Research Article

American TV Series Breaking Bad's Revelation of Postmodernism and Identity Fragmentation

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ABSTRACT

Breaking Bad (2008–2013) provides a framework for examining postmodernism, particularly its fractured identities, moral ambiguity, hyperreality, and rejection of grand narratives. This paper analyzes the transformation of Walter White from a gracious chemistry high school professor to a stonehearted manufacturer of crystal meth Heisenberg, as a representation of the postmodern self. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, and Fredric Jameson, it argues that Walter's competing roles as father, teacher, husband, and criminal unsettle the idea of a unified identity. As Heisenberg supersedes Walter's earlier self, the series illustrates Baudrillard's account of hyperreality. The paper also considers Jesse Pinkman's conflict among criminality, guilt, and redemption, showing how moral and personal identities remain unstable. Through nonlinear storytelling, ethically ambiguous characters, visual symbolism, and a critique of the American Dream, Breaking Bad questions established assumptions about truth, progress, success, and certainty. The discussion further relates these concerns to revelation of fragmented identity in the Indian English fiction, mainly in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that Breaking Bad extends postmodern critique beyond television analysis by showing how narratives expose identity as a constructed, contested, and regulated performance. It thereby positions the series as a significant cultural text for understanding the consequences of capitalist uncertainty.

Keywords: postmodernism; fragmented identity; hyperreality; moral ambiguity; Breaking Bad.

INTRODUCTION

Vince Gilligan's TV creation "Breaking Bad wastelecasted on American TV from the year 2008 to 2013[12]." The story is a narrationof the declineof Walter White who was a chemistry teacher taking classes of high school students and gradually he becomes a drugmanufacturer. In order to give his family a secured financial future he becomes a criminal when he gets diagnosed with a deadlycancer. In the beginning the TV series was praised for its complex plot narration and structure."But gradually when the story started getting noticed for its study of moral ambiguity, power, and identity, it became a cultural cult [13]." Accordingto A.Spinwall, "The series transcended its genre, becoming a cultural touchstone that sparked discussions about the nature of evil, morality, and personal transformation" [5]. For a highly insightful analysis of postmodernism Walter White's character development and hisslowconversion into his second self "Heisenberg," offers a wonderful case study.

The study of the damaged individual identities and dismantled structure of human morality in this story holds major significance to study of postmodernism."The show's narrative structure which is marked by fragmented storytelling, unreliable characters, and shifting perspectives, challenges traditional linear narratives and clear moral binaries" [4]. According to F.Jameson, Walter's transformation from a genuine and soft-hearted teacher to a cruelbusinessman manufacturing and selling drugs, reflects the postmodern condition of the fragmented self, a subject of increasing importance in literature and media studies [3]. "By questioning the integrity of identity and morality, Breaking Bad provides a compelling lens through which postmodernism can be analysed" [1].

RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper aims to study how the story Breaking Bad reveals the postmodern thoughts in form of the individual fragmented identities and the complexities of human morality. Theobjective of this paper is to explore the various facets of the protagonist Walter White's identity and how through his personal moral downfall how the story clearly resonates serious social concerns about the stable existence of the self in a shattered and life-like world which creates confusion about the concept of reality.

THESIS STATEMENT

This paper gives reasons that Breaking Bad functions as a postmodern television series, which shows the identity shattering of Walter White as a representation of the anxieties about the uncertainty of one's selfhood in the present time world. By applying postmodern theories, particularly those of Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, the study will demonstrate how Walter's transformation into "Heisenberg" mirrors the breakdown of stable identities in postmodern culture [2]. Additionally, the show's exploration of moral ambiguity and its rejection of universal truths reflect the postmodern critique of metanarratives, particularly the collapse of the "American Dream" and the rise of late capitalism [3].

