

WALTER WHITE'S MORAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE BREAKING BAD SERIES: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS BASED ON FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S SIX TASKS OF THE CAMEL SPIRIT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the moral transformation of Walter White in the Breaking Bad series through a semiotic analysis based on Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the "Six Tasks of the Camel Spirit" as outlined in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. The research aims to explore how Walter White's character evolves from a mild-mannered teacher into a ruthless figure, driven by a personal quest for power and control, by analyzing the visual and narrative signs that represent his psychological, moral, and ideological changes. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, the study decodes the denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings in key scenes that mark crucial moments of transformation in Walter's character. Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly the tasks related to self-overcoming and the rejection of herd morality, provides a philosophical lens through which Walter's moral journey is understood. The findings highlight how Breaking Bad represents a complex interplay between visual symbolism, narrative structure, and moral philosophy, shedding light on the ways in which media shapes and reflects individual and collective values. This study contributes to the field of media and cultural studies by offering a critical model for understanding moral transformations in contemporary television narratives.

KEYWORDS

Walter White, moral transformation, Breaking Bad, semiotics, Nietzsche, Six Tasks of the Camel Spirit



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INTRODUCTION

In the study of media and representation, film has a strategic position as an object of semiotic analysis because the structure of film is built on the basis of a sign system (Rudy, 2022; Dirgantara, 2020). Thus, film not only functions as a medium of entertainment, information, or academic value, but also as a vehicle for moral conveyance to the audience (Basari & Fauziah, 2023). Films often convey ethical messages both explicitly through dialogue and narrative, and implicitly through the moral consequences of the characters' actions (Juniatri & Wahyuni, 2022; Aprilia et al., 2022). Morality in this context encompasses the principles that are considered good and right in society, which are formed through social, cultural, and historical processes, as well as interactions with dominant religions and values (Nugraheni et al., 2023). Morality is dynamic and contextual, depending on the social and ideological conditions that surround the individual (Liya Umaroh & Maulida, 2021; Harahap & Alfikri, 2024).

Through the representation of characters and the dynamics of the storyline, films like *Breaking Bad* are able to depict the moral struggle between adherence to social norms and personal will, as well as between traditional values and modernity (Symonds, 2019; Nietzsche on Film, 2017). The *Breaking Bad* series stands out for its depiction of the character of Walter White, a chemistry teacher who transforms into a major criminal figure. His transformation is not described explicitly, but rather through psychological developments, visual symbols, and narratives that blur the boundaries between ethics and pragmatism (Bondebjerg, 2015; Barthes, 1981). A similar phenomenon can be found in Indonesia, where many teachers who, despite

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their profession should be appreciated, face great challenges such as low salaries and limited welfare. This creates a moral dilemma that encourages pragmatic behavior, as seen in the character of Walter White (Gunadarma University, 2025).

Breaking Bad is an American crime drama series created by Vince Gilligan and aired on the AMC television network from January 20, 2008, to September 29, 2013, with a total of five seasons and 62 episodes. The series is set in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and follows the moral transformation of Walter White, a chemistry teacher who, after being diagnosed with stage three lung cancer, decides to produce and sell methamphetamine in order to secure his family's financial future (ResearchGate, 2024). In media and cultural studies, key figures such as Walter White not only serve as the driving force of the storyline, but also as symbolic constructions that represent certain moral values (Reframing Crime Drama, 2024).

Roland Barthes's approach to semiotics and Friedrich Nietzsche's existential philosophy are used in this study to examine the symbols and ideologies in *Breaking Bad*, with Barthes considering that each element in the medium contains denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings (Barthes, 1981; Harahap & Alfikri, 2024), while Nietzsche offers the concept of moral transvaluation through the six tasks of the camel spirit in *Zarathustra's Words* that highlight the process of individual moral transformation (Derrida, 1979; Rodowick, 2010). Through the synergy of these two approaches, this study aims to analyze Walter White's moral transformation, identifying visual and narrative signs that represent the psychological, moral, and ideological changes of his character (Liya Umaroh & Maulida, 2021; Cohen, 2009). This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of media and cultural studies, as well as to enrich interdisciplinary discourses that associate symbolic analysis with ethical reflection in the context of contemporary media (Reframing Crime Drama, 2024; Gunadarma University, 2025).

