reality. This is the same as Baboulene's mimetic narration. The *Breaking Bad* series is a simulated reality but it bleeds into the real world through paratext, for example like this research. This is like mimesis in the way Aristotle perceives it, where rather than as poor imitation of reality the mimesis is an extension of reality which brings with it insight, knowledge and beauty. Representational mimesis by Plato and Aristotle is the foundation on which narratology rests. The *Breaking Bad* protagonist transforms from protagonist into antagonist motivated by mimetic desire. The notable moments that mark the character transformation are visual and behavioural. Narratology and mimetic theory as a dual hermeneutic lens enhance the ability to understand character transformation.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of chapters

This research consisted of five chapters including this conclusion. The first chapter served as an outline and brief introduction to each of the topics covered in the succeeding chapters. It began by outlining the core argument of the research. The research argues that where narrative subscribes to Bordwell's canonical story format, that the goals defined by the protagonist, as well as the protagonist's obstacles and conflicts are mimetically charged. By using narratology we may unpack the visuals to make sense of the inherent mimetic mechanism. The research argues that in a canonical story format narrative, a character's transformation from when they set their goals to when their goals are either achieved or not, can be better understood if viewed through the lens of mimetic theory. Mimetic theory describes what happens when a character sets goals, how he comes to desire these goals in the first place, how he tries to achieve them, how he faces obstacles and rivals and becomes implicated in conflict and eventually comes to find some sort of resolution by the end. The mimetic mechanism affords us the ability to really explore the intricacies of Walter's transformation from Walter to Heisenberg, or Mr Chips to Scarface. The first chapter briefly outlined the premise of *Breaking Bad* as a series. Without the premise of the series, it might be difficult for a reader to immerse themselves in the analysis without feeling as though they are lacking context.

The first chapter also outlined the aims and objectives of the research which were to synthesise mimetic theory as a framework and hermeneutic lens as well as narratology as a hermeneutic lens. It briefly outlined the theory for each of the topics before delving into them in subsequent chapters. It introduced the names of the theorists consulted throughout the research since a full literature review was only done on René Girard.

Lastly, the chapter outlined the structure of Chapter four, the analysis chapter and gave some insight into why the structure was relevant. Walter's quote, "Well that's all of life right? I mean, it's just the constant, it's the cycle. It's solution, dissolution, just over and over and over. It is growth, then decay, then transformation" perfectly sums up the trajectory of the character transformation of Walter White and so aptly informed the

structure for the analysis of this transformation. Walter goes from finding a solution to his financial burdens, to dissolving his moral resolve, to growing the largest methamphetamine empire in American history to losing everything and then by the season finale, coming full circle and completing the transformation from Walter to Heisenberg to Mr Lambert and back to Walter.

The second chapter is a literature review of René Girard. It discusses at length René Girard's history and how he came to develop mimetic theory and what inspired it. The chapter also reviewed Girard's works in contrast to his contemporaries to discern whether the research was totally original or not and decided that Girard took cues from Augustine with regard to man's propensity for violence and that he did not develop mimesis, which was conceived first by Plato but he did reconfigure mimesis as more than a simple means of representation. Girard's mimetic theory is considered original. It poses the question around whether the theory should be considered multi or interdisciplinary, ultimately arriving at the conclusion that it is interdisciplinary, which is to say that it is a grand unified theory which analyses and synthesises links from a plethora of disciplines. After contextualising the man behind the theory, the research delved into an explication of the body of terminology tied to the theory.

Chapter three contained a synthesis of narratology which is simply the study of narrative as a genre. Narratology was used to discuss the story arc of Walter White from when he sets his goals to when he encounters obstacles and conflict and eventually how he comes to resolve these things. Narratology affords the research the ability to home in on all the visual cues of the series which are pertinent to uncovering the mimetic mechanism. It helped us understand the structure of the story by using Fludenik's criteria, Bordwell's canonical story format and Aristotle's '*hamartia*', '*anagnorisis*' and '*peripeteia*', amongst others.

Chapter four explored the *Breaking Bad* series in depth, using narratology to unpack the structure of the narrative and using the mimetic lens to understand the character transformation of Walter White. In *A Solution: Clear as the Blue Sky* the research unpacked Walter's shame which is inextricably tied to pride. This subchapter uncovered how Walter's shame caused him to desire respect and power or more aptly, ontological self-sufficiency. At the outset, we believe that Walter's goal was to make money to

support his family when he passes away with cancer. We know from the pilot episode that Walter's goal was money and his obstacles included terminal cancer, financial strain, an inferiority complex, regret at having given up his shares in a very successful company.

Having outlined Walter's mimetic desire in the first subchapter, the second subchapter concerned itself with mimetic rivalry. It discussed at length Walter's troublesome relationship with Gustavo Fring in which Gustavo is both a model that Walter admires and covets as well as a rival who stands in the way as he tries to obtain his object, power. Walter and Gustavo's relationship produces a double imperative which means Walter and Gustavo become doubles of one another until the inevitable eruption of violence.

The third subchapter *Growth: The Empire of Heisenberg*, briefly explored Walter's transformation from masochist into sadist. Walter is no longer a submissive subject in the mimetic triangle as he is now operating from the top as the model who possesses power. He turns those he has outranked into victims in the same way he felt a victim under Gustavo. Walter has become the Proustian snob, both arrogant in power and indifferent to the suffering and damage he causes.