POST MODERNISM IN LITERATURE AND MEDIA

The trend of Postmodern culture and thought doesn't believe in big heroic tales or the idea of a stable minded, self-determined and integrated human self. It raises questions to the very notion of unbiased reality, saying that reality is something that is made up by media, culture, and language. In literature and media studies, postmodernism focuses on concepts including the disintegration of identity, moral beliefs and breakdown of traditional story frameworks

According to Baudrillard a postmodern world exists where signs and symbols create a reality of their own so closely resembling the original that differentiation becomes impossible. "Understanding the fragmentation of identity depends on the principle of hyperreality, portrayedby characters such as Walter White in Breaking Bad, who establish alternate selves (including his persona "Heisenberg") that distort their true identity. The notion of simulacra and hyperreality proposed by Jean Baudrillard's is highly relevant here [1], [17]"

Another significant concept in postmodern philosophy is Jean-François Lyotard's disapproval of metanarratives. "Lyotard discusses the decline of big stories like the Enlightenment ideas of progress and truth, in the postmodern era, allowing for the emergence of more personal, intimate stories that reflect people's experiences" [2]. The characters in Breaking Bad don't believe in clear lines between good and bad, indicating that the show's writers don't trustin absolute realities.

Fredric Jameson's work on postmodernism, particularly his analysis of late capitalism, provides a valuable perception for understanding how postmodern media like Breaking Bad reflects the commodification of identity and morals. "In Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Jameson writes that all parts of life, like identity and morality, are treated as products that can be changed and sold. This makes postmodern culture unique" [3].

TELEVISION AS POST MODERN TEXT

"As a medium of information,Television hasgradually adoptedpostmodern aesthetics [16]," shown by series such as Breaking Bad which present complex, broken stories narratives that portray postmodern themes of identity and morality. In contrast to traditional simple storytelling, which often presents clear moral distinctions and character developments, "Breaking Bad functions within a postmodern framework of non-linear storytelling, ambiguous morality, and fractured identity [16]."

Jason Mittell, emphasises how Breaking Bad diverge from traditional story telling by making its story complex and the development of its characters which encourages viewers to critically analyse the story deeper [4]. The show's uneven story structure, along with combined with ethically vague characters, aligns with the postmodern dismissal of rigid, stable identities.

Moreover, as Alan Sepinwall discusses in The Revolution Was Televised, shows like Breaking Bad reflect a broader shift in television toward exploring complex characters and narratives that challenge traditional moral frameworks [5]. Walter White's transformation into Heisenberg illustrates this complication, as his actions cannot be easily categorized as purely good or evil, embodying moral relativism central to postmodern philosophy.

In Philosophy and Breaking Bad, Kevin S. Decker examines how the show employs moral ambiguity as a narrative tool, allowing characters like Walter White to operate in ethically grey areas. Decker's analysis highlights the philosophical dimensions of the show, especially its exploration of ethical decision-making, power, and personal transformation [6]. The fractured narrative and unstable moral viewpoints in Breaking Bad make it an ideal subject for postmodern critique, reflecting the wider cultural apprehensions related to identity and ethics in postmodern age.

1. THE FRAGMENTATION OF IDENTITY IN THE STORY

1.1 Walter White becomes Heisenberg

The transformation of Walter White from a gracious chemistry school professor to a stonehearted and illicit manufacturer and trader of crystal meth exemplifies the fragmentation of identity in postmodern discourse. In this character arc, we witness the collapse of a firm, unified self as Walter negotiates multiple identities, within a morally vague world. This personality shift shows the postmodern rejection of fixed and clear subjectivities, as with time Walter starts to become both the family man and the criminal, merging these roles into a fractured whole.

Walter White's life at the beginning of the story is marked by a clear gap of what he is capable of and the life he is actually living. Although he is highly learned and qualified, he works in a job that does not fully reflect his abilities and struggles to meet the financial needs of his family. His situation becomes even more difficult when is diagnosed with fatal cancer. At this stage, Walter lately sees himself as a responsible father and husband, and his decisions are shaped by his duty towards his family. sense of identity, however does not remain stable for long. His decision to manufacture meth begins with an aim to support his family's finances for the present and the future times but slowly takes him away from his role of a dutiful family man. His shift into the role of the drug lord Heisenberg marks a critical moment of identity fragmentation. Walter not only assumes a new name but also adopts a new set of values, actions, and moral justifications, leading to a clash between his familial responsibilities and his increasingly criminal identity.

