

***American Psycho* as a Postmodern Text**



Munna Hossain Khan

Student ID: 173013006

Department of English and Humanities

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***American Psycho* as a Postmodern Text**

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Munna Hossain Khan

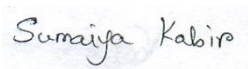
Student ID: 173013006

Thesis Supervisor: Sumaiya Kabir

Summer 2021

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



Sumaiya Kabir

Lecturer

Department of English and Humanities

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

Munna

Munna Hossain Khan

ID: 173013006

Department of English and Humanities

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

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Abstract

This research analyzed the webbed plot portrayed in *American Psycho*. The main character of the text is Patrick Bateman. He is alienated from society. This study showed the correlation between his false identity and other postmodern features. At first, this paper examined the fundamental postmodern experiences of the main character of this text and uncovered the role of consumerism that gave birth to such a character through the means of excessive greed, jealousy and wealth. Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality and Fredric Jameson's theory of late capitalism were used in order to show the existence of consumer culture in the text which is filtering the reality through value, exchange and production. Different perspectives of the postmodern issues were discussed and analyzed in order to show the intensity of the issues. One of the essays of Ihab Hassan was also utilized in order to show the depiction of few postmodern features. Furthermore, the horror of the consumer society was analyzed in relation to postmodern elements which are present in the text. However, the research is based on a descriptive qualitative method. The data used in the research were collected through different books and articles. Moreover, the novel can be considered as a postmodern text as it contains the features of postmodernism.

Keywords: *American psycho*, postmodern, hyperreality, false identity, consumer culture, alienation

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Problem/ Problematize

American Psycho as a text has its own historical settings and anxieties as well as connection to the other works of the literature. At a first glance, it may look like another novel based on the common serial killer theme. But when we progress further inside the plot, we can see references to the past famous serial killers. There are also references to the yuppie culture which existed during the 1980s. The blurriness between fiction and history is a common trademark of postmodern narrative which is also present in the text. *American Psycho* gave many references to the old and popular yuppie society. Patrick Bateman is the main protagonist of the novel. He is ambitious, young, rich and powerful. But he is trapped into the rules and regulations of the yuppie culture. However, he considers murders as fantasy to escape from the insanity of society and his own mind.

Statement of the problem

American Psycho as a text often tries to hide the insanity which exists in postmodern society. The ambition and jealousy of the main character make him a monster. We can justify the uprising of this monster through analyzing several postmodern elements of this text. This research will explore the different facets of these postmodern issues and how these issues justify the actions of the main character and create identity crisis. This research will also explore how the alienation of Bateman from his society is a direct result of this consumer based postmodern

society. The complex relationship between Bateman and his own society can be interpreted in various ways and different perceptions can be implemented in order to show the existence of consumer culture. Furthermore, if we analyze the mental world of the main character, we will be able to find out the reasons which led him to his psychotic journey. His failure to distinguish reality and fantasy also works as an element to hide from the obligations of the society. The consumerism aspect of the society has replaced the mindset of Patrick Bateman, therefore his identity. So, the hyperreal aspect of postmodernity is definitely present here as it manipulates and replaces the identity of the protagonist. If this fact is analyzed, the role of the consumer society can be presented in many ways to show how it has impacted the other postmodern features and issues. Furthermore, different references to American history and works of fiction can be found in the text. There are also inconsistencies in the narration of Patrick Bateman. These inconsistencies create a vagueness in the reader's mind. So, in a way, it creates a different mental world in the reader's mind which blurs the line between fantasy and reality. Moreover, there are also certain places where the novel examines the nature of the novel's protagonist and other components also. So, *American Psycho* follows a unique storytelling which is quite different from other traditional methods.

Research Objective

The aim of this study was to interpret the novel *American Psycho* as a postmodern text. It addressed the issue of how the context of the text relates to the hyperreal world of postmodernism and how the consumer society decides the role and identity of the main character.

Research Questions

Some research questions were considered the basis of this research. These are-

- To what extent were the features of postmodernity (e.g., hyperreality, late capitalism, pastiche) present in the text?
- How were the features of postmodernity (i.e., hyperreality, late capitalism, pastiche) used by Bret Easton Ellis in *American Psycho*?
- How were the issues (e.g., identity crisis, alienation) created through consumer culture?

