

**“There Will Be Consequences”  
The Legacy of Cinema in Television and Video Games**

by

Casey Worcester

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Sponsor: Rachel Fabian

Second Reader: Nathan Holmes

“*Ice Road Truckers*? What happens on that one?”

“Guys drive on ice.”

Walter White and Jesse Pinkman discuss television in the *Breaking Bad* episode, “Bug”<sup>1</sup>

## **Cinema and the Challenge of New Media**

When television was becoming increasingly popular in the 1950s in the US, the film industry began to see it as competition. Many believed that television challenged cinema in a way that no other medium could at the time, in that television brought into homes an audiovisual experience that was similar in many ways to the cinematic form. In response to this, many Hollywood films began to highlight the differences between the two media by developing new technology to enhance the viewing experience, such as CinemaScope, and producing numerous films in extravagant genres such as the musical and the historical epic.<sup>2</sup> Due to this, audiences could associate cinema with a grand, larger than life experience, while television reflected a much more personal, domestic one. This appears to be true when examining the dominant form of spectatorship in these media; films are meant to be watched communally in a dark auditorium with the massive image looming above the audience. Television is viewed privately at home, surrounded by friends and family. The television set itself has become a fixture of many households, often becoming the focal point of whatever room it is in, with all other furniture oriented around it.

This project examines, however, the ways in which the cinematic has been incorporated into newer media. I intend to examine how television and video games reveal “the cinematic” to

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<sup>1</sup> “Bug,” season 4, episode 9 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Moira Walley-Beckett and Thomas Schnauz, dir. Terry McDonagh, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 11 September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> John Belton, “CinemaScope and Historical Methodology,” *Cinema Journal* 28, no.1 (1988): 22-44

be a relationship between images at its most fundamental, rather than simply the experience of watching films theatrically. Noted Soviet filmmaker and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein claimed that montage is “the nerve of cinema.” In this sense, he means that cinema is defined by the way that filmmakers juxtapose shots with each other through the process of editing.<sup>3</sup> Placing two shots next to each other creates a connection between them in the eyes of the audience, encouraging a dialectical mode of interpretation. Eisenstein’s theory of montage did not solely rely on film, focusing instead on older forms of media such as hieroglyphs, theater, and architecture. While he claims that montage composes “the nerve of cinema,” it is not the only medium in which montage can be found. Eisenstein is but one of many theorists who suggest that what appears to make up “the cinematic” is not, in fact, limited to the medium of film.

Certain television programs and video games have been called “cinematic” over the years as a way of expressing some form of prestige. The quality of cinema is seen as an aspiration of these media. This analysis and usage of the term “cinematic” to describe television and video games prestigious often condescends each medium and disregards it as a lesser form of art. It elevates certain works to an ideal while simultaneously putting down most of the canon of each medium. However, this essay examines *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–13) and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo, 1998) in order to demonstrate how television and video games harness “the cinematic” in complex, profound, and thoughtful ways. I argue that these two works refashion elements of spectatorship, montage, and mise-en-scene to exploit the interactive dimensions of the cinematic.

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<sup>3</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form,” in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, edited and translated by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, 1949), 48.

By focusing on spectatorship, montage, and mise-en-scene, I will take key concepts devised mainly in classical film theory and interpret their critical value for analyzing the new media forms of television and video games. As David Bordwell notes:

“Classical” film theory, usually taken as spanning the fifty years or so before the rise of semiology in the mid 1960s, was often concerned to define film as an art. Theorists such as Andre Bazin, Rudolf Arnheim, and the Soviet Montage directors sought to isolate distinctively cinematic principles of representation and expression. These were investigated with an eye to the artistic qualities of films and the aesthetic experience of audiences.<sup>4</sup>

Significantly, Bordwell notes that early theorists of film were interested in both the specificity of film as a medium, and in how audiences viewed film and consumed it in relation to the way other cultural forms were consumed (for example, the novel and the theater). Thus, the “cinematic principles” of spectatorship, montage, and mise-en-scene written about in classical film theory have the potential to unveil intermedial dynamics of the cinematic. More recently, scholars including Angelo Restivo and Kara Keeling have written about the ways in which the cinematic is expressed in a wide variety of moving image media.<sup>5</sup> Such discussions have made it possible to employ the idea of the cinematic critically to elaborate on debates among television and new media scholars regarding the rise of platform-based interactive narratives. I have chosen the television program *Breaking Bad* and the video game *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

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<sup>4</sup>David Bordwell, foreword to Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ix.

<sup>5</sup>Kara Keeling, *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Angelo Restivo, *Breaking Bad and Cinematic Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

as works that exemplify interactive storytelling. I am especially interested in the ways in which these works can be interpreted as a form of meta-commentary on the nature of their respective medium (television and video games). This meta-commentary, I argue, foregrounds the intermedial elements of the cinematic within television and video games.

### **Platform Logics of New Media**

In his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, a foundational work in media studies and source of the oft-quoted idea that “the medium is the message,” Marshall McLuhan discusses how the “content” of a medium is always within another medium.<sup>6</sup> This clearly applies to film, as it incorporates elements of visual art, most obviously photography, and many others. Music, writing, acting, clothing design, architecture, and many more can all be contained within film, and all of these different media forms work together in film to create the viewing experience. Likewise, television utilizes the medium of film but changes its context. Television exists in a different spectatorial space than film and has different narrative elements. Before television, films existed entirely in a public space and were a social event. Programs made for television are not necessarily social events, as they are most often viewed in the privacy of one’s home. An essay by Charles Tashiro titled “Home Video and Film: The Case of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*” discusses how watching the *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (dir. Robert Zemeckis, US, 1988) on home video changes the experience of the film when compared to watching it in the theater.<sup>7</sup> The first difference between watching the film on home video compared to the

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, NY McGraw-Hill, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Tashiro “Home Video and Film: The Case of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*” *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 48, no. 1/2, 1996, pp. 58–66.

cinema is access. When you go out to a film, it is an arduous task. This varies on a case by case basis, but in order to watch a film in the cinema you have to travel out of your way, sometimes a very far distance. The film starts at a very specific time whether you want it to or not, so you need to get there promptly, especially if you want to make sure you have good seats. There is also the matter of eating food. Perhaps you will replace your dinner with snacks from the theater that you now have to buy. Finally, you have to be gone from your house from the duration, meaning that you need to be able to leave your house unattended for the whole film. This can be difficult in certain situations, such as when you are a parent wanting to watch a movie that's not appropriate for children. The creation of VHS and home video enabled viewers to have complete control over the timing of when the film starts and allows audiences to enjoy a wider selection of cinema than even a multiplex can provide.

There are clear ways in which the viewing of a film on VHS intersects with television viewing practices, and the advent of streaming on-demand platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ have further blurred the boundary between film and television spectatorship. Scholar Ann Gilbert has written about the ways that streaming on-demand has changed the viewing experience of television.<sup>8</sup> She draws upon scholarship by Chuck Tyron, who notes that television viewing on a streaming platform like Netflix is an inherently active experience due to the fact that a viewer must browse the website and select a specific program before they watch.<sup>9</sup> Online platforms also create what she refers to as a “scarcity of time” as opposed to a “scarcity of programming schedule” which was found in traditional television. This describes a shift of

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<sup>8</sup> Anne Gilbert, “Push, Pull, Rerun: Television Reruns and Streaming Media,” *Television & New Media* 20, no. 7 (2019); 686-701.