The existence of Heisenberg, with his black hat and intended brutality, becomes a hyperreal version of Walter, a person whose power and authority goes beyond the restrictions of the oppressed teacher. Walter himself appears to be aware of his dual existence at times of deep moral and ethical shifts that characterise the transformation, which is not a slow one. Because of this dichotomy, Walter's public persona as a devoted father and his private existence as Heisenberg, are at odds, which leads to a disintegration of his personality.

Walter White's transformation into Heisenberg can be examined using Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyperreality. According to Baudrillard, in the post-modern world, signs and pictures create their own reality, which is a hyperreality that is more potent and significant than the original [1]. Walter pretends to be Heisenberg in order to gain respect, power and control. Heisenberg is a hyper realised version of Walter, not merely a guise he adopts.

Walter separates himself from his past personality as he creates his second self of Heisenberg, becoming a famous tycoon in the world of meth trade. Heisenberg becomes Walter's primary identity rather than just a cover Through self-fashioning, Walter enters a hyperreal state where Heisenberg is more real and impactful than the "real" Walter ever was. The boundaries between Walter and Heisenberg blur as the series progresses, with Walter increasingly identifying with the latter. By the end of the series, Walter's confession to his wife, "I did it for me," marks his full acceptance of Heisenberg as his true identity, completing his journey into simulacrum [6].

The typical characteristic of postmodern idea is reflected in the crash of Walter's identity and the collapse of his morality. In the entire story, from the start till the end, all of Walter's crimes including the making of meth and murdering people, are given a complete different moral justification. Initially, in order to support his family, Walter gets involved in meth trading. This situation makes him appear as a poor unfortunate man, who goes to any extent of crime just for the sake of saving and supporting his family. However, further in the story, being deeply driven by his selfishness, arrogance, stubborn ego and his craving for gaining power over the world he gets deeper and deeper into the underworld of crime and corruption.

In the story breaking bad there is no fixed set of moral beliefs and principles to guide Walter's actions, instead he creates his own set of morals and values, based on which he has been shown giving situationally justified explanations every time for his behaviour. As Heisenberg he goes through various morally complex territories with time with no limitations of the so-called fixed set of moral truths and principles of life. "This story of Walter clearly reflects the non-acceptance of grand narratives in the post-modern era. According to Lyotard, in the post-modern era glorified tales of morality lose their influence and allow space for the individual, personalised set of moral values and beliefs" [2]. In the postmodern world truth is not unchanging but is perpetually debated according to individual aspirations and situational demands. Walter's fall into the moral uncertainty is a genuine example of this ideology.

Walter's transformation into Heisenberg ultimately leads to the complete loss of moral boundaries that once influenced his decisions. His final conversations make this transformation clear. "When Walter accepts that his actions were not simply intended to secure his family's financial future, he also recognises his personal desire for power and control his own desires for power and control" [6]. This admission is significant because it exposes the self-interest that had remained beneath his earlier justifications. In this sense, Walter's transformation can be read through a postmodern understanding of identity and morality, in which neither remains stable but becomes increasingly fragmented and situation based.

1.2 Jesse Pinkman'sIdentity and Redemption

Jesse Pinkman,unlike WalterWhite's determined change into his other self, is a character in the story whose identity is defined by an endless fight between his criminal life as a drug manufacturer and his desperate need of seeking divine forgiveness. Jesse 'story is of a lifelong emotional and moral restlessness, where from time to time he gets to experience moments of self-realisation and its clash with his downfall in the world of crime. The post-modern era's main feature of the shattered individuality of humans is well reflected by Jesse's identity which always remained volatile, disturbed and emotionally broken throughout in the story of Breaking Bad. The post-modern issue of identity fragmentation is clearly visible in Jesse's inner conflict where the entire human personality is not existing as a whole entity rather is composed of scattered pieces of the psyche which are in perpetual state of anxiety.