Limitations

This study has potential limitations. The analysis of the text is drawn on through observational studies. So, they are subject to biases and might have possibly influenced the outcome.

Research Methodology

This paper will analyze a novel titled; *American Psycho* written by Bret Easton Ellis. The text will be read through a postmodern viewpoint. To analyze the text, the researcher will use several theories that fall under the field of postmodernism. The theorists who are used for this research are Jean Baudrillard, Ihab Hassan and Fredric Jameson. The theories will be reviewed by evaluating ten peer-reviewed journals. The researcher will be focusing on qualitative methods only.

Jean Baudrillard & Hyperreality: According to Jean Baudrillard, the post-modern has witnessed a huge transformation in our society. Our society is now more reliant on signs and symbols rather than what's going on in the real world. Baudrillard argues that 'hyperreality' is this new phenomenon which is more real than the actual reality. We live in a world which is far away from reality. So, the subject which focuses on how 'reality' influences our lives is now irrelevant. Because most people are not living experiences that are based on their actual reality. Rather, it is a hyperreal experience which is dominating our lives.

Fredric Jameson & Late Capitalism: According to Fredrich Jameson, the media as a whole works as a new and more influential product of late capitalism (film, internet, print, television). So, capitalist society is taking over our lives through the use of the media. Through extreme mediatization, our identity and culture have become very reliant on the media's version of our reality. This version of reality is filled with capitalist ideologies and values.

Fredric Jameson & Pastiche: According to Fredrich Jameson, parody has been replaced by Pastiche in this postmodern age. For Jameson, pastiche is the imitation of unique or peculiar, idiosyncratic style. It is like wearing a linguistic mask. So, we get to see the past through the pop images of the past. It is unable to represent the historical past, but it can demonstrate ideas,

symbols and stereotypes which existed in the past. So, we can only know about the history through the pop images and simulacra of that history. But we remain far away from the original history.

Ihab Hassan & Postmodernism: Ihab Hassan in his essays demonstrates that the period of postmodernism is over. Now, we are gradually entering the age of postmodernity. It consists of ideological plurality of discourses, media glitz, hype and hyperbole, consumer society. All of them as a whole are helping postmodernism to transform into conceptual ectoplasm. Postmodern novels incorporate the idea of inner reality. This reality is constantly changing in relation to the experiences of the other individuals. So, we are redefining our relationships between fragments and wholes, ourselves and others.

Data Collection Procedures:

Multiple databases were used while selecting the sources for this research. Initially, Google Scholar was used in order to find out which types of articles were available. At first, broad search terms were used in order to find the available list of articles that are peer-reviewed. The researcher was able to use a better list through the data derived from the Google Scholar with that search term. Other databases such as JSTOR, EBSCO were also used while conducting the research. The researcher was also able to attend an online meeting arranged by ULAB library which assisted in selecting search terms. In addition to database searching, a number of relevant articles were located using Boolean and phrase search.

Sources were evaluated using a number of different criteria. First, the source was selected on the basis of relevance regarding the research questions. Second, the source had to be the primary source. Any source that was focused on secondary source research was removed. Third, the source had to be a peer-reviewed journal source.

Conclusion:

While conducting the analysis, the researcher sought information in the data collection that is mostly in line with the research purpose. The researcher also provided emphasis on seeking the data which had the clearest presentation on the topic.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

American Psycho as a postmodern text contains some postmodern themes and issues such as hyperreality, identity crisis, narrative ambiguity, consumer culture and pastiche. This is evident while we explore some of the research previously done regarding the features of postmodernism and how these features are present in *American Psycho*. All of the data is organized into thematic structure.

Researcher 1

Caracciolo in his qualitative research states that Bateman is the product of this postmodern society. He wants to be a significant part of the yuppie lifestyle. He wants to be admirable and unique, different from others. But he cannot. The whole society is a kind of an image where everyone is an imitation of one another. The whole society is trying to justify this image. Finally, Caracciolo concludes that the society in which they all live is the illusion of reality where postmodern commodities determine their action, behavior and identity. But this research is limited to show how consumer culture has affected the mental phenomenon of Patrick Bateman.