<sup>9</sup> Chuck Tryon, *On-demand Culture: Digital Delivery and the Future of Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 2013).

responsibility from the network to the viewers. Before streaming on-demand, networks had a set schedule in which they needed to air programming. This meant that they had to prioritize what would draw the most viewers in. Streaming gives this prioritization to the viewers. Netflix has the freedom to upload as much content as they can afford and the responsibility is now on the viewer to decide what is worth their time. Streaming also functions as a better alternative to syndication for an old program no longer producing new episodes. When airing a program in syndication, networks sometimes need to cut for time or content. This is no longer a concern on streaming platforms. The analysis that streaming is “inherently active” is problematic when considering that Netflix’s user interface is designed to overwhelm the viewer with choices and will begin automatically playing a trailer or even the beginning of an episode of television if the viewer lingers on a particular title for too long. The autoplay feature at the end of an episode of television is designed to keep viewers watching rather than navigating away. Continuing to watch is the passive action, whereas choosing to stop becomes the active one, which is the same way it is when shows air on network television.

Television has historically been viewed primarily in the private space of the home, however with the rise of streaming on demand and social media it has become a public event. In recent years, many bars have been known to show *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–19) when a new episode premieres.<sup>10</sup> Watch parties create a much more public space, which completely changes the viewing experience. The crowded rooms and various reactions of different people create a different perception than watching it at home by yourself. It is also important to discuss the role of social media in blurring the boundaries between public and private media viewing.

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<sup>10</sup> Tracy Swartz, “Inside a ‘Game of Thrones’ Watch Party at a Chicago Bar,” *Chicago Tribune*, 28 April 2015, [www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-game-of-thrones-watch-parties-at-bars-disappearing-20150421-story.html](http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-game-of-thrones-watch-parties-at-bars-disappearing-20150421-story.html)

Many people “live tweet” popular television shows. Since Twitter operates in part as a public space, this is another form of public storytelling. After an episode of *Game of Thrones* is over, nearly every top trend on Twitter is related to that episode. It has gotten to the point where discussion of the program on social media may be the most crucial part of the audience’s experience with it. Creators seem to be aware of this desire for public engagement with the material. At the end of every episode of *Game of Thrones* for the last few seasons, there has been a behind-the-scenes video discussing various facets of the production of the show. This provides new insights into the episode and is essentially the creators themselves taking a part in this public discussion.<sup>11</sup>

McLuhan’s writings predate the rise of platform-based television and gaming; however Ian Bogost and Nick Montfort write that McLuhan’s claim that “a medium contains other media” accurately describes the current of platform based media consumption that stress the hybrid and interactive nature of moving-image media.<sup>12</sup> Video games have also significantly slowly blurred the line between private engagement and public engagement with the rise of at-home, console based gaming, multiplayer, and online gaming. Perhaps one of the most important video games in this regard is *Pokémon Red and Blue* (Nintendo, 1998), directed by Satoshi Tajiri. The central premise of the game is to collect the one hundred and fifty creatures called *Pokémon* that can be found throughout the game and battle them against other ones. The game was made specifically for Nintendo’s Game Boy, a portable gaming device that had a unique ability to connect to other Game Boys via a “link cable.” This allowed for players to connect their games together to battle

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Andreievic, “Watching Television without Pity: The Productivity of Online Fans,” *Television & New Media* 9, no. 1 (2008): 54-46.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Bogost and Nick Montfort, “Platform studies: Frequently questioned answers,” *Digital Arts and Culture* (2009), np.



each other with their *Pokémon*. Multiplayer gaming had been around for a long time, but this game made a critical addition to this formula. The reason it is called *Red and Blue* is because there are two separate versions of the game named *Red* and *Blue* respectively. They are the same game save for one crucial difference. Each version has eleven *Pokémon* that cannot be found in the other version during regular play. This means that if a player wants to collect every possible *Pokémon*, they need to find someone who has the other version of the game and trade *Pokémon* with them in order to complete their collection. With the advent of the internet and the ability to connect to it wirelessly, further installments in the series have made this an easier task, with the ability for players to trade *Pokémon* and battle players from around the world.<sup>13</sup> In recent years, the number of games with online connectivity has increased exponentially, with many games hinging on this online connectivity. Games like *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004) and *Fortnite Battle Royale* (Epic Games, 2017) can only be played online with other players. This has allowed video games to join films as a public, communal experience, and furthermore these online games tend to play very differently than games that are not played exclusively online. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was released for the Nintendo 64, a home video game console that was popular in the late 90s. The game was a sequel to previous games in the *Legend of Zelda* series, and incorporated numerous changes to the format of the previous games in the series in order to incorporate possibilities that were opened up by the capabilities of the Nintendo 64 compared to previous Nintendo consoles.

The hybridization of video games, television, and film is seen in multi-media works such as *The X-Files*, first aired on the FOX Network from 1992-2002. The show followed two FBI

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<sup>13</sup> Christian McCrea, “We Play in Public: The Nature and Context of Portable Gaming Systems,” *Convergence* 17, no. 4 (2011); 389–403.

agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), and their work on unsolved cases that pertain to paranormal or supernatural activities, particularly activities that involve some sort of extraterrestrial beings. Mulder is a staunch believer in the supernatural, particularly extraterrestrials, while Scully is highly skeptical of the possibility of their existence. The show followed a standard format similar to many other crime dramas such as *Law and Order* (NBC, 1990–2010), where each episode follows the investigation of a crime that the audience is shown a glimpse of at the beginning of the episode. The show was notable for its overarching plotline concerning an upcoming alien invasion. The plotline was built up across many episodes but never came to an actual conclusion by the time the show ended after nine seasons. Importantly, a video game, *The X-Files Game* (HyperBole Studios, 1998), and film, *The X-Files: Fight the Future* (dir. Rob Bowman, US, 1998), were made during the show's run which expanded the plotline. After the show ended in 2002 with the plotline left unresolved, many novels and comics were made, but they did not conclude the plotline. These were followed by a second movie and two more short seasons of television in the 2010s that, again, failed to actually conclude the plotline. The reason that audiences have never gotten an ending is that the structure of *The X-Files* would be completely undone if the show were to actually go forward into the plotline of the alien invasion, as it would unravel the traditional crime drama format that the program revolves around.<sup>14</sup> The multi-platform viewing and transmedia storytelling in *The X-Files* franchise allows us to investigate ways in which new media interactivity has transformed film, and, likewise, how the cinematic has been taken up in moving-image contexts that extend beyond film.

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<sup>14</sup> Felix Brinker, "Conspiracy, Procedure, Continuity: Reopening *The X-Files*," *Television & New Media* 19, no. 4 (2018): 328-344.