Research on film, morality, and philosophical approaches has been widely conducted in various contexts, but no studies have been found that specifically combine Nietzsche's philosophy with a semiotic approach to analyzing television series, especially *Breaking Bad* (Nietzsche on Film, 2017; Symonds, 2019). Studies of Nietzsche's thought, for example, have focused a lot on the concept of *Übermensch* in the context of social and general ethics. Several previous studies have addressed Friedrich Nietzsche's thought in the context of popular culture, particularly through philosophical approaches in film and television analysis (Cohen, 2009). Some of them highlight concepts such as the will to power or the *Übermensch* in fictional characters, but generally only use a singular philosophical approach. On the other hand, the study of Roland Barthes' semiotics has also been widely applied in analyzing signs and meanings in visual media (Rudy, 2022; Harahap & Alfikri, 2024). Although both of these approaches have strong interpretive potential, as far as the author's research goes, no research has been found that explicitly combines Nietzsche's philosophy with Barthes's semiotics in a single analytic framework, particularly in examining the moral transformation of Walter White in the *Breaking Bad* series.

This research aims to elaborate on Walter White's moral philosophy in the *Breaking Bad* series based on the Six Duties of the *Camel Spirit* as explained by Nietzsche through his book *Zarathustra's Words*. The focus of this research is to analyze how the visual and narrative semiotic elements in the series depict the transformation of Walter White's character, as well

as how his moral journey reflects the six duties of the *camel spirit* depicted in Nietzsche's work. The theoretical benefit of this research is that it contributes to the study of media and popular culture by combining Barthes' semiotic approach and Nietzsche's philosophy to analyze the moral development of fictional characters, as well as enriching academic perspectives in understanding values, identities, and ethical conflicts in television narratives.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method to examine in depth the phenomenon of character morality in popular media, with a focus on Walter White's moral transformation in the *Breaking Bad* series. This approach allowed researchers to explore narrative and symbolic contexts in detail, so as to capture the complexity of character changes in a holistic way. The subject of this research was the representation of Walter White's character, who underwent a complex change in moral values, while the object of research was the moral transformation experienced by the main character throughout the development of the storyline. Data was collected through visual documentation methods, observing and analyzing important scenes in the series that were directly related to Walter White's psychological and ethical changes. Visual elements such as facial expressions, costumes, and lighting were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to uncover implicit meanings that were not always conveyed literally.

The data analysis technique used was the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes, which examined how signs function in forming meaning. The analysis was carried out through three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. The main focus was on Walter White's transformative moments, such as the extreme decision-making and violent acts that marked his change in moral status. With Barthes' approach, this analysis not only revealed the story, but also reproduced values and ideologies related to power, responsibility, and free will. Denotations explained the literal meaning of symbols, connotations provided a more subjective dimension of meaning, and myth described cultural or social narratives that connected symbols to broader meanings in human life. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used data triangulation techniques and methods.

Data obtained from visual observations were compared and verified with other written sources, such as interviews with producers, film criticism, and relevant philosophical theories. This triangulation was used to avoid interpretive bias and ensured the accuracy of the meaning of symbols with a variety of theoretical perspectives, especially in the realms of semiotics and existential philosophy. The data analysis unit in this study was the key scenes in *Breaking Bad* that represented Walter White's moral transformation process, where analysis was carried out both visually and textually on the symbols, narratives, and dialogues in the series to reveal the moral and existential meanings contained in character development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Semiotic Analysis on the Scene

First Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Walter White's character is standing in front of the class wearing glasses and a gray knitted sweater and a collared shirt can be seen behind him. There are three glass bottles of

hujau, blue, and red that are placed on the table. In the background there is a blackboard filled with various chemical formulas. In the front, several students were seated facing Walter.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows Walter White as a chemistry teacher explaining the material in front of the class. Simple clothes and flat facial expressions suggest that Walter is in a monotonous routine and is not well appreciated by his students.

C. Myths

This scene reflects the social myth that the teaching profession is often not properly appreciated by society and educational institutions. Walter is described as a figure who has high abilities and knowledge, but is in a weak social position. Teachers are no longer positioned as the main figures who shape civilization, but as the fillers of a system that is functional but not influential.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the initial stage in the camel's spiritual task, namely the First Task: Feeling Ignorant and Humble. This phase is where the individual bears the burden and submits to external values. Walter accepts his role as an unappreciated teacher, keeps doing his job, and suppresses his potential and self-esteem. This is the initial form of his moral consciousness that will drive his moral transformation later on.