At the beginning of Breaking Bad, Jesse Pinkman is shown to be a small-time methamphetamine maker who lives a dangerous and illegal life. But behind his drug dealer persona is a person who is always looking for a place to join, a sense of worth, and a way to make things right. Jesse's duality becomes a central theme in the show as he oscillates between embracing his role in the drug trade and seeking moral absolution for the harm he has caused. This tension between his criminal activities and his desire for redemption reveals a fractured identity, one that is emblematic of the chaos and instability found in postmodern subjectivity.

Jesse Pinkman in Breaking Bad is introduced in the pilot as a small-time meth producer living a dangerous and criminal life. He also carries the guilt of the deaths of Tomas and Jane and the countless lives that have been ruined by his addiction to drugs. Walter's change into Heisenberg is motivated by pride and power, but Jesse is every now and then crushed by the outcomes of his deeds and he struggles for a narrow escape. But his is an internal as well as an external war because he feels guilty and wants to make things right. Attempts to escape the drug trade and joining the rehabilitation programs are two of such decisions of Jesse, driven by his quest of redemption. But the people and things around him continuously draw him back into the realm of criminality pushing him to face his sinister nature.

Never entirely resolved, Jesse's dualities align with the postmodern premise that identity is never set in stone. He cannot be properly categorised as a criminal or a morally excellent person. Instead he lives in the middle ground between the two extremes. According to J.S.Decker, Jesse's broken identity shows the chaos that comes with being a postmodern person, where the lines between good and evil, right and wrong, are fuzzy and people are left to figure out their own experiences. [6].

The post-modern era's rejection of distinct moral boundaries is reflected in Jesse's moral conflicts throughout the story. His decisions are always influenced by his emotions and circumstances rather than by any standard code of morals and ethics, causing him to waver between right and wrong. When compared to traditional storylines where the characters are led by a universal code of conduct, Jesse's choices are marked by uncertainty. This ethical uncertainty is central to postmodern thought, which rejects the idea of universal truths or moral absolutes in favour of subjective experiences and situational ethics [2].

Jesse's inability of choosing between the right and wrong becomes very difficult in the story, by the fact that he was so closely attached to the innocent Andrea and her son Brock Watching them suffer forces him to see the painful real-world consequences of his drug life first-hand. When Brock is poisoned, Jesse is crushed by guilt believing that his association with Walter's crimes put the boy in danger. His growing guilt and self-hatred is reflective of the postmodern life, where people struggle trying to live with themselves in a world where right and wrong have broken down completely. Unlike Walter who has no problem justifying his evil actions, Jesse can never come to terms with what he has done, and that leaves him completely emotionally broken by the end of the series.

In the end, Jesse's inner conflict mirrors a broader battle for identity in an ethically ambiguous world. He remains bound to the repercussions of his past, yet he refuses to relinquish his quest for redemption. His ultimate flight into the open night leaves his tale unresolved, a tribute to the ongoing effort of self-creation in a realm devoid of immutable laws.

2. POST MODERN IDEAS ABOUT CONTROL AND POWERS

2.1 Narrative Fragmentation is scattered

Instead of traditional narrative patterns the story uses complicated narrative structures and confusing plotlines to address important postmodern issues. "The story is not told in a linear cause and effect order but bounces around in time with flashbacks, flashforwards and unpredictable sequences of events [15]." This broken structure is reflective of postmodernism's aversion to neat, single-meaning stories. It highlights the fact that truth and meaning are frequently obscure and mutable. The series' non-linear narrative is most evident in

Season 2 as the season opens with strange black-and-white flashforwards featuring a pink teddy bear that foreshadows an impending plane crash. The series' refusal to explain allows viewers to puzzle together the meaning of these weird events as the plot unfolds.

"The viewers are not able to follow the story line clearly because of this disorganised method of narration." "Such narrative techniques disrupt the viewer's traditional expectations of story and emphasize the postmodern idea that is not fixed but must be constructed through the interplay of fragmented pieces [4], [18]."

Breaking Bad doesn't give viewers a nice, simple story to follow. It makes the story a jigsaw that viewers have to piece together, scene by scene. The show jumps about timelines and leaves important data fragmented, requiring viewers to negotiate a chaotic flow of events to figure out what is really happening. By confusingly moving across phases and leaving major details in the story scattered, the show forces the viewers to navigate a highly puzzled flow of events and look for the real-time events taking place in the plot.