Vince Gilligan, creator of *Breaking Bad*, was a writer and producer on *The X-Files*. After finishing his work on that program, he decided that he wanted to work on a program where “the fundamental drive is toward change” rather than relying on a status quo, the way programs such as *The X Files* did.<sup>15</sup> From there, he developed the idea of *Breaking Bad*, the central conceit of the program being the transformation of protagonist Walter White (Bryan Cranston) from a quiet, nerdy teacher into a terrifying, aggressive, murderous drug kingpin. The program originally aired on the cable network AMC, where it was met with moderate success in ratings for its early season. Towards the end of its run, however, the show was also made available to watch on Netflix, where millions of viewers watched it for the first time. The release of the program on Netflix allowed new viewers to watch the entire program in weeks or even days, which led to the final season of the program becoming one of the most watched pieces of television of the decade when it originally aired on AMC. The program is so tied to Netflix that when Vince Gilligan decided to make a feature film to serve as an epilogue to the series, Netflix was the distributor. This film, entitled *El Camino: A Breaking Bad Movie* (dir. Vince Gilligan, US, 2019) continued to blur the lines between television and cinema, as it used cinema as its primary form, but drew heavily on the televisual nature of the show. In terms of spectatorship, there is little difference between watching *Breaking Bad* on Netflix and watching *El Camino* on Netflix. In fact, Netflix has attached *El Camino* directly to *Breaking Bad* by adding it to the program’s autoplay feature, allowing viewers to watch it directly after watching the final episode of *Breaking Bad* without having to press a single button.

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Romano, “Breaking Bad Finale: Lost Interviews with Bryan Cranston and Vince Gilligan,” Daily Beast, 29 September 2013, [www.thedailybeast.com/breaking-bad-finale-lost-interviews-with-bryan-cranston-and-vince-gilligan](http://www.thedailybeast.com/breaking-bad-finale-lost-interviews-with-bryan-cranston-and-vince-gilligan)

Both *Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* demand more interactive spectatorship from the viewer than film demands. This is partially a quality of their respective media and partially a quality of the specific works themselves. However, they also productively draw on models of spectatorship, montage, and mise-en-scene that have been attributed to the cinematic. The works utilize montage in a broad sense of the relationship between images. By expanding spaces and creating juxtaposition between images, these works create new meaning. Television and video games have a unique relationship to mise-en-scene as television gravitates towards a more personal and intimate mise-en-scene than cinema and video games allow players to explore the mise-en-scene at their leisure and observe all the minutiae of the frame at their own pace.

“I will continue to watch you... Hoo hoo hoo hoot!”

Kaepora Gaebora saying goodbye to Link, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

### **Cinematic Spectatorship Beyond the Gaze and the Glance**

The first notable difference between cinema, television, and video games is the method of spectatorship. When it was created, cinema was viewed within a physical cinema for practical reasons. This made cinema into a communal experience within a dark room, looming large over the audience that is viewing it. Upon its creation, television immediately separated itself from film due to the fact that it was consumed in the home rather than in a public space. Television is also more restricted than film in its first decades. The revenue from television was based on advertising, which meant that the program itself needed to be formatted in order to have breaks for advertising to play. It also needed to fit into a schedule so that the audience would know when to tune into a program and advertisers would know where exactly they were advertising.

This was also compounded with the need to get as many viewers as possible in a given night, leading to television programs becoming short in length, in order to fit as many as possible into each broadcast day. Most television shows were either thirty minutes or an hour long. The differences and competition between film and television quickly set a distinction between television and films in terms of content. Films emphasized their higher budgets and “larger than life” nature, whereas television emphasized domestic spaces and places in which people worked. This is not to say that these spaces were unheard of in film, but they were ubiquitous in television and their relationship to the audience and the production is vastly different. Spaces in television become familiar because they are constantly repeated to the audience over the span of weeks as the program airs. It becomes part of the audience’s schedule to return to this space at a certain time of the week when they watch the program. This builds a greater connection between the space and the audience and leads the audience to have more of a sense of ownership of the space depicted, because it also exists within their home. Of course, with the advent of home video and streaming, the distinction between film being viewed in a cinema and television being viewed in home has seemingly shattered. This is not entirely accurate, however, as the spectator is something that also exists within the mind of the artists making films and television. While the audience may end up watching the film at home, the filmmakers still make films with the intent for them to be viewed in the cinema, which informs their filmmaking decisions. The format of film and television has still been retained despite this barrier being weakened. A television program is still a series of episodes strung together whereas a film is still a single feature length work. This has a massive effect on each medium, as the development of the narrative functions separately. *Breaking Bad* addresses the potential issues with this directly, as Walter White, like many of the viewers watching the program, has failed in his ability to live up to the ideology sold

to the American public through television. He has a wife, a home, one child with another on the way, and a good job doing something noble. At every turn, however, these desires do not live up to the ideal that is shown on television. Walter and his wife do not hate each other, but their relationship is less than ideal, especially sexually. Walter's job is just barely providing for his family, causing him to take a second, low-paying part-time job at a car wash. Walter's son is disabled, which separates him from the ideal able-bodied white American family. At every turn the ideal family of classic television is revealed to be more complicated and messy than the ideals of the 50s.

In postwar film criticism, film spectatorship became distinguished through apparatus theory. This theoretical framework that is defined by the idea that all of film is ideological and has meaning, due to the fact that it was constructed by “the gaze” and privileges a singular spectator. TV scholars have contrasted this mode of spectatorship by emphasizing that TV is constructed around the “glance” rather than the gaze. However, as Mimi White notes, this assumption was critiqued by a number of scholars, most notably John Thornton Caldwell.<sup>16</sup>

Video games began their life as something that were played in a public space, but within a decade transitioned largely into a medium that was also consumed in the home. This creates in the audience a similar sense of ownership over the spaces of video games to that of television. Even games on mobile phones and handheld video game devices function this way as well, due to the fact that the player owns the device that the game is being played on. Scholars have discussed whether it is accurate to describe video games as a medium of interactivity. In his

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<sup>16</sup> Mimi White, “Flows and other close encounters with television,” in *Planet TV: A Global Television Reader*, edited by Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar (New York: New York University Press, 2003): 97–98. John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

essay, “The Myth of the Ergodic Video Game,” James Newman argues that video games are not a medium of interactivity due to the fact that many moments within video games are not interactive.<sup>17</sup> His argument is a compelling one, but the fact that there are moments in video games in which there is no direct interaction between the game and the player, such as a cutscene in which the narrative is expanded, does not mean that interaction is not the nature of the video game medium. The moments where the player is simply observing something, be it a cutscene, a menu, or a high score board, exist within the context of the interaction between the player and the game. If someone took all the gameplay moments out of the game and presented a viewer with just the cutscenes and other portions where no direct interaction is taking place, it would not be the same experience as playing the game. Newman notes that one could experience a game simply by watching another person play it, but this does not truly take away from the interaction of the game. When watching someone play, there is still an interaction taking place between the game and a player. The interaction between the player and the game is extremely important, even when only being observed by a third party, because every player will play the game differently. For example, watching someone play the original *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* for the first time would be an entirely different experience from watching someone play it who has a lot of experience with the game. If the player is unfamiliar with the game, their gameplay will be defined by their thought process as they try to figure out how to complete their goal. They may stop in places they do not need to just to see what is to be found, or they may wander in circles because they cannot remember their way around yet. If a person is very familiar with the game though, then they will be able to move directly between the places they need to go to and do the

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<sup>17</sup> James Newman, “The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame.” *Games Studies 0102: The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame*. By James Newman, 2002, [www.gamestudies.org/0102/newman/](http://www.gamestudies.org/0102/newman/).

things they need to with ease. They are playing the same game, but the way they are interacting with the game changes the experience entirely, even to a passive observer.

“If you're watching this tape, I'm probably dead...”