Second Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Walter White was talking with a serious expression in the evening. He was wearing glasses and a dark jacket, and his face looked firm. The translated text at the bottom of the screen displays the sentence, "... Maybe you and I can be partners." The scene takes place in minimal lighting, with a dark background that is not very clear.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows a pivotal moment when Walter begins to make decisions beyond the limits of his social role as a teacher. The phrase "can be partnered" was said to Jesse Pinkman, his former student, and became the starting point of their collaboration in the criminal world. Walter's cold expression and the shooting in a night atmosphere reinforce the impression that he is beginning to abandon his old morality and enter the gray area ethically. It is a transition from obedience to taking control of one's own life.

C. Myths

This scene forms the myth that when a person loses power in a system, as a teacher, he or she may seek it through an improper alternative path. Walter no longer believed that the social structure would lift him up, so he created his own power structure through illegal cooperation. It challenges the old myth that success and self-control can only be achieved through formal and moral or legally legitimate channels.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the transition from the "camel" phase to the "lion" phase within the framework of the camel's spirit duties. Walter began to fight against the external values that he had been adhering to. By offering Jesse a partnership, he takes an active step to free himself from his passive social role. This is the starting point of resistance to the system, where Walter begins to create his own moral values and decisions, albeit still shrouded in doubt.

Third Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Jesse Pinkman's character is standing outside at night. He was wearing a red hoodie jacket with a half-confused and slightly mocking facial expression. The translated text at the bottom of the screen displays the sentence, "You want to cook meth crystals?"

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows Jesse's response to Walter White's invitation in the previous scene. The sentence he spoke, in a tone of surprise and contempt, showed that Walter's invitation was considered unreasonable, especially since it came from a former teacher whom he had previously known as a obedient and morally indeviant figure. The red hoodie color that Jesse wears adds a symbolic impression to the character who is impulsive, brave, and used to the illegal world. Jesse's expression also shows disbelief in Walter's seriousness in entering the world of narcotics.

C. Myths

This scene depicts the myth of surprise when a "good" figure, i.e. a teacher, makes an extreme decision. Society tends to assume that someone as educated as a teacher will not take the criminal route. Jesse's speech became a representation of the social reaction to moral deviance by people who were assumed to be of high morals. The myth that teachers are always adherent to norms is violated here, and Jesse becomes a representative of an audience that doubts the shift.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene is still in Walter's transition from camel spirit to lion spirit. This moment is the initial test of Walter's choice to reject the system that oppresses him and switch to the path that gives him power. In this context, Jesse serves as a "wall of reality affirmation" that tests Walter's seriousness in creating new values.

Fourth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Two figures are in a narrow space that looks like a van or emergency kitchen. Jesse Pinkman (left) wearing a red hoodie and protective mask, is bending over a table. Next to him, Walter White (right) appears with a naked upper body, wearing an apron and green rubber gloves, and wearing a protective mask. He was pouring liquid from a laboratory tool. The background shows a window with the curtains closed tightly, giving it a dark and closed atmosphere.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows Walter and Jesse illegally producing narcotics using laboratory equipment. The change in Walter's appearance, who is now shirtless and wearing protective

gear, signifies a shift in the role from a teacher to a "producer". He no longer imparted knowledge, but applied it to criminal activities. Dim lighting and narrow spaces give the impression of being hidden and full of stress. While Jesse still looks submissive in body position, Walter appears dominant and focused, marking the beginning of a shift in power in their relationship.

C. Myths

This scene debunks the myth that science is always used for noble purposes. Here, science becomes a tool to fight powerlessness and create power through dark channels. Walter White represents the narrative that when the system does not provide room for knowledge to be valued, then it can be hijacked and used as a form of rebellion against the social order. This is a criticism of a society that underestimates the profession and scientific expertise.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. At this moment, Walter White began to enter the lion spirit phase. He no longer only rejects old values, but also begins to create his own actions based on free will. Walter shows that he is not only against the system, but also building his own moral world. Walter White made knowledge a new identity. This process is a step towards fuller value independence.

Fifth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

The image shows a bird's eye view shot showing Walter White standing opposite Jesse Pinkman. Walter wears a light green shirt, while Jesse wears a yellow jacket. Among them was a coin thrown up. The setting looks like an indoor area with patterned carpets.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene features a decision-making moment between Walter and Jesse to determine who will solve the problem with Crazy 8, a drug dealer they are locked up and who must be killed for their safety. Shooting from above gives the impression that they are in a situation controlled by "fate" or a force greater than personal will. The toss of coins became a symbol of the loss of moral control, that is, they no longer made choices based on values or conscience, but left them to chance. This also marks the deepening of Walter's involvement in the criminal world.