At the same time, the series undermines the traditional promise of the American Dream, which says hard work and determination always result in riches, stability, and happiness. Walter White, convinced that power and wealth will fix his problems, goes out to pursue this very ideal. But his dogged pursuit has the opposite effect: moral rot, savage violence and the complete devastation of his family. The hollow promises of cruel capitalist society are revealed in Breaking Bad as Walter's striving for success leaves only wreckage behind.

"The idea of "incredulity toward metanarratives" by Jean-François Lyotard is very important to this argument. In his book The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard says that big stories like the American Dream don't work anymore because they don't consider how complicated and contradictory people's lives are." [2]. Walter White's transformation into Heisenberg represents a rejection of the traditional metanarrative of the self-made man. Instead of achieving success through legitimate means, Walter resorts to illegal drug production, revealing the dark underbelly of capitalism, where success is often achieved through moral compromise and exploitation.

Walter's criminal behaviour is a comment on the American Dream, which is based on the accumulation of wealth at all costs. After learning he had terminal cancer, his initial motivation for entering the drug trade was to provide for his family. But his hunger for power, control and attention soon grows into an obsession with these. So, Breaking Bad breaks down the idea that the American Dream is a way to find happiness by showing how the never-ending search for money and fame can be wrong. Rather, the show demonstrates that this ambitious endeavour is detrimental to the individual as well as those around him, demonstrating that this grand narrative is ineffective in postmodern society.

2.2 Capitalism and Identity: The Commodification of Walter White

"The criticism of late capitalism by Fredric Jameson helps us understand how Walter White's identity is turned into a commodity and broken by the demands of neoliberal success stories" [3]. "In Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Jameson says that people and their identities are turned into marketable goods in the postmodern era. These goods are shaped by the forces of late capitalism" [4]. "Walter's transformation from a genuine academician to the nefarious drug manufacturer Heisenberg is an example of this process of converting individuals into commodities [14]."

The blue meth, which is widely sought after across the drug trade for its unmatched purity, is referred as a strong symbol of power and success. Heisenberg is built not merely as a temporary alter ego, but as a recognized brand that commands fear, power, and respect.

Because of this shift, Walter's personal identity is fused directly with what is manufactured, and his self-worth is tied directly to the market value of his drug. The harsh pressures of a profit-driven society are clearly reflected in this transformation, where value of an individual is measured by his ability to create and sell a desirable product.

3. SYMBOLISM AND HYPERREALITY

3.1 Use of colour and space symbolizes post-modern identity

Symbolism and hyperreality hold major significance in the story of Breaking Bad to showcase the postmodern ideas of scattered identity and collapse of genuine human connections. The story uses various visual and narrative symbols that represent the vast complexities of meanings and identities, the important elements of postmodern theory. These symbols are reflected through the story's careful use of colour, setting, and the artificial nature of Walter White's relationships with others.

"One of the most important aspects of Breaking Bad's visual style is its use of colour to depict the disintegration of the characters' identities. Colour acts not only as a stylistic device, but also as a postmodern symbol, mirroring the intricate, divided selves of Walter, Skyler and Jesse. All major characters are connected to a specific colour that gradually develops with their individual stories, indicating changes in their identity and morality [20]."

In the story, the colour green is associated with Walter and it is used to symbolize money, greed and transformation. Green is often connected to Walter's need for financial security which is the reason why he gets involved in the drug trade in the first place. However, as the story develops further, green becomes a symbol of Walter's growing ambition and greed. His original logic behind is drug trade, which was to provide financial support to his family, is gradually replaced by his obsession with power and control. This colour represents the fragmentation of his identity as he transforms from a dedicated family man to the ruthless Heisenberg [6]. Green also represents the moral downfall that takes place due to Walter's increasing involvement with the drug trade, as his identity breaks into conflicting roles of a teacher, father, and criminal.

