Plurality, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Hyperreality in Postmodern American Fiction: A Case Study of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*

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Dedication

In the memory of my mother, Chouki Malika

To my hero, Chouki Brahim

To the one who always believed in me, Chouki Narimen

Mohamed Ridha Chouki

Dedication

In the memory of my father, Abdessamed Djaalali

To my mother, Mounia Brahmi

To my siblings, Akram, Mohamed El Amine, Roufaida

Oussama Djaalali

Abstract

The dissertation argues that the Postmodern American Society is associated with a transcending hyperrealist perception of the world as proliferated technology, media, and images galvanize an obscure inception of reality. Literature attempts to critique the social foundations of society in a sense of reflection; Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) addresses the postmodernism of American society through the labyrinth of the protagonist, Patrick Bateman. The designated approach of analysis examines through a Baudrillardian reading the concepts of Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyperreality with the implications of individuality in the Spectacle, and highlight the relativism of truth excreted in postmodernism through the novel. In addition, the work investigates the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity and its impact on society. As it examines the construction and perpetuation of gender norms and power dynamics that contribute to gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality across the scope of related parties within societal hierarchies. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, the research will bring forth key theoretical perspectives to better understand masculinity with an attempt to investigate its historical and cultural background. By analyzing what feminist sociologist have established in researches of Criminology and Gender studies in order to highlight the implications of Hegemonic Masculinity in various spheres of society, including media, politics, and the workplace, and the extent of its influence on societies as well as individuals.

Keywords: Simulacra, Simulation, Hyperreality, Relativism, Individuality, Spectacle, Gender, Hegemonic Masculinity, Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*.

Résumé

Cette thèse soutient que la société américaine postmoderne est associée à une perception hyperréaliste transcendante du monde alors que la prolifération de la technologie, des médias et des images galvanise une obscure conception de la réalité. La littérature tente de critiquer les fondements sociaux de la société dans un sens de réflexion; *American Psycho* (1991) de Bret Easton Ellis aborde le postmodernisme de la société américaine à travers le labyrinthe du protagoniste, Patrick Bateman. L'approche d'analyse désignée examine à travers une lecture Baudrillardienne les concepts de simulacre, de simulation et d'hyperréalité avec les implications de l'individualité dans le spectacle, et met en évidence le relativisme de la vérité excrété dans le postmodernisme à travers le roman. En outre, le travail étudie le concept de Masculinité Hégémonique et son impact sur la société. Comme il examine la construction et la perpétuation des normes de genre et de la dynamique du pouvoir qui contribuent à la violence, à la discrimination et à l'inégalité fondées sur le genre dans l'ensemble des parties liées au sein des hiérarchies sociétales. Grâce à une revue complète de la littérature existante, la recherche apportera des perspectives théoriques clés pour mieux comprendre la masculinité avec une tentative d'enquêter sur son contexte historique et culturel. En analysant ce que les sociologues féministes ont établi dans les recherches de criminologie et d'études de genre afin de mettre en évidence les implications de la masculinité hégémonique dans diverses sphères de la société, y compris les médias, la politique et le lieu de travail, et l'étendue de son influence sur les sociétés ainsi que les individus.

Mots clés: Simulacres, Simulation, Hyperréalité, Relativisme, Individualité, Spectacle, Genre, Masculinité Hégémonique, Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho*.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة أن مجتمع ما بعد الحداثة الأمريكي مرتبط بنظرة ما فوق واقعية للعالم حيث أن الظهور المتصاعد للتكنولوجيا و الصحافة و الإعلام والصور بلور بداية أسس غامضة للواقع. الأدب يعمل على نقد الأسس الإجتماعية من خلال تقديم تأمل لإنعكاسته. في روايته المختل الأمريكي (١٩٩١)، يعالج بريت إيستون إليس ظاهرة ما بعد الحداثة للمجتمع الأمريكي من خلال متاهة الشخصية الرئيسية، باتريك باتمان. النهج المختار للتحليل يعاين من خلال قراءة بودرياردية لمفاهيم المصطنع و الإصطناع و فوق-الواقع في الرواية مع تحديد الآثار المترتبة على الفردية وسط المشهد. و تسليط الضوء على نسبية الحقيقة البارزة في ما بعد الحداثة من خلال الرواية. إلى جانب ذلك هذا العمل يحقق في مفهوم الذكورة المهيمنة وأثرها على المجتمع. حيث يدرس بناء وإدامة المعايير بين الجنسين وديناميكيات السلطة التي تساهم في العنف الاجتماعي، التمييز، عدم المساواة في الجهات المعنية ضمن التسلسلات الهرمية المجتمعية. من خلال مراجعة شاملة للأدب الموجود الذي بدوره سيقدم نظرة عامة على المناظير النظرية الرئيسية و المناقشات المتعلقة بالذكورة المهيمنة، بما في ذلك سياقها التاريخي والثقافي من خلال تحليل منظور الآخرين في مجال علم الاجتماع وعلم الجريمة ودراسات النوع الاجتماعي. واستكشاف كيف تعمل الذكورة المهيمنة في مختلف مجالات المجتمع، بما في ذلك وسائل الإعلام والسياسة ومكان العمل ومدى تأثيرها على المجتمعات وكذلك الأفراد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المصطنع، الإصطناع، فوق-الواقع، النسبية، الفردية، المشهد، الجندر، الذكورة المهيمنة، بريت إيستون إليس، المختل الأمريكي.