C. Myths

This scene challenges the myth that moral decision-making is always based on ethical considerations and personal responsibility. In the harsh reality they face, life and death decisions are reduced to a game of luck. The new myth that has been formed is that in a world without a stable moral structure, morality can be replaced by probability. Walter, who used to teach logic and scientific principles, now puts the lives of others on the random side of a coin.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. Walter White began to realize that the world he was entering had different laws

and values than his old world as a teacher. In this phase, he not only rejects the systems that oppress him, but also begins to understand the power structure and the consequences that come with it. The coin toss is a form of compromise between an old value that he has not completely abandoned and a new reality that demands extreme action. He expanded his awareness of the moral consequences in the criminal world, although he did not yet dare to take full responsibility for it. This is the transition phase from passive knowledge to active action that is still withheld.

Sixth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

The image shows Walter White lighting a marijuana cigarette using a flame from a gas stove in the kitchen of Jesse Pinkman's home. He was wearing a yellow-and-white striped shirt and bent his body very close to the stove fire. The room looked cluttered, with a lot of stuff strewn across the kitchen table in the background.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows the moment when Walter is under psychological distress after finding out that he had to kill Crazy 8. Instead of looking for a rational solution or talking to others, he chose to smoke marijuana at Jesse's house. Marijuana in this context is not just an escape, but a form of compulsion to turn off reason and avoid confrontation with the moral reality that haunts it. The position of his body subject to fire indicates a desire to break habits, and manners.

C. Myths

This scene forms the myth that even socially labeled "good" and highly educated individuals like teachers can lose their grip when faced with extreme existential dilemmas. Walter is the image of an individual who has no room to process moral pressures in a rigid system. He used marijuana to try to calm his mind.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. In this moment, Walter White is grappling with moral pressures that he has never experienced before. He begins to realize that old values such as responsibility, logic, and morality are not enough to answer the extreme dilemma he faces, namely the decision to kill or not. By using marijuana, Walter is trying to "turn off" part of his own mind.

Seventh Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

The image shows a piece of paper divided into two columns. The left column is titled "Let Him Live", and the right column is titled "Kill Him". Under "Let Him Live" are written reasons such as "It's the moral thing to do" and "Judeo/Christian principles". Below "Kill Him" is the reason "He'll kill your entire family if you let him". The handwriting looks neat but hurried, as if written in a tense condition.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows Walter making a list of moral considerations for deciding whether or not he should kill Crazy 8. The "Let Him Live" column represents the conscience and legacy of the religious moral values that have shaped Walter's social identity. While the "Kill Him"

column represents realistic considerations of survival and fear. This paper becomes a symbol of attraction between external norms and survival instincts. Walter is facing a moment where he must weigh between ethical values and the logic of fear.

C. Myths

This scene debunks the myth that moral decisions always rely on absolute principles such as religion, kindness, or conscience. Walter is showing that under certain conditions, morality is not just a matter of right or wrong, but about who acts first to survive. The old myth of "Christian moral principles" as the ultimate guide is questioned here, replaced by the new myth that fear and rational calculation can defeat morality if the threatening conditions are strong enough.

Scene Connection to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. In this stage, Walter White began to challenge the old moral values that he had embraced. He no longer accepts ethical principles passively, but actively tests them in extreme situations. By making a list of moral logic on paper, Walter shows that he is beginning to try to understand the world and values from a new perspective. He is in the dark realm of the existential "jungle", a place where traditional morality and personal logic conflict with each other. This is the moment when Walter does not simply resign himself to the burden of life, but begins to try to create a new foothold of values, albeit still in a stage full of doubts and inner struggles.

Eighth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Walter White was behind Crazy 8, who was tied to a pole in the basement. Walter is strangling Crazy 8 using a bicycle chain, while his face looks tense and tearful. Crazy 8 himself looked helpless and injured. In the picture, a translation of Walter's dialogue appears, which reads, "Forgive me."

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene shows the moment when Walter finally decides to kill someone for the first time. He does it directly with his own hands and not from a distance or through another party. The phrase "Forgive me" shows that Walter has not completely abandoned his empathy. Walter's crying shows that he knows his actions are contrary to his old moral values, but he still does it as a form of tragic compromise for survival.