Researcher 2

In another qualitative research, Niedlich insists that the novel is the depiction of a postmodern world. It is chaotic, immoral, most importantly hyperreal which does not have morals and values. This world is in disorder and absolutely meaningless. As a part of the society, Bateman is

involved in the reproduction of this meaninglessness. However, at the same time, he is also responsible for making a meaningful world which is in order and there he can control fates and events. As contemporary mass media denies the existence of reality, Batman tries to find a way in which he can also construct his own reality.

Researcher 3

Weinreich argues that *American Psycho* portrays the city as the zone of signs, the media and the code. In this city, labor is a mode of production, but it has been replaced by another kind of labor. Though it still remains important to reproduce labor as a social ritual. Weinreich insists that Patrick Bateman's labor is such a ritual. He is only welcomed to socialize, not to excel and improve himself. Thus, his value is replaced by society's obligations, commodities. Though every character has been described with finest detail, still everyone appears to be interchangeable like the brand-name commodities. So, through this qualitative research, Weinreich concludes that Baudrillard's principle of semiotic reduction is prevalent in society.

Researcher 4

Serpell in his research states that Bateman has an advantage. He can easily get away with his murders. Because everyone in Yuppie society is interchangeable. Serpell further insists that our postmodern society, life, and human body is valueless. Bateman is not the only person who is only struggling with his identity, rather there are huge amounts of people who also have the same problem. Everyone is the result of the simulation, and the hyperreal world has replaced their real identity. So, the unusual people are not acknowledged by the society. But further research needs to be done regarding the value crisis of this postmodern society.

Researcher 5

Cojocarú states that the characters in the novel belong to the same yuppie lifestyle from the 1980s. All of them imitate each other quite well. Bateman is a rich person, and he can afford a lot of luxurious items. But rather than fulfilling his needs, his wealth causes him a feeling of dissatisfaction. No commodity can satisfy him. That's why he looks for different ways to find satisfaction and therefore his identity. Cojocarú concludes that Ellis has portrayed a postmodern society which is filled with superficiality and the identity of the characters are decided by external factors.

Researcher 6

In discussing narrative point-of-view, Phillips states that Bateman fails to show the distinction between perception and imagination. So, the readers cannot really decide whether he was responsible for those crimes or not. However, the examples of various crimes done by him is not enough to consider him an unreliable narrator. Rather, the inconsistent relation between the narrator and the reader and the textual signs are the reason behind this unreliable narration. Bateman's way of seeing or judging the world and the reader's perception does not match. Thus, it creates a postmodern ambiguity. Phillips names this phenomenon as "unintentional self-incrimination".

Researcher 7

Julian Murphet (2002) considers Bateman as one of the inconsistent narrators in modern day fiction. The killing of Paul Owen and the incidents that were linked to this murder proves Bateman as an inconsistent narrator. When going through the description of the murder, the

reader will definitely find inconsistency in his narration. Murphet also states that the presence of metafiction is evident in the philosophical thoughts of Patrick Bateman. Bateman himself describes his character as a fictional character through one of his monologues. It explains the idea that Bateman functions as a character in the fictional plane. Though his characteristics are identical to real people, still he functions as a fictional character.

Researcher 8

Bennet and Royle insist that pastiche is an example of intertextuality in literature. It is an imitation of an original piece of work which existed in the past. Bennet and Royle further stated that *American Psycho* is a critique of the hyperreality, and consumerism aspect found in postmodern society. Patrick Bateman is a fictional character. Though he lives in a fictional society, the society he lives in reflects the real society which was present in Manhattan during the 80-90s. Both societies are the imitation of one another.

Researcher 9

In similar research, Helyer states that Patrick Bateman is fascinated with serial killers. It is apparent as he loves to read biographies of different serial killers. He also discusses with his friends about these serial killers. Ed Gein, Charles Manson, Ted Bundy and Son of Sam are some of these well-known serial killers mentioned in the novel. Bateman has an admiration for them. He read about these different serial-killers and most importantly he adopts the mindset of these killers. Thus, he creates a new identity by mimicking them. This is a kind of pastiche as he imitates their mindset and action. Furthermore, Helyer also insists that *American Psycho* can be described as gothic fiction. She describes the gothic fiction as a "unique combination of the repulsive and the compulsive ". The gothic genre warns the reader about the danger of breaking

social norms. Thus, Bateman's character shows what actions need to be avoided in society. The Gothic genre also incorporates the use of both horror and humor. Although the element of horror is quite visible, the humor is found in Bateman's own black humor and the various comical situations that he often observes.