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General Introduction

The emergence of Postmodernism in the twentieth century as an intellectual movement in North American and European academia has engendered a significant level of scholarly and discursive contention. The postmodern condition has been associated with plurality since the beginning of the theory, as it advocates for the rejection of grandnarratives and the overreaching accounts of history. It challenges the normative approaches of reality and scrutinizes the perception of unified truth; nurtures the fluidity, diversity, and hybridity of identity on the expense of stability. Promotes the quest of subjective experiences and diversity of perspectives in knowledge acquisition. The foundational essence of postmodernism is influenced by a variety of modernist thinkers of different domains. While Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Karl Marx each had significant contribution to their respective fields including: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, Criticism, Sciences, Humanities, and Anthropology; their scholarship is recognized as an influential foundation for the intellectual current of the postmodern thought.

The postmodern thought reflects a critical stance against the predominant principles of modern doctrine. It is frequently claimed that Nietzschean philosophy set precursor for postmodern thought to evolve (Erickson 84; Robinson 33 qtd. in Chen 795), as Nietzsche is arguably regarded as the instigator to refute objective truth, express objection of metanarratives, and challenge Western Christian beliefs and values. In *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche claims that "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" (Nietzsche 120). The statement is widely quoted and much ink has been spilled in respect of its words, the religious and philosophical scholars argued that Nietzsche's claim is simply an attempt in promoting atheism and nihilism while rejecting all forms of morality; however, Nietzsche did not claim the literal

"Death of God" for he, as an atheist throughout his adulthood, does not believe in the existence of such entity, rather, Nietzsche suggests that the traditional conceptualization of God as a moral and metaphysical foundation of human existence has seized to exist as it lost its significance and influence in modern times.

The idea of the "Death of God" influenced postmodernists across the western world; in fact, the nature of the idea is postmodernist in its essence, as it advocates that:

> [A]ll the grand narratives of [Nietzsche's] time had collapsed. People's beliefs in reason and logic, science and its laws, truth and value were all without foundation. Faith in reason and progress, born during the Enlightenment, was no longer tenable and the only reliable truth was the *will to power*, which enthusiastically led him to call for a "revaluation of all values." (Nietzsche qtd in Chen 795, 796)

Evidentially, postmodernism is associated with an unlimited series of "ends" and can be traced through the writings of different scholars as it is introduced as the "End of History" (Fukuyama 1), "End of Modernity" (Vattimo), "End of the Social" and "History: A Retro Scenario" (Baudrillard 43, 65), which accommodates the Nietzschean perception of 'the revolution of all values.' (796). That is, postmodernity advocates that truth and morality are subject to relativism rather than being perceived as an absolute and universal standard.

In this regard, *American Psycho* is an American Postmodern literary text that attempts to define the Postmodern Condition in America. The text is considered as a classic Postmodern Literary text for its criticism of American capitalism. Since its initial publication, the novel agitated literary critics for its eccentric, parodic, and satirical content. The release of the novel by the end of the last century was followed by harsh criticism for its extended description of

clothing brands, furniture, commodities, and gastronomy; the brutal violence scenes –
specifically towards woman; pornography; and reverence of surfaces. These elements made
critics deem the novel as "the essence of trash … a contemptible piece of pornography
("American Psycho: The Essence of Trash" Yardley), "*American Psycho*'s social criticism is
purely sophomoric—horrifying only for its author's utter lack of narrative skill." ("American
Psycho" Lyons), and as "a brilliant depiction of the savage society we've created" ("American
Psycho is a modern classic" Welsh). Which resulted in restriction held upon Ellis for attending
the opening ceremony of Euro Disney, leading to a ban being placed on the book's release by the
American Literature Association. However, in a response published in the New York Times to
this criticism, Ellis states: "I did not know how violent it would become. But it seemed clear to
me that Bateman would describe these acts of brutality in the same numbing, excessive detail
and flat tone that he recounts everything else—his clothing, his meals, his workouts at the gym."
He adds: "For me, it was an aesthetic choice that made sense. 'Surface Became the Only Thing'
... Everything was surface—food, clothes—that is what defined people" (qtd in Pan Macmillan).
That is, Ellis's drivers for writing the novel were essentially to provide a social critique of a
society where superficiality controls the overall dynamics of society.

　　　　Hegemonic masculinity has been for long a topic of concern for scholars in fields such as
sociology, gender studies, and cultural studies. This concept refers to the dominant form of
masculinity within a given society, which is often characterized by traits such as aggression,
competitiveness, and emotional suppression. In contemporary America, hegemonic masculinity
is widely seen as a problematic and limiting force, one that reinforces gendered violence and
perpetuates inequalities between men and women.