C. Myths

This scene debunks the myth that good humans will not commit extreme crimes such as killing. Walter White is a symbol of someone who slowly convinced himself that killing was justified for logical and situational reasons. It also goes against the myth of the traditional hero: that the main figure always has moral control. In the Breaking Bad narrative, extreme acts such as killing become part of the journey of "becoming strong", not because of hatred, but because the system has created the conditions that encourage such actions to be deemed necessary.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. This murder symbolizes Walter's shift from just a moral burden bearer to a perpetrator of extreme actions for the sake of a new principle, namely survival and self-protection. Walter has passed through the phase of doubt and is now at the point of a concrete existential decision. He knew what he was doing was wrong according to the old values, but he did it anyway because he felt he had no other choice. This indicates that his consciousness is growing in a darker direction. This is a sign that he is in the process of forming a different moral value structure than before, although he is not yet fully aware of where he is going. He is still on his way to climbing the mountain of consciousness, carrying the burden of old values that he has not fully removed.

Ninth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

Walter White was sitting alone in the driver's seat of the car. He was wearing a brown jacket and glasses, with a straight forward view. The camera captures her from the side in a close-up angle, revealing a flat and tense facial expression. Outside the car window there is a long, empty highway, illuminated by sunlight in the afternoon or afternoon.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene represents Walter's psychological condition after committing a crucial act, namely killing Crazy 8. Facial expressions that do not explicitly show emotion can be interpreted as a form of inner emptiness or denial of an action that has just been performed. The empty streets that stretch next to the car indicate the loneliness and moral alienation that the characters are experiencing. Walter was in a condition where the old values no longer provided a stable moral foundation, while the new ones had not yet fully formed.

C. Myths

This scene depicts a shift in myths about morality and self-control. In conventional narratives, individuals who have power over the lives of others are often associated with dominant or controlling positions. However, in this context, the act of power actually produces emptiness and moral confusion. Walter White as a representative of an educated and rational individual is shown to experience mental disorientation after crossing the ethical boundaries that he previously obeyed. This indicates that in extreme situations, actions that are considered logical do not necessarily guarantee psychological stability.

Connection of Scenes to Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. In this stage, Walter has passed through a phase of passive acceptance of external values and begins to experience a significant change in consciousness. He realizes that the old value system he adheres to is not able to answer the complexity of the reality he is facing. The silence in the car and the tension in his facial expressions reflect the process of transitioning to a new structure of understanding that is more personal and ambiguous. This corresponds to the characteristics of the camel spirit entering the territory of ignorance, as a step towards the formation of a deeper consciousness.

Tenth Scene

A. Meaning of Denotation

The image shows a scene showing Walter White from behind, standing in front of the bathroom sink without his top clothes on. He was wearing gray shorts and held an electric razor in his right hand. On the sink table were several medicine bottles neatly lined up, while in front of him appeared a large mirror with a white frame. The walls of the bathroom are light blue and all the lighting is natural.

B. Meaning of Connotations

This scene depicts Walter's morning routine in the midst of a weakened physical condition due to the cancer he suffers from. The back that looks shirtless and the silence of the room represents the vulnerability of the body and existence. The medicine bottles affirm his position as an individual who is experiencing physical degradation and facing the reality of death. Walter holding a razor can also be interpreted as an attempt to maintain control over his own body, as other aspects of his life begin to spiral out of control.

C. Myths

This scene debunks myths about masculinity and control. Socially, men are often perceived as strong, rational, and able to control their surroundings. However, in this scene, Walter appears as a vulnerable figure, both physically and existentially. The myth of men as dominant figures is reversed by the fact that their own bodies are a source of powerlessness. This suggests that power and control are not fixed attributes, but rather can be lost when a person encounters borderline conditions such as illness.

Connection of Scenes with Friedrich Nietzsche's Camel Spirit Task

This scene represents the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. Walter is in a stage when he begins to experience a change in consciousness of the existential conditions he is facing, especially with regard to his body, and his illness. When he stands in front of a mirror and sees himself in a physically vulnerable state, he not only accepts that suffering, but also begins to reinterpret his role as a helpless individual. He realized that his body was not a source of power, but a reminder of the limits of existence. Within this framework, Walter is in a realm of searching for new meaning, where old values such as stability, control, and conventional self-esteem begin to be abandoned, and the search for himself begins to take shape

Discussion

The Myth of the Teacher in the Breaking Bad Series

The teaching profession is often positioned as a noble form of service in society, which then gives birth to the myth that this job does not require adequate financial rewards because it has been sufficiently symbolically respected (Adiatma et al., 2023). As a result, many teachers in Indonesia receive salaries below the standard of eligibility, even though they have a strategic role in shaping the nation's future. This condition puts teachers in a difficult position, where they have to carry out their professional duties while facing economic pressures in daily life. Therefore, although the teaching profession is praised for its moral value, real rewards in the form of financial well-being remain an urgent need that must be met by the state.