Researcher 10

Allen Thiher states that Hassan in his essay "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism" brings up some relevant questions regarding postmodernism. He tries to provide the definition of postmodernism dialectically in relation to modernism. There he found a number of differences between modernism and postmodernism. Hassan argues that postmodernism must be defined by the plurality of discourses. He also provides a series of postmodern features. It is a 'paratactic' list which provides a number of opportunities about how we might want to describe ourselves. In a way, Hassan might be offering an approach to overcome our alienation in the postmodern world.

Conclusion

American Psycho has demonstrated the fact that it is a rich source of postmodern elements. It has been flexible enough to utilize a multitude of previous works as well as several postmodern themes. So, *American Psycho* works as a representative of the madness that exists in this postmodern society.

Chapter 3

***American Psycho* in light of Jean Baudrillard & Fredric Jameson**

American Psycho contains a few themes and issues which are prevalent in postmodern literature. Ellis' work is a clear depiction of how the postmodern society is a stimulation of reality and how the concept of consumerism works throughout the society. This chapter will discuss these postmodern aspects of the novel in light of the critics such as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson.

Jean Baudrillard is a French cultural theorist. He thinks that reality has lost its place in this postmodern world. Hyperreality has taken the place of reality. We cannot separate the value of signs and objects in this world. Rather, our valuable identity has been replaced by a postmodern identity in which commodities form our identity. During the modern period, reality was aided by an image. The original had its own value, and the image had its individual reality. In the postmodern world, the contact with reality has been lost and the image has become the placeholder of reality. As a result, individual identity does not exist in our society. Rather, it is replaced by a postmodern identity where commodities and materials form our identity.

Patrick Bateman is a serial killer. Throughout the text, we are provided with the psychological insights regarding Bateman. He has all the qualities of a normal human being. He himself states that "I have all the characteristics of a human being: flesh, blood, skin, hair, but not a single clear identifiable emotion except for greed and disgust" (Ellis 290) But he also has a desire to be unique. His morning routine consists of an extreme workout session. He also applies several skincare products. That's all because "I want to fit in" (Ellis 244) he says. These things in a way make him even more frightening than a psychopath serial killer. He is indeed a psychopath.

But he is even more horrifying. Because the image he is building up every day is not a real one. Instead, it is an illusion of reality. The gorgeous external image of himself is the reason he can draw a lot of victims. He lives in a society where everyone is an imitation of one another. The whole society works as a mirror in order to form a combined image which is actually an illusion of reality. Bateman's daily routine consists of useless long explanations of clothes and brands, and fancy restaurants. These commodities influence the mental world of Patrick Bateman. Therefore, his identity, actions and lifestyle as a whole are decided by these materialistic factors. Furthermore, it is well known that postmodern novels deal with the chaotic part of society as stated by Ihab Hassan. The postmodern world is disorderly and immoral. It removes individuality and produces meaninglessness. Bateman's loss of control over his identity proves the fact that he is also consumed by this chaotic world. Therefore, he is also responsible for the reproduction of this meaninglessness. Bateman is not a normal individual with some psycho characteristics. Rather, Bateman is a psychopath with normal human characteristics. This is evident when we see that Bateman can control his impulses and ultimately decides that he will not kill his secretary, Jean. But surprisingly at that point, he starts to kill even more people. His insanity is shown when he plays with the body parts of his victims. Furthermore, he even eats part of one of the victim's brains. This shows the existence of repression in Bateman's mind. Bateman says "I need to engage in homicidal behavior on a massive scale. It cannot be corrected but I have no other ways to fulfill my needs" (Ellis 348). The result of this repression is shown during the climax of the text. It reveals one of the possibilities that Bateman may not have killed those people at all; rather it is just the imagination of his mental world. He presumably has created a mental world in which he can control events. He apparently tries to form his own reality so that he can cope up with his identity crisis.