The fourth subchapter, *Decay: The Crumbling Legacy of Ozymandias* discussed Walter's mimetic scapegoats who are mainly Hank, Skyler and Jesse. It discussed Walter *hamartia* as pride. His *anagnorisis* comes when his actions cost Hank his life; it is a moment that truly humbles the great Heisenberg, reducing him to mere Walter White. Another instance of *peripeteia*[32] occurs in *Granite State (S5 E15)*, when Walter turns himself in to the authorities and the audience thinks he has finally done the right thing but expectations are totally reversed when the authorities arrive and Walter has taken off. *Felina (S5 E16)* does everything the audience may not have expected. Walter

[32] Over the course of the series there are a few instances of *peripeteia*, which is to say incidents which reverse the expectations of the audience. The most notable instance of *peripetia*, as was highlighted in chapter 4, is Walter's failed arrest, Hank's death and the capture of Jesse (*Ozymandias S5 E14)*. In terms of the overall narrative, this is the most important moment of *peripeteia.* Walter turning himself in to the authorities is another incident which sets the audience up for a reversal in expectation as Walter again evades the law *(Granite State S5 E15).* It is not as remarkable an example of peripeteia as the death of Hank but it is worth noting.

returns to see his family; he avenges Hank's death by killing the Nazi gang and freeing Jesse. However, Walter does not die of cancer, which is a total reversal of what the audience was expecting.

The final subchapter, *The Transformation: Mr Chips to Scarface,* concerned itself with mimetic resolution or otherwise, how the violence culminating over the series of the narrative is finally resolved.

The research concluded that Walter's transformation subscribes to Bordwell's canonical story format in that it sets out the protagonist's goals, obstacles, conflict and resolution and that by using the mimetic lens, we have been able to reveal the mimetic mechanism at play. It concludes that by delving into visual culture we are able to use hermeneutics, to draw out meaning and to develop a better understanding of the human condition.

5.2 Contribution of study

This research was fundamentally concerned with character transformation and revealed this by drawing a connection between Bordwell's canonical story format and the mimetic mechanism. Further than this, it challenged Girard's decision to neglect representational mimesis. It showed that Plato and Aristotle offer variations of mimesis that may be used not only in conjunction with, but almost interdependently, with mimetic theory to develop a comprehensive reading of a visual text. The research has shown that there is benefit in using narratology to uncover representational mimesis as Plato and Aristotle figured mimesis. After using narratology as a hermeneutic lens, we are able to layer mimetic theory as a hermeneutic lens over this to produce a truly novel hermeneutic lens. The overlap of the lenses is imitation, this is to say that the audience's attention is being drawn to imitation in the form of external, visual representation and to imitation in the form of behavioural constitution governed by mimetic theory. It far extends the reading of the transformation of the protagonist.

5.3 Limitations of study

The core argument is that a narrative which subscribes to the structure of Bordwell's canonical story format, is intrinsically tied to the mimetic mechanism. By using

narratology as a tool in unpacking the visual, we may use mimetic theory to really understand character transformation as the character navigates Bordwell's structure.

The study firstly is limited by its scope of application. To really test if this argument holds ground, would mean applying this argument to a broad spectrum of television series or even narratives in general. The series used for this case study is a largely Western medium production with a mostly Western cast. It would be worth exploring this argument as applied to non-Western medium productions. It is also limited in that it does not consider every single episode of the series, only those considered most pertinent to the argument. The risk here is that some valuable insights may have been in those excluded episodes.

5.4 Suggestions to further or improve the study

It is suggested, certainly even invited, that the structure and core argument of this research be applied to different narratives which subscribe to Bordwell's canonical story format to see if the same results are revealed. Is there always a character transformation from when we first learn the protagonist's goals to when they come near to achieving them? Are the character's goals tied to desire and the mimetic triangle? Are the character's obstacles and conflicts revealed as mimetic rivalry?

A way in which this research can be improved and extended is by formulating a set of criteria or list of questions which may be repeated across a series of case studies to create sets of comparable results. Bordwell's canonical story format is already set up this way so it might become more of a case of asking the right questions around the mimetic mechanism in order to reveal it in narrative in relation to the canonical story format.

It may be argued that the research relies very heavily on retelling and not as much on analysis. To this point, it is worth noting that the research aligns with the believes of Aristotle and Heywood and Sandywell who suggest that the recounting of events through language extends our understanding of them. A possible way of improving this may be to recount the narrative as appendices and use the body of the research to develop a more thorough analysis. Further than this, research could be encouraged to

review television criticism itself and address gaps in the framework to formulate something contemporary and capable of better reviewing, analysing and critiquing serial television.

A FINAL WORD

My research journey has, in many ways, mirrored the monologue by Walter that guides the flow of this research. When I started out, I had a solution in mind and I was certain of it but I quickly came to find that research is not straight forward, it demands attention and the difficulties I faced almost dissolved my resolution entirely. From it came many lessons which helped me grow and the growth was indeed necessary. Last year this time, I thought I had done enough to be able to close this chapter of my life but I came to realise that my research was not ready and a violent string of unexpected circumstances caused what progress I had on my research to fall into ruin and decay, not unlike Ozymandias. The journey that this research has taken me on has truly altered me. The transformation has been remarkable and unmistakable.

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