—Walter White, threatening Hank with a fake confession video in the *Breaking Bad* episode “Confessions”<sup>18</sup>

### **Interactive Spectatorship and Serial Narrative in Television and Video Games**

One relationship between images in *Breaking Bad* that stands out as truly resonant is Walter’s confession from the aptly named episode “Confessions.” In the episode, Walter records a fake confession in order to threaten Hank (Dean Norris) to make him stop investigating Walter. In the confession, Walter crafts a false narrative that runs parallel to the true narrative of the show. In this version, Walter is not the mastermind behind Heisenberg, but Hank is instead. Walter recounts several events in the show, but talks about it as if Hank was the one in charge the whole time and Walter was simply forced to go along with it. This confession is shown to the audience twice. First, the audience sees the beginning of the confession from Walter and Skyler’s (Anna Gunn) perspective as they sit down to record it. Walter begins the video by sitting on their bed. The audience is given a glimpse into the camera’s point-of-view and sees that it is a wide shot of Walter sitting very still on the bed. He begins by saying “My name is Walter Hartwell White. I live at 308 Negra Aroya Lane, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87104. This is my confession.” This moment directly calls upon and exists as a mirror to the video Walter made in the very first episode.<sup>19</sup> After crashing the RV and putting on his shirt, Walter records a video

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<sup>18</sup> “Confessions,” season 5, episode 1 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Gennifer Hutchison, dir. Michael Slovis, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 23 August 2013.

<sup>19</sup> “Pilot,” season 1, episode 1 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Vince Gilligan, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 20 September 2008.



saying, “My name is Walter White. I live at 308 Negra Aroya Lane, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87104. To all law enforcement entities: this is not an admission of guilt.” As he is saying this Walter is extremely disheveled and the audience is shown the camera’s point-of-view, which shows a close up of Walter’s face, constantly shaking around due to the fact that the camera is in Walter’s hand. The confession in season five contrasts with this to show how Walter has gained more control over his life and the crimes he is committing. The wide shot, recorded on a camera with a tripod with Walter’s whole body framed perfectly in the center, feels very picturesque. The shot feels very deliberately set-up and controlled by Walter, compared to the shot in the pilot episode which frames Walter as a man in over his head, scrambling for a way out. The scene from the “Confessions” episode ends after Walter says, “This is my confession.” When broadcast on television, a commercial break follows.

When the show returns from commercial, the audience is shown the full confession video after a scene where Walter, Hank, Skyler, and Marie have an extremely awkward dinner together in which they threaten each other. The scene ends with Walter giving Hank the video on a DVD and leaving with Skyler. The audience then sees Hank and Marie (Betsy Brandt) watch the confession on the television in their living room, enraptured as Walter tells his story to the camera. The scene forgoes showing the confession from the point of view of the camera recording it, and instead only ever shows it as an image on a television, while also cutting back to the reactions of Marie and Hank watching. The fact that Walter in this moment is only appearing as an image on a screen is emphasized by the way the scene is filmed. The television screen itself is heavily focused upon by the camera, often shown in close-up so that the audience sees the imperfections of the physical screen itself. These close-up shots also create a distorted view of Walter’s face, as they act as a close-up, but are not close to an actual actor’s face so they

do not pick up any details of skin, only the details of the image on the screen. Several shots are also filmed from an angle, distorting Walter's appearance even more. Hank and Marie never speak while the video plays, though they do glance at each other a few times. After the video ends, they talk about the fact that Walter confesses to paying Hank's medical bills with his own money, which was something Hank did not know about until this moment. This scene serves as a metaphor for the power of television itself. Walter's confession is in reality nothing more than a video on a DVD. It is not a gun pointed at anyone, nor is it any form of physical restraint. All that exists is the DVD itself and the image on the screen, as well as a presumed back-up copy of the video that Skyler and Walter have. Despite only being an image on a screen, it still has very real power, as it effectively silences Hank. Upon seeing this, he knows that Walter and Skyler have the potential to put this video before any law enforcement agency or court that may try to rain down judgement on Walter. It may only be an image, but it has incredible power.

This image of Hank and Marie watching Walter tell his story on the television stands in contrast with the very medium of television itself. It reflects the viewer watching the television program *Breaking Bad* and following Walter along on his journey from high school chemistry teacher to meth kingpin. It shows the power that the television has to bring a story into someone's own home and have a real impact. The DVD has an impact on Hank and Marie's relationship, as it brings new information to light that Hank did not know before, and it serves as an obstacle for Hank to get around. This reflects the emotional consequences and impact that television can have. This moment also acts as an indictment of any viewer who believes that Walter is justified in his actions, as it serves as a sort of dark reflection of the show itself. In the real world, watching the story of Walter White is a form of entertainment, consumption, and is an act of artistry. In the universe of the show, this video is a tool to manipulate any potential

viewer into sympathizing with Walter. The story told by Walter is filled with many falsehoods and half-truths, but it could be argued that the audience of *Breaking Bad* is presented with falsehoods and half-truths as well. Throughout the show, viewers hear Walter insist that everything he does is for his family, despite the fact that it creates a massive rift between himself and his wife and son. The show managed to convince many viewers that Walter truly was justified in his actions, even though this was not exactly the intention of the creators. When taking that into consideration, the moment of Walter's confession acts as a brilliant moment of meta-commentary on the nature of television itself.

There is a question over active spectatorship vs. passive spectatorship. On the face of it, film as a medium employs a form of passive spectatorship, due to the fact that the audience sits and watches the film as it happens, rather than taking an active part in the consumption of the work. A book, for example, would have a more active spectatorship because the reader actively needs to read and comprehend the words on the page and cannot truly let it simply wash over them. Spectatorship of television is more active than film, usually, because the audience needs to keep returning to watch the show continue. This has shifted in recent years with the rise of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon. When watching a program on Netflix, a viewer is really interacting with two forms of media at once: they are interacting with whatever television program they are viewing, such as *Breaking Bad*, but they are also interacting with the medium of Netflix itself. Netflix as a website is designed to get the viewer to spend as much time as possible on the website, which is easiest when the viewer is passive. The more active the viewer is, the more likely they are to decide it is time for them to stop and do something else. The website is designed to overwhelm the viewer and give the impression of limitless choices and options. While the titles are organized, they are organized in such a way that the viewer is

constantly being shown options of things to watch, with no way to trim their options down to make it easier to decide. A list of titles will also reset back to the beginning when the viewer reaches the end of it, making it appear to be endless. When actually watching the program, the next episode automatically plays four seconds into the end credits, giving the viewer a very short time to decide to continue watching or not. This short decision-making time encourages viewers to make a quick choice to continue watching based on their reaction to the ending of the previous episode. All of this affects the audience's spectatorship.

Video games more explicitly employ active spectatorship, because the act of playing the game makes the player actively engage with it. Some games are derided for having a lack of interaction with the player and focusing more on the story that is being told through cutscenes, and this is very understandable. While it is true that the artists should be able to make their game and tell its story in whatever manner they choose, it makes sense that gamers would want to play a video game they are constantly interacting with and doing things. Too many cutscenes may get in the way of the player's enjoyment and ruin the pacing of the game. It is becoming more common for video games to have multiple storylines that branch off in different directions, which helps solve this problem as the player often has to make a decision about what to do or say at a certain critical moment in the story. This makes the player's spectatorship with those moments of the game become even more active.