Fredric Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* says that the media as a whole works as a new and more influential product of late capitalism (film, internet, print, television). So, capitalist society is redefining the necessity of our lives through extreme mediatization. Because of the mediatization, our identity and culture have become very reliant on the media's version of our reality. This version of reality is filled with capitalist ideologies and values. That's the reason, we are experiencing the rise of new forms of business organizations. The concept of multinational and transnational organizations has now crossed the national borders. These organizations are now following the new capitalist values. These multinationals do not represent any specific country; rather it's influence, and supremacy are now greater than any nation. This rise of multinationals has some social consequences. The rise of the yuppies is one of these consequences. So, we can say multinational corporations are taking control over the values and identity of our society. Mass production of commodities is now directly linked with the structural values of society. Therefore, it is accelerating the growth and expansion of consumer culture.

The materialistic nature of American consumer society portrayed in *American Psycho* is necessary to analyze the social phenomenon Bateman lives in and how it influences his identity. This society fails to provide a sense of fulfilment and by the help of cruelty and violence Bateman wants to get away from the conformist nature of America's consumer society.

To evaluate the consumerist aspect of *American Psycho*, it is necessary to inspect the social circumstances in the 80s in America, which are apparently depicted throughout the text. Then, we will be able to understand why Bateman showed his violent nature to escape the conformity of America's consumer society. In the 80s, American society changed remarkably compared to the 60s. In the 60s, America saw numerous reforms and protests such as the African

Americans' civil rights movement, young Americans protesting the Vietnam War and women for justice and gender equality. America had to finish its military warfare in Vietnam at the end of the 1970s. The rights of women were established as well as the civil rights movement also succeeded in reaching its goals. But America fell victim to an economic recession. The interest rates and inflation were very high. Thus, Americans became distressed due to the economic downfall and bankruptcy. So, they focused more on helping themselves and spent more time on their own self-interest.

Therefore, in the 1980s, America saw technological progress and a booming economy that restored optimism in the Americans to live an unburdened life. Many people felt as if "there were almost no limits on the good life they could lead". Money was the main concern for most Americans. They believed that money could help them to attain a good life. This particular generation was known as "the 'me' generation". A few of the groups were named "yuppies", which signified the educated young and urban professionals. They were highly ambitious and only focused on spending and making money. Money related words such as privatization, yuppie, takeover became the key vocabulary of this generation.

On the political level, the government provided many opportunities to the citizens which seemed to reestablish the possibilities of the American Dream. But the harsh reality was that the American Dream only became a reality for people who already possessed enough wealth. As it turned out, this expanded the division between social classes. Thus, American society saw a significant gap between the poor and the rich. Bateman as a character can be considered as a villain or anti-hero. But in a way, he is a prey of the American Dream. The era of the American Dream was filled with greed, jealousy and materialism. These factors have influenced the actions of Patrick Bateman. Externally *American Psycho* may seem like a horror story or the story of a

serial killer. But the complex character of Bateman shows the reader what our society and culture have done to him. *American Psycho* provides us with a forewarning through the tale of Bateman. If we see carefully, we can see the presence of this monster all among us. We all are Patrick Bateman, but in a different shape, skin color, gender or ethnicity. We may walk normally; we may eat normally, or we may drink normally. We can also possess good looks and wealth. But all of us have the same greed, desire and self-consumption side inside us. We feel envied by our friend's body; we all feel jealous of our rich neighbor's wealth. We may even show these characteristics. But what we do not like to present is to reveal the killer among us.

The emptiness of Patrick Bateman also resulted from this consumer society. Our lives get the sense of fulfillment through the relationship with other people. But it is also the most complex factor of our lives. Bateman is free from this complexity. But he has a desire to fit in. But he is not able to form any bond. The danger of living in this way is that he lives by killing other people. This is the thing that the American Dream did to the citizens. People like Patrick Bateman fall into a victim of this consumer-based society. So, Bateman is the representative of the culture and arrogance of 1980's America. There is no reason to justify the crimes he did, but we cannot deny the fact that he is the face of 1980's yuppie culture.