At the beginning of the *Breaking Bad* story, Walter White's character is portrayed as a smart, dedicated, and hardworking science teacher, but living in economic limitations and low social status. Despite having a strong academic background and a high knowledge of chemistry, he was only appreciated as an ordinary high school teacher, even having to take a side job at a car wash to make ends meet. This image represents the social myth that teachers are moral figures who are willing to accept limitations as a consequence of their devotion. This reality also reflects the condition of teachers in Indonesia, who, despite being socially recognized as a pillar of education, often do not get the welfare they deserve. As revealed by Adiatma, Hawari, & Syarif (2023), teachers are often valued only through social recognition, while in the context of welfare, especially in terms of salary, they are less noticed. Walter White became a symbol of the figure of the teacher who was trapped in a system that idealized devotion, but failed to guarantee a decent dignity for educators.

As the series progresses, Walter White gradually frees himself from the social myths that have been attached to the teaching profession. He no longer sees the role of the teacher as an educator, but as a role that fails to give him recognition, power, and well-being. This transition was seen when he began to build a new authority and identity through illegal activities, namely producing narcotics. This extreme decision not only marks a rebellion against old values that emphasize patience, devotion, and obedience, but also a critique of the social structures that economically marginalize the teaching profession. Walter pursued influence and self-esteem that he had not gained in the world of education. In this context, *Breaking Bad* becomes a narrative about the demolition of the myth, that teachers will not always be faithful to noble values if the existing system fails to provide a fair living space.

Through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, the change in the character of the teacher in Walter White is depicted gradually through the visual signs, connotations, and myths that appear in various scenes. In the Pilot episode, Season 1 Episode 1, at 07:42, Walter appears to be standing as a teacher in the classroom, but with tired gestures and expressions and clothes that look shabby. This denotation shows the figure of a competent but unprosperous teacher, while its connotation reflects the social image that teachers are often symbolically respected but materially ignored. This scene reinforces the myth that the teaching profession is a form of devotion without welfare demands.

Another example appears in the scene in the same episode, minute 29:28, when Walter chooses to partner with Jesse in producing methamphetamine. The connotations of this action show Walter's attempt to regain power and control over his life, after feeling that the system is incapable of giving him justice as a teacher. The myth that the teacher is a moral figure who is faithful to the formal path is also dismantled through this action.

In addition, the scene in Season 1 Episode 2, *Cat's in the Bag*, minute 30:51, shows Walter smoking marijuana at Jesse's house as a way to ease the inner tension after being faced with the moral dilemma of killing. This scene shows that even the figure of the teacher can lose his grip when existential pressures are unable to be accommodated by the existing normative system. In the context of myths, teachers are no longer symbols of moral fortitude, but ordinary human beings who grapple with extreme realities and tend to take paths that are not in accordance with social expectations.

From the elaboration of these various scenes, it can be seen that the *Breaking Bad* series does not only present a criminal narrative, but also becomes a critical reflection on how society

interprets the teaching profession. The myth of teachers as a sincere servant but does not need to be financially rewarded is slowly dismantled through the journey of Walter White's character. The transformation of Walter into a powerful figure with his new identity, namely Heisenberg, is a form of resistance to a system that only symbolically respects teachers, but ignores their welfare rights. The explanation in this relevant scene shows that idealization without adequate results, such as salary or real financial results, can actually give rise to a moral crisis. In this context, *Breaking Bad* sends a message that the teaching profession needs real recognition in the form of economic and social justice.

The Six Duties of the Camel Spirit in Walter White's Moral Journey

In Nietzsche's thought, the camel spirit stage describes the moment when the individual consciously accepts the spiritual burden that comes from the noble values of someone who has gone beyond ordinary life, i.e. a hero. Instead of rejecting it, the camel spirit accepts the burden with submission, realizing that devotion and suffering are the first steps toward existential transformation. The six tasks are outlined through questions asked by the hero to the camel spirit, starting with one main statement that reads "Isn't this", and followed by five other questions that start with "Or is this". These questions are not mere intellectual contemplation, but rather a form of existential examination that requires the individual to re-examine himself, his values, and the courage to endure suffering for the sake of inner enlightenment.