*The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* forms spectatorship in many different ways. This begins when the player starts the game and has to put a name on their save file. Whatever name the player puts in is the name the characters in the game will use to address Link for the duration of the game. This is designed with the idea that most players would put in their own name, so that when a character says the player's name, it feels more like the player personally is being

talked to, rather than the character of Link. Of course, players can always name the save file “Link” so that characters will refer to him as that, and many players do, but the option for the player to be addressed by name is an important part of this method of spectatorship. For some, it may be too on-the-nose to have the characters call Link by their name and it might actually break their suspension of disbelief, so they have the option to name the character whatever they want, to personalize their experience. It is also worth noting that the player could give Link a vulgar name on the save file so that they can laugh when all the dialogue sounds like the characters are constantly cursing at you. This is, of course, very juvenile humor but it is important because this is a legitimate way of interacting with the game and if a player chooses to give Link a humorous name it will affect the way the player experiences certain moments in the game. Link is essentially a blank slate for the player to project themselves onto. Link never has any dialogue of his own, which is done to allow the player to project himself onto the character. Since he cannot directly speak to the characters in the game, neither does Link, so that he cannot say something the player would not say. The closest Link comes to speaking is when the player needs to select “Yes” or “No” to determine whether instructions will be repeated. Infamously, the only vocalizations Link has are screams and grunts that he utters when he swings his sword, is injured, or falls. This does make Link something of a humorous protagonist, particularly when he gets injured, because his screams are very over-the-top. It works well to make Link feel more alive, despite the fact that he never actually gets any dialogue of his own. While he is silent in that regard, he does not feel like an emotionless, stoic protagonist and that is, in large part, because of the vocalizations that he has.

## The Cinematic Form As Montage

Television, video games, and film all engage the cinematic through montage. Television and video games differ from film due to how they are consumed, where they are consumed, their structure, their design, and the effect that each medium inherently has on its audience. Some might claim that video games differ from film and television in that their images are entirely artificial, created by artists working at a computer, whereas cinema captures real images of real people, places, and things. This ignores basic elements of the cinematic form, however. At its most fundamental, film can only be a reflection of reality and never truly a replication. In the early days of cinema, this was more clear due to the fact that images could only be captured in black and white; any color had to be drawn onto the actual film images themselves. Even when modern technology allows the photographer to capture more accurate images, there are still plenty of differences between the image and the reality that can exist within the cinematic form. The camera itself can capture light in a different way than eyes can. It can also focus on certain subjects, leaving other parts of the frame “out of focus.” In an objective reality, there is no such thing as focus. The image can also be edited on a computer to adjust the colors, lighting, and other elements.

Beyond this, throughout the history of cinema, filmmakers have combined different images together to create a more surreal experience. The need for cinema to represent reality is not an inherent part of the cinematic form. Of course, there are also visual tricks that can be used to warp the audience’s perception of reality. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (dir. Peter Jackson, US and New Zealand, 2001–2003), the director and cinematographer used forced perspective in many shots to make the actors playing hobbits and dwarfs look much smaller

compared to the actors playing men, wizards, orcs and elves. Computer-generated imagery also complicates the idea that cinematic images cannot be artificial.

Television and video games are cinematic because they, too, rely on the relationship between images as their primary form of artistry. There are numerous examples from *Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* that can be used to analyze the way television and video games take the cinematic and transform them.

“Technically, chemistry is the study of matter, but I prefer to see it as the study of change.”  
Walter White, stating the theme of *Breaking Bad* in the least subtle way, in the *Breaking Bad* “Pilot” episode<sup>19</sup>

### **The Relationship Between Images in *Breaking Bad***

Previously, it was mentioned that Vince Gilligan’s initial idea for *Breaking Bad* was a program where “the fundamental drive is toward change.” Interestingly, though, *Breaking Bad* brings this idea into fruition by changing the characters and their situations around and does not truly abandon the status quo until the very end. It is not until the end that Walt’s family dynamic gets truly disrupted, Jesse (Aaron Paul) and Walt cut ties, Walt’s methamphetamine business stops, and Hank ends his quest to capture the drug cook known as Heisenberg. For most of the show’s duration, the elements of change can be found in the relationship between the images and the relationship between the show’s images and the images of other shows with which the audience may be familiar. The pilot episode shows both of these relationships brilliantly in two moments. The relationship between images within the show is highlighted in two scenes in which Walter and his wife Skyler are in bed together and end up engaging in a sexual activity. In the first scene, Walter is lying down in bed, while Skyler is sitting up, leaning her back against the wall looking at her computer. She is positioned above him, a framing that subtly emasculates

him. She begins to use her hand to stimulate Walter under the covers, but does not break her gaze from the computer. This scene establishes that Walt and Skyler are lacking in sexual chemistry and emasculates Walt by showing how disinterested his wife is in him. The passive role he takes in the sexual activity is also highly emasculating. The scene ends with Skyler reacting to something she sees on the computer, ruining the “moment,” if it can even be called that. At the end of the episode, after Walt cooks methamphetamine for the first time and has a near death experience, he returns to bed with Skyler. This time, the shot is framed from above the bed, rather than from the foot of it. This places Skyler and Walter’s heads at an equal level, changing their dynamic compared to the earlier shot. The scene ends with Walter grabbing Skyler and initiating sexual intercourse. The episode ends on the image of Skyler crying out in pleasure, mirroring the moment she cries out in joy at the computer from before. This mirroring of the first image shows how the events of the episode have fulfilled a want or need that Walter has, allowing him to recapture his masculinity.

The relationship between images across different shows is highlighted in the opening sequence of the same episode. It begins with a pair of pants flying through the air and cuts to Walter driving a Winnebago, wearing only his briefs and a gas mask. After crashing the RV, he stumbles out, takes off the mask, and puts on his shirt. He takes out his phone and begins to record an explanation for his actions. Hearing sirens in the distance, he walks out into the road and points a gun in the direction of the siren. Viewers familiar with Bryan Cranston, the actor who plays Walter White, will recall his role as Hal in the program *Malcolm in the Middle* (Fox, 2000–2006). The image of Walter stumbling out of the Winnebago in his “tighty whities” has a strong visual relationship with many visual gags from *Malcolm in the Middle* that show Hal in his underwear, usually engaging in some embarrassing act. *Breaking Bad* gives this visual a dark



turn by introducing the RV that has been converted to a meth lab, which also contains two seemingly dead bodies, as well as the image of Bryan Cranston in a green shirt and his underwear pointing a gun straight into the camera. The image is so provocative that it is recreated for the marketing materials for *Breaking Bad* Season 1. Most notably, the home video release of the first season shows Walt, in his underwear, with the green shirt tucked into the underwear, holding a gun. This image takes the familiar and turns it into something dark and evocative. It hooks viewers in and thematically sets up the idea of Walt's change from a pathetic, emasculated father into a murderous drug kingpin.

The evolution of settings is also an important aspect of the relationship between images in *Breaking Bad*. The White's house is a setting that appears in nearly every episode, and while it doesn't change drastically until the end of the series, it is a space in which images are constantly juxtaposed to create new meaning. Early on in the series, Walter hides the money he makes cooking meth inside the vents of the room that is being redone in preparation for the birth of his daughter. This links the innocence of a child's bedroom to the lie that Walter is living to maintain his family life. It also creates a link between the money and Walt's explanation that he is cooking meth "for his family." In the beginning of season three, when Skyler finds out that Walt is a meth cook, he tries to stop cooking meth.<sup>20</sup> After a big deal at the end of the previous season, Walt seems to have enough money to set aside for his family. He is also in remission, which means that he can continue to earn through his regular job and add to the money when he can.<sup>21</sup> However, he gets drawn back in to cooking meth by Gus Fring (Giancarlo Esposito), who

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<sup>20</sup> "No Mas," season 3, episode 1 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Bryan Cranston, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 21 March 2010.