This materialistic division of society is also clearly depicted in *American Psycho*. Bateman and his co-workers represent the materialistic yuppies, who are only concerned with wealth and fame. Simultaneously, they demean the poor and lower-class people such as beggars, prostitutes and immigrants. Bateman dangles money in the face of poor people. When he faces a homeless woman, he calls her 'old' and 'ugly'. It exactly portrays the poor side of America's capitalism in the 1980s. Bateman's real personality does not seem to be important in this society. It is mostly about one's look, not about one's inner values. As the poor and the beggars do not

possess much wealth, they are considered as the degradation of humanity and value. One of Bateman's friends confirms this view by saying: "If [women] have a good personality and are not good looking, then who fucking cares?" (Ellis 95) By committing the murder of these poor people, he tries to show that these people are not worthy of living as they do not have much wealth. We can therefore see that a good personality is worth nothing compared to one's appearance.

Because of this materialistic transformation of the society, everything in Bateman's external appearance incorporates this impersonal, materialistic, superficial society. Thus, Bateman is obsessed with his perfect skin and skin-care products. Every morning he spends a lot of time training his body and taking care of his skin. One could easily say that he prepares himself to be consumed in this consumer society. Additionally, his talk is dominated by luxurious brand names and other signifiers of status. He defines his lifestyle by his consumption-articles and status symbols and also feels inferior in his self-worth if someone else for example has a more stylish calling card. He does not seem to tolerate the idea that someone else can be better than him. When he meets another person, he describes which types of clothes the other person is wearing and also the designer labels of the clothes. It reveals the fact that Bateman judges the other person through his/her external appearance and wealth. Emotions, words, good behavior do not matter, the yuppie lives in a materialistic society, in which only fame, money and image matter.

Chapter 4

American Psycho in light of Ihab Hassan

Ihab Hasan in *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*, provides us with several postmodern elements. These elements are- irony, hybridization, immanence, constructionism etc. Some of these elements including pastiche, fragmentation, metafiction are present in the *American Psycho*.

In postmodern literature, pastiche is a common feature. Frederic Jameson criticized pastiche and defined it as “blank parody” On the other hand, Hassan considered it as an important element of a new tradition. He included pastiche in the list of important postmodern features. He insists that pastiche helps to develop representation and that "... image or replica may be as valid as its model". He further describes how it boasts a new tradition "in which continuity and discontinuity, high and low culture, mingle not to imitate but to expand the past in the present". *American psycho* as a work of fiction revisits the idea of serial killers. In a way, it imitates the serial killer genre.

Because of the title of the novel, the reader expects a psychopath character. Ellis also introduces Bateman. Bateman is always amazed by the renowned serial killers. He also reads a lot of biographies about different serial killers and talks about them with friends. This is also a pastiche as he adopts the mindset of these serial killers and mimics their personality and action. So, the novel provides a reference to 80's yuppie culture. It depicts the consumer culture which was existent at that period. The reader expects that Bateman as a serial killer will commit some murders. Here, the author expects us to guess the character's nature. Before the occurrence of any murder, Bateman responds to Evelyn "I'm a fucking evil psychopath" (Ellis 23). But he got ignored. Another reference of his killer side was provided by the colleagues of Bateman

regarding his habit of reading biographies of serial killers: "Bateman reads these biographies all the time: Ted Bundy and Son of Sam and Fatal Vision and Charlie Manson" (Ellis 92)". As a reader, we all know that Bateman will kill some people in the novel. We feel satisfied when these murders happen. Because our expectations are fulfilled through these murders. On the contrary, we feel horrified by the violent description of these murders. The theme of serial killer is used here. Furthermore, the elements of a serial killer fiction (such as murders, police chase, psychopathic thoughts) are depicted in the novel but in a unique way.

Fragmentation is another important element of postmodern literature. This literary technique breaks the narrative into parts. *American Psycho* follows this pattern of fragmentation. For example: One chapter deals with Bateman killing a victim, then the upcoming chapter talks about Whitney Huston. It does not follow any specific plot sequence. Rather, there are several layers of the plot which also shows this inconsistency. For example: when the investigator makes an appearance in the novel, the reader expects that now Patrick Bateman will be imprisoned for the murder of his victims. But the investigator never makes an appearance again. So, Bateman also escapes trial. Murphet also considers Bateman as one of the most inconsistent narrative voices in contemporary fiction.