Skyler White is related to the colour blue, which has traditionally been associated with tranquillity, stability and self-control. In the plot, however, blue is also utilised to represent Skyler's growing knowledge and involvement in Walter's illegal operations. Her transition from a naive wife to an active participant in Walter's money laundering is represented in her continuous relationship with the colour blue, which is also associated with the pure meth that represents Walter's criminal enterprise. Thus, Blue becomes a symbol of Skyler's involvement and her struggle for control in her increasingly difficult marriage.

Jesse Pinkmanis associated with the colour yellow that embodies instability, restlessness, and fragility. Yellow in Breaking Bad reflects Jesse's internal turmoil and moral confusion. Jesse keeps swinging between guilt, regret, and a desperate need for redemption. He lacks in decision making, he cannot make correct choices. the Yellow colour also conveys this sense of moral instability, as Jesse is always on the verge of causing self-harm, finishing his life. In numerous scenes, his yellow clothes reflect his fragile emotions and divided sense of self as he is dragged more into Walter's world while striving to hold on to his sense of morality.

The desert serves as a recurring setting that functions symbolically as a space of isolation, lawlessness, and moral ambiguity. It is in the vast emptiness of the desert that many of the most crucial events in Breaking Bad occur as the murder of Gustavo Fring and Walter's final showdown with his enemies. The desert's barren landscape becomes a metaphor for the moral wasteland that Walter inhabits as he navigates the criminal underworld. "The desert's isolation reflects the fragmentation of identity experienced by Walter, Jesse, and others, as they are cut off from traditional moral structures and left to construct their own ethical realities [19]."

3.2 Simulated Bonds and Emotional Detachment in Relationships

The connect of Walter White, especially with his family, can be explained by Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality, where simulations and symbols replace the real. As Walter grows more confident in his persona as Heisenberg, his relationships with his wife Skyler, his children and his criminal associates become more and more artificial.

Primarily, Walter's relationship with Skyler is portrayed as a relatively typical suburban marriage. However, as the series progresses and Walter embraces his unlawful personality, their relationship becomes a simulation. Walter continues to play the devoted husband and father, but these presentations are false, concealing his deeper, more menacing persona as Heisenberg. Walter's relationship with Skyler falls into the domain of hyperreality in Baudrillard's terms. Their marriage does not depict a real emotional bond anymore but is a façade, a simulation of the traditional roles of husband and wife that hides the real nature of their gradually broken bond [1]. The gap between the public appearance of Walter and Skyler as a married couple and the hidden reality of fraud and dominance is exemplified by Walter's emotional exploitation of Skyler, particularly when he compels her to assist him in money laundering.

Similarly, Walter's connection with his son Walt Jr. is similarly distinguished by hyperreality. He appears to be the caring father, but his behaviours are telling us he cares less and less about his family's welfare. His fatherhood is a sham, his actions motivated by a lust for power and control rather than a sincere concern for the well-being of his own family. Walter's breakdown shows that his relationship with his son is not real and it is an example of the postmodern idea of hyperreality. In hyperreality relationships are performances and do not have the real emotions of the original.

This false reality is also claiming Walter's relations with his criminal friends, such as Jesse and Gustavo. The manipulation of Jesse shows the falseness of their relationship where Walter acts as if he cares and teaches Jesse like a real mentor, but in reality, his actions aim for his craving for acquiring power and control on people. Walter's betrayal of Jesse, which resulted in Jesse's imprisonment and torture, demonstrates that their

attachment was a cover-up for Walter's evil intentions. The way in which Walter exercises power and control in these relationships is an essential component of his second identity as Heisenberg.

K.S.Decker says, "In the postmodern world of Breaking Bad, authentic relationships are replaced by simulations, and personal identity is constructed through performances rather than genuine emotional connections. Walter White's second self, named Heisenberg, and he becoming that, represents not only the fragmentation of his identity but also the collapse of authentic relationships, as all connections are mediated through the hyperreal lens of power, control, and deception" [6].

4. FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

4.1 Post modernism in Indian English Literature

Indian English literature is deeply influenced by postmodernism as an intellectual trend, particularly in works that address postcolonial identity and the disintegrated selfhood. The postmodern state shown in Breaking Bad is also revealed by authors like Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, who address themes of cultural and personal breakdown [7]. These writers address the conflicting truths of postcolonial existence, in which conventional concepts of nationhood, self-identity, and ethics are deconstructed. [8]

The 1981's world famous novel Midnight's Children, by Salman Rushdie is a classic example of postmodern literature. In this novel, the protagonist's fractured identity reflects the nation's fractured identity [7]. The character of Saleem Sinai shows how difficult it is to separate personal history from national history. It's like the character arc of Walter White, a virtuous guy to a character of moral ambiguity. Just as Breaking Bad uses non-linear storytelling and fragmented moral landscapes to demonstrate Walter White's transformation into Heisenberg [7], Rushdie uses magical realism, a type of narrative fragmentation, to show the instability of identity. "Similarly, Roy's novel highlights the fragmentation of identity within the context of family, caste, and societal expectations [21]."

The emphasis on the shattered time frames and perspectives in the story is reflective of the postmodern approach used in Breaking Bad as well, in which, time and memory are used to communicate the instability of identity. Just as Roy's characters struggle with social and personal breakdown, Jesse Pinkman's inner conflicts signify a collapse in moral and ethical self-perception [9].

4.2. Similar themes of Fragmentation

Both Indian postmodern literature and Breaking Bad share concerns about the destabilization of traditional narratives. In Indian English literature, colonialism and postcolonial trauma lead to a fractured sense of national and personal identity [10].

In postcolonial texts, like Midnight's Children, characters lack a distinct identity in the face of the complicated dynamics of colonial legacy and modernity [7]. A Western equivalent to this is the identity dilemma of Walter White, where the fragmentation of the self into Heisenberg is ultimately achieved by the capitalist pressures of prosperity and the American Dream [10]. Both postcolonial subjects and Walter White wrestle with the collapse of traditional roles and the emergence of new, often contradictory identities.

"In Breaking Bad, Walter's transformation into Heisenberg reflects a broader cultural anxiety about the instability of identity in the face of modern pressures" [11]. Indian postmodern stories show characters in conflict between traditional culture and modern principles, resulting in a divided ego. For example, the characters' broken identities, in The God of Small Things, are caused by past events and social limitations, just like the emotional breakdown of both the characters of Jesse Pinkman and Walter White [9].

4.3 Post-modern techniques in story telling

Both Breaking Bad and postmodern Indian English literature use chaotic narrative techniques to emphasise the broken nature of one's identity [4]. Rushdie's fragmentary narrative in Midnight's Children is similar to the disorganised order of events in Breaking Bad, where the audience see Walter's changing identity through flashbacks, flash-forwards and dizzying narrative jumps [7].

Postmodern literature, particularly postcolonial Indian writing, often depicts characters with fragmented moral frameworks, mirroring the ambiguity of the postmodern world [9]. This is analogous to the moral ambiguity of Walter White whose motive becomes more and more obscure as the story unfolds [4]. "Similar to Jesse Pinkman's shifting ethical consciousness in Breaking Bad, the moral restraints become blur by trauma and historical struggle in the story, The God of Small Things, ending in a complicated tale of ethical and personal confusion" [9].

5. CONCLUSION

Postmodern ideas like identity fragmentation, moral ambiguity, and rejecting grand narratives are at the heart of both the story and the character development in Breaking Bad. The way Walter White's grows in stature, from a humble and grounded academician to the criminal of the underworld, Heisenberg, finely reveals the postmodern condition of fractured identity, in which different roles of family man, teacher, and criminal, exist in conflict with each other.

The series employs complex narrative structures, including non-linear storytelling, fragmented timelines, and the use of symbolism, such as colour and space, to reflect these fragmented identities. By critiquing the American Dream and exposing the commodification of identity under late capitalism, Breaking Bad challenges traditional narratives of success and morality, instead presenting a world shaped by individual desires, power, and moral uncertainty. The series' portrayal of hyperreality in relationships, particularly Walter's simulation of familial roles, further underscores the postmodern collapse of authentic emotional connections, as identities and relationships are increasingly mediated through power and deception.

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