<sup>21</sup> "ABQ," season 2, episode 13 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Adam Bernstein, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 31 May 2009.

convinces him to keep making meth by telling Walter that “a man provides for his family.”<sup>22</sup>

This ties Walter cooking meth to his own masculine ego. After this point, the money is no longer stored in the child’s bedroom, signifying that Walter is no longer truly doing this for his family, if he ever was to begin with, and is now solely doing it for himself and his own pride.

The evolution of Jesse’s house is used to show his state of mind in season four. Previously, Jesse’s house was relatively neat and clean. There was some drug paraphernalia lying around, but his living spaces were usually very empty. This emptiness visually implied how poor Jesse was, as he did not have a lot of things in his home which would signify wealth. In season four, as he becomes depressed after shooting Walt’s lab assistant Gale(David Costabile), he installs a giant set of speakers in his home and constantly has people over to party. At this point his house begins to decay severely. Food, clothes, drugs, and all other kinds of garbage end up strewn across his floor. Graffiti begins to cover every surface. People are sleeping all over the living room, and they are sitting on the stairs. The cluttered nature of the house shows how poorly Jesse is coping with his guilt after killing a man. This would not be as effective if the audience was never shown what Jesse’s homes were like before he killed someone, because there would be nothing to compare it to. If there was no prior frame of reference, the cluttered house could just as easily signify that Jesse has always lived this way. It would not help to visually establish his mental decline.

The serial nature of television allows for images to be built and then called upon again over time, developing new meanings. The most notable example of this in *Breaking Bad* is the symbolic image of the pink teddy bear, its missing eyeball, and the visual repetition of the teddy

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<sup>22</sup> “Mas,” season 3, episode 5 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Moira Walley-Beckett, dir. John Renck, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 18 April 2010.

bear's half-burned face. The teddy bear first appears in the "cold open" of the season 2 premiere "737."<sup>23</sup> The bear reappears four more times at the beginning of episodes throughout the season until the finale "ABQ"<sup>16</sup> which ends with a midair collision occurring over Albuquerque. That episode ends with the purple teddy bear landing in Walter's pool after he sees the collision happen. The collision is the result of a chain of events caused by Walt's actions throughout the season, culminating in the death of Jesse's girlfriend, Jane (Krysten Ritter). Her father turns out to be an air traffic controller, who makes a mistake on his first day back on the job after returning from mourning. The teddy bear's half-burned face can clearly be read as a visual metaphor for Walt's behavior. Walter can be described as "two-faced" because of the double life he leads and because of his behavior towards others, where he acts kind one moment, and monstrous the next.

In the beginning of the next season, Walter cleans out his pool's filter and finds one of the bear's eyeballs inside. The eyeball returns throughout the season as a visual reminder of the consequences of Walter's actions. Subsequently, the "two-faced" symbol becomes a recurring visual motif that represents people that have been victimized by Walter. It appears a few times in season 3 inside the apartment of Gale. Gale is a character who is similar to Walt in many ways. He is another talented chemist who decided to cook methamphetamine, but has a real respect for the chemistry involved. He works for Gus Fring, who also is employing Walter at this point in the story. Walter realizes that Gus plans to have Gale learn how to cook the extremely pure blue meth that is associated with Heisenberg. Thinking that he will be killed when Gale becomes confident in his ability to cook the meth without Walter's oversight, Walter manipulates

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<sup>23</sup> "737," season 2, episode 1 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. J. Roberts, dir. Bryan Cranston, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 8 March 2009.

Jesse into killing Gale.<sup>24</sup> The “two face” in Gale’s apartment is a styrofoam bust that has a face painted on one-half of it, with the other half of it being blank. The “two face” occurs again at the end of season 4 when Walter rigs a bomb inside of Hector Salamanca’s (Mark Margolis) wheelchair in order to kill Gus Fring.<sup>25</sup> After the explosion, Gus walks into the hallway of the nursing home and the camera slowly turns to reveal the missing half of his face. The shot is visually similar to the first shot that revealed the teddy bear’s face, with both shots spinning around their subject to reveal the disfigured face. The shots also become a sort of mirror image of each other. The teddy bear is facing the right side of the frame, and the camera spins around it to reveal the burned side of its face, the left side. When Gus walks into the hallways he is facing the left side of the frame, and the camera spins to reveal that the left side of his face is now blown off. This could be seen as signifying Walter’s final descent into the monster that is his Heisenberg persona. In the original teddy bear shot, the intact side of the face would represent Walter White’s home persona, and the burned face his Heisenberg one. Applying that same idea to Gus’ face would show that now the Walter face is burned away and only Heisenberg remains.

“The flow of time is always cruel...”

Princess Zelda. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

### **The Relationship Between Images in *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time***

*The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* began development alongside another title for the Nintendo 64 system, *Super Mario 64* (Nintendo, 1996). An important note to understand when

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<sup>24</sup> “Full Measure,” season 3, episode 13 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Vince Gilligan, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 13 June 2010.

<sup>25</sup> “Face Off,” season 4, episode 13 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Vince Gilligan, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 9 October 2011.

discussing the development of these games is the nature of the hardware on which they are designed to be played. These games were developed within the same company that developed the console that it was released on. This is important to know because the game was designed specifically to work within the strengths and weaknesses of the console. These games also serve as a way to market the console, as this console was the only one to play those games. Both *Super Mario 64* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* presented their developers with the challenge of translating a gameplay style that was successful with two dimensional graphics onto a system that was capable of producing three dimensional graphics, giving images more depth and allowing for the use of more camera angles, as well as creating a greater space for movement among the characters. *Super Mario 64* came out when the Nintendo 64 system was launched and was able to take the core gameplay mechanics of the *Mario* series and adapt them for the new system in a way that was extremely well received by players. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was able to achieve the same success in adapting the *Zelda* series and was notable for utilizing the cinematic form in order to accomplish this goal.

The player controls a character named Link, a young boy who lives in a forest full of other children. He is awakened one day by a fairy named Navi who tells Link he has been summoned by the Great Deku Tree, a magical tree that protects all the children in the forest. The Tree tells Link that he has been poisoned by an evil warlock named Ganondorf who means to conquer the realm of Hyrule, in which the game takes place. Before dying, the Tree sends Link off to see Zelda, the young Princess of Hyrule. She informs Link of Ganondorf's plan to seize a powerful object created by the gods, called the Triforce. In order to stop him, she wants Link to seize it first, along with a magical sword that is said to "seal the darkness." From there the player goes on a quest to accomplish this by exploring the land of Hyrule, meeting many different

fantasy characters, and then finally returning to the castle of Hyrule in order to obtain the Triforce and the sword. Upon doing this, however, the player discovers that Ganondorf was aware of Link and Zelda's plan the whole time, and simply waited for them to get to the Triforce and the sword so he could seize it. When this happens, the sword seals Link inside a place called "the Sacred Realm" for seven years, because he is not yet old enough to wield the sword.