In the "Paul Owen" chapter, the living room is narrated as: "... very spare, minimalist. The walls are white pigmented concrete, except for one wall, which is covered with a trendy large-scale scientific drawing, and the wall facing Fifth Avenue has a long strip of faux-cowhide paneling stretched across it. A black leather couch sits beneath it. I switch on the wide-screen thirty-one-inch Panasonic to Late Night with David Letterman, then move over to the answering machine to change Owen's message" (Ellis 224). But in the later chapter, he describes the same room as "New Venetian blinds, the cowhide paneling is gone; however, the furniture, the

mural, the glass coffee table, Thonet chairs, black leather couch, all seem intact; the large-screen television set has been moved into the living room and it's been turned on" (Ellis 379). There are inconsistencies in Bateman's narration. The glass coffee table was never there in that room and the tv was located next to the living room. Murphet concludes that the readers need to imagine the whole description and realize that "Bateman has never been here before".

In the novel, we can also find another postmodern element called metafiction. The presence of metafiction is evident in the analytical and self-reflective thoughts of Patrick Bateman. These self-reflective thoughts are rarely found in the beginning chapters. But in the last chapters, it occupies much of the plot. Murphet calls it "The very clarity of the phrases, the philosophical nuance of the exposition, rubs against Bateman's otherwise imbalanced and disordered language games". The readers are also presented with some monologues of Bateman which signify that he is just a fictional character. He says: "...there is an idea of Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there" (Ellis 376-377) Patrick Bateman might look and act similar to other people in the society but in the end, he is just a part of fiction. Thus, the story introspects the components of the novel itself.

While describing several aspects of postmodernism, Hassan provides us with some distinctive qualities of postmodernism. Hassan asserts that post-modern literary texts are mostly anti-formal. So, these texts are quite complex for the readers to comprehend. *American Psycho* as a postmodern novel follows this model and goes beyond any boundary. The novel is mostly about the disintegration which lies in our society. The consumerism aspect is the reason behind this anarchy. Hassan asserts that modern literary texts deal with the trauma of modern society

and its people. Though modernism does not provide much independence to the characters as it follows a specific boundary and a fixed genre. On the other hand, postmodernism has a vast context and range. It provides much independence to the character and this freedom most of the time leads to obscurity as explained by Hassan. This sense of obscurity is also evident in *American Psycho*. Patrick Bateman is a young and handsome individual. But we all know that he wears a mask which hides his real identity. He lives in a society where status and wealth are the most important factors. As Bateman is a wealthy individual with high status, he is able to attract his victims. He always gets away after murders. It shows that he might be really good at killing people and then hiding the evidence. There are also possibilities that he never even committed those murders. All of these murders were just the product of his imagination. So, the readers are stuck here, and this does not lead to a specific outcome. So, in a way, the freedom of the characters here leads to confusion in reader's mind

Chapter 5

Conclusion

American Psycho portrays an extreme violent depiction of postmodern society. Despite having controversial contents, it can be considered as a great example of a postmodern text. It depicts the relevant issues of a postmodern society. Its harsh criticism on materialism, consumerism provides the novel with postmodern complexity. This paper shows the complexity by analyzing the protagonist of the novel and a specific timeline in American history. The ambiguous ending of the text also displays this complexity where the readers are stuck between reality and fantasy.

It also provides reference to a cultural society which was prevalent in the 1980s. The text itself works as a critique of this 1980s yuppie society and its consumer culture. The description of this consumer society blurs the line between history and fiction. Furthermore, the readers cannot also decide whether Bateman really committed those murders or not due to the ambiguity in the ending. So, it manipulates the mental world of the readers through this complex ending. In a way, it also leaves the readers to their own decisions whether to accept the whole thing as fantasy or not.

The researcher raised a few questions while conducting the research. There are a number of postmodern features found as discussed in the previous chapters. The author used several postmodern features/themes such as consumer culture, pastiche, fragmentation etc. The unique usage of these features is evident throughout the novel. These features were used in order to create a gap between the reader's mind and the real-time action. It was also utilized in order to show the existence of several issues (such as identity crisis, alienation) which are prevalent in postmodern society.

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