In the context of moral transformation, particularly as it relates to the six tasks of the camel spirit, Walter White's transformation can be read as a struggle relevant to the six tasks. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study interprets various visual and narrative elements in selected scenes from the *Breaking Bad* series as signs that contain denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings. Each sign in a scene is not just a representation of action, but also a symbol of a change in consciousness, inner conflict, and a shift in the moral values of the character. This analysis shows that Walter White's journey did not take place randomly, but can be systematically mapped into the six tasks of the camel spirit as described by Nietzsche and interpreted psychologically by Rizal. Thus, the semiotic approach allows for a deeper reading of Walter's existential transition, as well as showing how that moral transformation is shaped visually and narratively in the series.

Walter White's moral transformation began at the most basic stage in the six tasks of the camel, namely the First Task: Ignorance and Humility. In this context, the camel spirit is a symbol of the individual who submits and bears external values without resistance, a phase in which a person suppresses self-esteem in the social structure (Rizal, 2022). The scene at the beginning of the *Breaking Bad* series (S1E1, Pilot, 07:42) shows Walter White teaching chemistry in a classroom with a gloomy and bland atmosphere. He wears simple clothes and uses visual aids in the form of colorful bottles, but he does not receive any attention or appreciation from his students. This scene not only depicts Walter as a competent teacher figure, but also confirms his position of being symbolically a weak character. He is still in a social system that places the teaching profession as a noble servant, but does not give real rewards, such as financial. In this stage, Walter has not yet rebelled, but he lives the role given to him with resignation. This is the initial form of his moral consciousness, that he is aware that the world in which he lives does not make room for his ideal values, but he has not been

able to form new values. This phase became the psychological basis for Walter's transition to resistance to the system and the search for a new identity in the later stages.

The transition to the Second and Third Tasks, i.e. the expansion of consciousness and knowledge, is marked by the moment when Walter White begins to show a response to his stagnant existential condition. In *Breaking Bad* (S1E1, Pilot, 29:28 and 29:44), Walter decides to invite Jesse Pinkman to collaborate in the methamphetamine business, then confirms his new role as a figure who actively chooses his own path. The denotative sign of the call to do business indicates practical action, but connotatively reflects a shift in attitude from passive to initiative. The myth that has emerged is an attempt to resist the social structure that has been limiting the role of teachers as individuals without power. At this stage, Walter begins to tread the existential 'forest' described by Rizal (2022), namely a condition of ignorance and uncertainty, where old values begin to be abandoned and replaced by an exploration of broader moral possibilities. He is no longer fully submissive, but has not yet attained full consciousness; He is in the process of getting to know his 'new territory'.

The next stage, the camel spirit begins the journey towards self-liberation through the expansion of consciousness and the deeper search for knowledge through the Second and Third Tasks: Expansion of Consciousness and Knowledge. Choerul Rizal (2022) describes this stage as a process of climbing the mountain of consciousness, but before that, the spirit must penetrate the forest, which is interpreted as a symbol of unconsciousness, inner conflict, and old values that are still shackled. Individuals who are in this phase begin to question values that have been considered absolute, and dare to enter morally and existentially alien territories. In this context, Walter White not only faced the oppressive realities of his life, but also began to form a new identity and his moral structure, in spite of the old system that limited him as a helpless teacher.

Some scenes show this process gradually. In *Breaking Bad* (S1E2, Cat's in the Bag, 30:51), Walter smokes marijuana at Jesse's house, showing an attempt to escape the psychological pressure of the murder experience. The denotation is that Walter smokes in a dark room, but the connotation reveals his anxiety and failure to rearrange his moral orientation. The myth that has been awakened is that even educated figures can lose their moral compass when the reality of life is too heavy to deal with in normative ways. Another scene in *Breaking Bad* (S1E6, Crazy Handful of Nothin', 42:14), Walter for the first time refers to himself by the name "Heisenberg". This scene marks the birth of a new persona that rejects moral subordination. The denotation is the moment Walter stands up in a dominant style and short dialogue. But its connotation is a psychological turning point in which Heisenberg's identity becomes an existential representation of power and autonomy. The myth that is formed is that power can be formed through the reconstruction of identity, not simply social position. Walter had not yet fully become a lion spirit, but at this stage, he had come out of total submission and began to put together a new order of values that was more in tune with his new world. These scenes show that Walter is in an ambiguous and transformative phase. It no longer bears just the burden of the old, but begins to explore new areas of value that are wilder, uncertain, but which give it the possibility to define itself more autonomously. This is the essence of the Second and Third Tasks in the camel spirit phase: to penetrate ignorance in order to attain deeper consciousness.