Upon exiting the Sacred Realm, Link discovers that the realm of Hyrule has been completely changed from when he was a child, and has become a grim dystopia. For the rest of the game, Link visits places that he visited as a child in order to gather power so that he can defeat Ganondorf. The first place the player goes upon leaving the Sacred Realm is the town just outside of the castle, and it is starkly different from how it was when the player left it. When the player enters it before, it is a bright vibrant place filled with people dancing and playing, as well as some animals running around. The music is festive and lively. Upon entering the town as an adult, it is dark and grim. The only inhabitants left are zombies, which are standing in the same spots as the joyful people who were there when Link visited as a child. There is no longer lively music; instead there is just an ambient, tonal noise. This immediately signifies to the player that the world they are going to explore will be different and darker now. By showing this, the game immediately communicates to the player how dire the situation has become in Hyrule. It also serves as a visual example of the consequences that a person's actions can have. Link is motivated to save Hyrule from Ganondorf partially because he feels responsible for what has happened. This idea of consequences is delivered in an incredibly elegant way through the use of this image. Another crucial element is where Link is placed when the player loads their save file. If the file is saved while Link is a kid, upon loading that file Link will be inside his house in the Kokiri forest when play begins again. This reinforces the idea of the forest as Link and the

player's home. When loading a game that was saved with Link as an adult, however, Link is instead inside the Temple of Time, which is inside the city that is now filled with zombies. This forces the player to see the image of the ruined town multiple times throughout the playthrough. It also serves to alienate Link and the player from the previous home of the forest.

After exiting the town, Link returns to the forest in which he grew up, and found that it, too, is full of monsters. Beyond that, however, not much has changed. Even though Link himself has aged, the rest of the forest children still appear exactly the same as they did when the player saw them in the beginning of the game. The player learns that this is because Link is not actually like the rest of the children there. The children are called Kokiri; they are mythical children protected by the Great Deku Tree and do not age past childhood. Link is not a Kokiri; he was simply left under the protection of the tree by his mother, who was fleeing from a brutal war. The unchanged nature of Link's childhood friends is a metaphor for the memories of one's childhood, which will inevitably be altered by time and new perspectives, but will always contain constant elements. The act of placing the adult Link amongst the unchanged children from his childhood also creates a distance between Link and his former home. Upon seeing that Link is not truly from the forest, it becomes open to interpretation as to whether he really ever belonged there in the first place. This works towards the theme of growing up that is central to the game. The act of reflecting upon and reassessing the memories of one's own childhood is crucial to growing up and becoming the person they are as an adult.

Throughout his adventures as an adult, Link meets a mysterious, masked character named Sheik. Everytime the two meet, Sheik gives Link some advice and teaches him a song that will help him be able to teleport to the outside of whatever temple Link is about to venture into. The player eventually learns that Sheik is actually Princess Zelda in disguise. This revelation is

accompanied by Zelda making a physical transformation from Sheik's boyish design with an outfit reminiscent of a ninja, to an elaborate gown with a tiara and long hair. Immediately after this happens, she is captured by Ganondorf, and Link needs to travel into Ganondorf's castle in order to save her. This moment shows how our perception of others changes based on their appearances and our understanding of them. The mysterious Sheik is a guide that arrives to help when help is required, but the beautiful Princess Zelda is a damsel in distress who needs to be rescued. It also changes the relationship that the player has to the character, as suddenly it is understood that this is a person that Link has a history with. This element provides a message about growing up as well. This shows how the people that we knew as kids can transform into completely different people when they grow up. The person that Link knew as a kid has been changed by the experiences that she has gone through as the world changed around her, which made her unrecognizable to Link as an adult. There is also a subtle message about the way people are shaped by the world around them. As a child, Zelda is naive and innocent because she lives isolated within the castle and is constantly guarded. This is shown to the player first-hand as even getting to visit her is a challenge due to how tightly she is guarded. Before reaching her, the player needs to go through a lengthy segment of the game where they avoid being seen by her guards. As Sheik, Zelda is a hardened warrior, but also a wise guide. Being thrown into a harsh world after being guarded allowed her to develop greater wisdom, but it also made her more emotionally guarded. It is interesting, because her emotional guarding is necessary in the cruel world of Hyrule as ruled by Ganondorf, but it could also be seen as her reapplying the protection she had as a child. She no longer has a castle and soldiers to guard her, so instead she guards herself by being emotionally distant and covering her face. When she reveals herself as the Princess, Zelda becomes emotionally and physically vulnerable. Upon revealing herself to



Link, she is almost immediately captured by Ganondorf. This reminds the player of the precarious position that she is in as a princess, as she is a target of aggression. It also shows the effects that the world has on people. She needs to let her guard down and make herself emotionally vulnerable in order to connect with Link and help him finish his quest, but this is a great risk for her and ends up causing her direct harm. She hid herself as Sheik precisely because she knew this is what would happen if she was discovered as Zelda. Ultimately, this aspect of the game touches on the way we are shaped by the world in which we exist and how the progression of time changes all of us.

### **Cinematic Mise-En-Scene: Expanding Space and Time**

Film scholar Linda Williams argues that serial television allows for a greater expansion and exploration of space and time than cinema provides.<sup>26</sup> She analyzes the opening of the season 3 premiere of *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–2008), a scene that she claims does not progress the narrative or foreshadow events to come. If this is the case, the moment does not necessarily need to be included in the finished work and likely would not if this were a film. A serial television program, however, has enough time and space to account for moments such as these and *The Wire* uses the time accordingly. The aforementioned episodes of *Breaking Bad* featuring the black and white cold opens function in a similar way. While these scenes do foreshadow events to come at the end of the season, they are not necessary in terms of narrative utility. These moments could be removed from the show and it would not be left incomprehensible. These moments are allowed to exist in *Breaking Bad*, however, because, as a television show, the time and space exists to indulge in them. Williams also discusses how *The Wire* never truly stops to

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<sup>26</sup>Linda Williams, *On The Wire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) pp. 56–65

make sure the audience is following along; the narrative is constantly moving forward and it is assumed that the audience can follow. *Breaking Bad* operates in much the same way, trusting the audience to remember details of the plot and understand the events occurring.

*Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* function in a similar way in terms of revealing and exploring spaces within their own respective narrative. In each work, the spaces start as extremely contained and homelike areas that then expand out into a much wider, darker world. This is extremely evident in *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, as the player is initially confined to a small area of the Kokiri Forest and must explore it in order to find a sword and a shield before continuing on into the larger world. As the story progresses, Link and the player explore more areas and the world expands rapidly. First, he makes his way to the castle and the town immediately surrounding it. From here, Link visits another town which leads to a mountain populated by rock monsters. Then, he visits a cavern filled with fish people. Each of these spaces are fully realized and can be explored by the player. There are shops so needed items can be purchased for Link, there are minigames to play, and there are secrets to find. Most of the areas have a giant fairy to find that will grant special powers, though most of the powers are not very useful. This expansion gives the game a sense of exploration and mystery, and fits with the game's theme of coming of age. Many new areas are associated with new enemies to fight and new allies to make. Going to unfamiliar places and meeting unfamiliar people is an essential aspect of coming of age. It also communicates that the world is much wider than that experienced by a child, and that despite its massive size, everything in the world is connected. The interconnectedness of everything is best communicated when the player returns to the areas they visited in the child section of the game. There is not a single area left untouched by the evil forces of Ganondorf; nothing exists in isolation. In the second half of the game, Link returns to

these spaces and they expand further. As a child, Link cannot go inside of Death Mountain because it is too hot, but as an adult he is given magic clothing that allows him to enter, opening that area up to the player. In Kakariko village there is a graveyard. As a child, one of the graves can be pushed aside to find a secret underground area. As an adult, multiple graves suddenly have underground areas, as does the bottom of the well in town. The player needs to venture into all of these in order to access the hidden Shadow Temple located behind the graveyard. So in this way, the expansion of the world perpetuates itself, as exploration opens opportunities for further exploration. It is important to note that the player can glimpse a few of these areas as a child, but cannot fully explore them until they reach the adult section of the game because they lack the proper equipment. This is symbolic of the glimpses of the struggles of adulthood that children sometimes are subject to, particularly during times of tragedy.

*Breaking Bad* functions in a very similar way. The first episode establishes some key spaces such as Walter's home, the Winnebago, the school, and the hospital. The second episode expands the setting to show Jesse's home.<sup>27</sup> The second and third episodes stay fairly contained within Jesse's house, before the following episodes expand again when Walter and Jesse get involved with Tuco (Raymond Cruz) and his gang. Throughout the rest of the series, these locations keep expanding further and further. Season 2 introduces the streets where Skinny Pete (Charles Baker), Badger (Matt Jones), and Combo (Rodney Rush) deal drugs. It also introduces the DEA offices, Saul Goodman's (Bob Odenkirk) legal office, and Los Pollos Hermanos, the restaurant run by Gus Fring. Season 3 introduces Gus Fring's industrial laundry facility that hides Walter and Jesse's new meth lab. Season 4 introduces many areas south of the US border

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<sup>27</sup> "Cat's in the Bag...", season 1, episode 2 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Adam Bernstein, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 27 January 2009.

where Gus has conflicts with the drug cartels. Season 5 introduces the Madrigal conglomerate and features Walter's meth being transported around the world. Interestingly, the last two episodes add new locations that seem to contract from the world rather than expanding it. The locations seen are new, but the characters become trapped in them. Walter and Saul are trapped within the basement of a vacuum cleaner store waiting to be whisked away by Ed (Robert Forster).<sup>28</sup> This is the last time the audience sees Saul. We are also introduced to the drug lab that the Neo-Nazis trap Jesse within and Walter's new home in New Hampshire. These areas feel closed off and isolated from the rest of the outside world, which fits the grim tragic tone of the final episodes perfectly. The final episode introduces Skyler's new home, which feels small and dirty compared to the house she lived in for the rest of the series.<sup>29</sup> The last the audience sees of her is in this space, so she is trapped in our eyes as well. Several times throughout the series, spaces become closed off to the characters, which also helps with this sense of the world suddenly contracting. For example, Jesse and Walter need to destroy the Winnebago, Walter gets fired from his job at the school, the White's house becomes quarantined by the police and looted by teenagers, Fring's meth lab gets burned to the ground, and Saul closes his legal practice. This fits with the series' themes about chemistry and change, as things cannot expand forever and eventually need to be broken down, which is exactly what happens at the end of the series.

Interestingly, spaces in *Breaking Bad* serve as gateways to other spaces in the same way that they do in *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Walter's visit to the hospital serves as a gateway to the meth lab. The meth lab becomes a gateway to Jesse's house and the streets. The

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<sup>28</sup> "Granite Slate," season 5, episode 15 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Peter Gould, dir. Peter Gould, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 22 September 2013.

<sup>29</sup> "Felina," season 5, episode 16 of *Breaking Bad*, writ. Vince Gilligan, dir. Vince Gilligan, exec. prod. Vince Gilligan, AMC, 29 September 2013.

streets become a gateway to Saul's legal office. Saul serves as a gateway to Los Pollos Hermanos, which is a gateway to Gus Fring's operation, which becomes a gateway to Madrigal. These two works both feature expansion that perpetuates itself in nearly the same way. This likely has something to do with the way that these works are meant to be consumed. *Breaking Bad* was not made to be watched as a three-day-long movie and *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was not meant to be played in a day. They were meant to be consumed over time, in installments. Both can essentially be referred to as serialized, which is interesting because we do not often think of video games as serialized. The serial nature of these stories allows for expansion when given the opportunity. When making a work that is serialized in this way, a creator has two options: they can either repeat the same scenarios repeatedly, the way that a sitcom or an arcade game does, or they can delve deeper into the characters, story, and setting the way that *Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* do.

## **Conclusion**

*Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* are startlingly similar in terms of how they engage with audiences. Both form serial narratives in which protagonists become drawn into a world that is much larger than what was previously known to them. These protagonists meet a vast array of characters in these new locations and the world around them becomes increasingly dark. Both function as meta-commentaries on the nature of their respective media, with *Breaking Bad* offering a critique of the role of the nuclear family on television as well as the medium's ability to manipulate audiences. *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*

offers a critique on the consequence-free nature of previous video games, where players are always able to start over and prevent their mistakes. This is critical in an age where these media are proliferated on a global scale. These media have a great power to connect with audiences and shape their worldview, and if we can understand the way that these media operate, and the way that they transform the cinematic, then we can understand how they come to shape the world.

Depictions of the nuclear family on television have contributed to a culture where that family pairing is normalized and seen as aspirational. That is not to say that the nuclear family is a bad ideal to aspire to, but it should not be seen as the ubiquitous, sole goal of every American citizen, the way that it is portrayed on television. This invention has allowed our culture to experience moments collectively across spaces that were previously thought impossible. The collective viewing of 9/11 is a perfect example of the television's power to bring horrors directly into the home and unite audiences across the globe. Video games are not as ubiquitous as television and therefore do not share all of the same effects. However, they, too, share a power to bring people together communally over large distances. It is a fast growing industry, and soon may occupy the space in society that was previously reserved for other media forms. Perhaps we do not experience aspirations and history through video games the same way that we experience them through television, but video game spaces can become an outlet for audiences to investigate questions of morality and understand the perspectives of others. The storytelling capacity of the video game has yet to reach its true potential.

The use of spectatorship, mise-en-scene, and montage in *Breaking Bad* and *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* illustrate just a few of these new avenues opened up by the advent of television and video games. These media have completely reframed spectatorship when compared to cinema, which has resulted in a more interactive engagement between the work and

the audience. The serial nature of both media contributes to this and creates new opportunities for developing the mise en scene across time. Video games also allow for more close analysis and exploration of the importance of mise en scene. Both works employ principles of montage on a large scale to create new meaning as well, enriching our understanding of the cinematic.

Throughout its history, cinema has been thought of as a medium without a future. The Lumiere Brothers famously stopped producing films for this very reason. Over one hundred years later, cinema has yet to prove them correct in that assessment and it never will. If all the multiplexes shut down, and all the film festivals ceased, and audiences stopped caring for feature-length films, cinema would still have a future. The future of cinema now lies within television and video games as well as within cinema itself. This future contains more possibilities for utilizing elements of the cinematic to reach audiences and engage them. These media have been perceived by those concerned with their own wallets as a kind of existential threat to cinema. Studios have been driven by the fear that the end is always near and television, or video games, or both will be the smoking gun that ended it all. From the perspective of artistic potential, these fears are completely unfounded. New media will only deepen the cinematic and open new avenues for cinematic expression.