Fourth stage: Doubting Friends in the transformation of the camel's spirit, according to Rizal (2022), is a test of personal relationships, where a person begins to doubt friends and questions values such as loyalty, affection, and affection as moral foundations. Semiotically, this scene dismantles the myth of empathy in interpersonal relationships and forms a new narrative that power demands sacrifice over emotional relationships. In the context of this fourth task, Walter not only doubts Jesse as a partner, but also sheds old values in order to assert his autonomy in the power structure he is building.

Fifth task: Facing Inferior Humans and Symbols Transformation in the camel spirit phase according to Nietzsche is a stage in which individuals must dive into the darkest realities and are full of moral contradictions, including dealing with inferior human figures and disgusting living conditions (Rizal, 2022). In this stage, the spirit is no longer satisfied with accepting suffering, but is also required to face the decadence environment as part of a transformative process.

Denotatively, this scene shows Walter with a wound on his face, wearing a bright green shirt and talking on the phone. The connotations of his facial expressions and the words "I won" indicate a shift in moral transformation, namely that Walter is no longer bound by the old ethical boundaries, as he has passed the point of facing a powerful enemy. In terms of myths, this moment forms the narrative that absolute victory can be achieved not through conventional morality, but through the courage to face the system and overcome it through power and strategy. He does not avoid mud, but rather swims in it and comes out as a completely changed being. In the frog symbolism that Nietzsche uses, Walter has completed the process of metamorphosis, transforming from a knowledgeable figure to a master of his own new values. The phrase "I won" is the culmination of the transformation of the camel spirit into a new power, which is no longer shackled by the old values.

The final stage of the camel's journey according to Nietzsche is the sixth task: Overcoming Resistance. In this phase, the individual is challenged to not only face, but also to come to terms with all the most painful and frightening forms of opposition in his or her life. This includes the courage to look directly at the darkest side of oneself, as well as to come to terms with the most extreme consequences of the existential choices that have been taken (Rizal, 2022). In the context of the *Breaking Bad* series, the most powerful representation of this stage appears in the scene in Season 5 Episode 16, "Felina" (51:33), as Walter White lies bloodied in his meth lab, staring at the ceiling with a peaceful expression.

Denotatively, this scene shows Walter's dying body, lying alone among the chemical equipment, with blood flowing from his body. The connotation is an attitude of resignation and acceptance of the fate and death that is to come. There is no more resistance, no escape. The myth that is formed is that true transformation requires the courage to make peace with total destruction, including facing the consequences of all the moral and existential choices that have been made. Walter is no longer in an internal conflict, as he has completed his entire inner battle. Within the framework of the camel's spirit duties, this scene was the culmination of all the burdens that had been carried before. Walter reaches a point where he no longer resists suffering, no longer fears destruction, and no longer holds on to the old values he wants to defend. He accepts that the end is part of the process of becoming himself, and that destruction

can also be a form of liberation. This is the moment when the camel spirit is ready to release its burden and prepare for a new transformation as a lion spirit or child spirit.

From the overall analysis of the fifteen scenes that have been selected, Walter White's moral journey can be interpreted as a process of moral transformation that is in line with the six tasks of the camel spirit as described by Nietzsche and further interpreted by Choerul Rizal (2022). Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, each stage of the task can be read not only through narrative development, but also through a system of signs that form a new meaning in Walter's character transformation. The denotations, connotations, and myths in each scene not only show the moral shifts of the characters, but also show how burdens, doubts, loneliness, power, and acceptance of death are part of a profound transformative dynamic. Walter White moved not only from a social position as a teacher to a criminal figure, but also from an individual who bore the burden of old values to an individual who created his own existential values, through a process full of resistance and contemplation. Thus, the six tasks of the camel spirit serve as a philosophical framework that explains the complexity of Walter White's transformation in a more essential way, transcending the narrative aspect into moral and spiritual reflection.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed Walter White's moral transformation in the *Breaking Bad* series by applying Roland Barthes' semiotic approach alongside Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the six tasks of the spirit, as interpreted by Choerul Rizal (2022). By examining visual and narrative elements in 15 key scenes, the research traced Walter's evolution from a teacher who adhered to societal norms to an individual who forged his own values and identity. Barthes' framework revealed layers of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—highlighting visual changes, internal conflicts, and critiques of social myths, while Nietzsche's six tasks illuminated Walter's journey through burden-bearing, moral exploration, and the development of existential courage. The findings demonstrate that *Breaking Bad* not only portrays a complex character transformation but also illustrates the creation of meaning and values through a prolonged process of suffering and moral conflict. For future research, it is suggested to expand the analysis to include other characters or series, or to incorporate audience reception studies to further understand the impact of moral transformation narratives in contemporary media.

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