One cultural artifact that has been widely discussed in relation to hegemonic masculinity is Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1991). The book tells the story of Patrick Bateman, a Wall Street investment banker who is also a sadistic serial killer. The novel has been interpreted in a variety of ways, with some critics seeing it as a satirical critique of capitalism and others as a celebration of violence and misogyny.

The dissertation will endeavor with analyzing the existing literature related to theorizing the postmodern condition. In this respect, Simon Malpas's *The Postmodern* (2004) and Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) will be utilized to investigate the plurality surrounding postmodern theory, and look into the different perspectives of major theoreticians of the postmodern including: Jean Baudrillard, Francis Fukuyama, and Ihab Hassan. The postmodern has been introduced as a series of ends across different scholars, Baudrillard and Fukuyama's prospects are analyzed to define the relationship of the postmodern and its association to the 'End of History' as presented in their scholarships. Also, in his essay *The Plurality of Postmodernism* (1986), Ihab Hassan highlights the plurality of the postmodern condition, and introduces eleven definiens of postmodernism across the different artistic fields which are used in this case to demonstrate the postmodern in the novel.

The dissertation endeavor in conducting a Baudrillardian reading of the novel highlighting the relevance of the concepts Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyperreality in the American societal woven adopted in creating the novel. The focus on explaining these concepts stems from the seminal work of Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). The work is considered as a classic work of postmodern theory, as Baudrillard presents his prospects of Hyperreality where reality is compromised for a world overshadowed of representations of reality – simulacra. In other words, the postmodern world allowed for a rapid change resulting

for the simulacra to reach an accelerated phase where reality becomes indistinguishable from the signs produced to simulate the real: hyperreality – simulation becomes more real than reality itself. Also, Baudrillard advocates that consumer culture has facilitated for a world of simulacra as the proliferation of technology mediated the human experience with reality. The Baudrillardian framework will be utilized to evaluate the existing hyperrealism in the novel with the accordance of Martin Weinreich's *"Into the Void": The Hyperrealism of Simulation in Bret Easton Ellis's "American Psycho"*, the article explores the novel through Baudrillard's scholarship highlighting the aspect of labour in postmodern society.

Identity in postmodernism has been constantly redefined for the plurality surrounding the age, as identities go through constant reconstruction transforming in accordance to social, institutional, and ideological factors. In this regard, Individuality is challenged as the postmodern condition becomes rooted in societies. Guy Debord, the French Marxist philosopher, cultural critic, and filmmaker, introduces the concept of the 'spectacle' in *the society of the spectacle* (1967), which encompasses a social organization in modern societies dominated with a system of images, commodities, and media that has replaced lived experience. This particular way of living or behaving is dominant in developed societies, which are mostly associated with liberal democracy, and Ellis attempts to portray the effects of the spectacle on the American society through a setting inseparable from the spectacle. Thus, the spectacle challenges the individuality of the characters resulting in the disintegration of their identities into a single mold exchanged between the individuals portrayed in the novel.

The nuance of literature is the ability to critique society by reflecting its values, norms, principles and problems in order to provide an alternative reality fertile for experimentation. In *The Death of The Author* (1977), Roland Barthes argues that the text is an entity with its own

meanings independent of the author who is merely its "scriptor" that is influenced by certain

social and cultural factors existing within his surroundings; as the literature is produced, the

reader through reading the texts is the creator of their meaning. Whereby the deconstruction of

the themes, characters, plotlines, symbolism, and stylistics allows the readers to unveil

interpretations regarding the societal issues that the texts attempt to explore. In this regard,

American Psycho as a classical work of postmodernism reflects on the societal issues of

American society in the twentieth century. The dissertation attempts to inquire these societal

issues through raising the following questions:

- What is the Postmodern Condition? What characterizes Postmodern American

    Literature? How does the Postmodern Theory contribute to the diagnosis and

    deconstruction of societal issues within Postmodern American society?

- What are the factors that determine the prevalence of hyperrealism over reality? What are

    the challenges of the labour market in postmodernity? What are the conditions of

    perceiving objective truth in the age of plurality; more specifically, the series of murders

    committed by Patrick Bateman? How did the spectacle contribute to the redefinition of

    individualism in Postmodern societies?

- How does American Psycho critique and challenge the norms of hegemonic masculinity

    in contemporary America? How does American Psycho challenge traditional notions of

    masculinity and offer alternative models for understanding gender and power dynamics?

    What is the relationship between power dynamics and hegemonic masculinity in

    American Psycho?

    Through a close analysis of *American Psycho* as a case study of American postmodernist

Literature, the following dissertation aims to deconstruct the hyperrealist nature of American

society that is portrayed through the lens of the novel. That is to say, the aim is to highlight the extravagant incorporation of commodities/ signs in the human world which renders the dominance of simulation over the conventional perceptions of reality evident in the novel, resulting for hyperreality to prevail over reality. As such hyperrealist setting is deployed in the novel, its existence is granted through the spectacle and realized by such fostering postmodern society controlled by media. Here, the nuance of identity incarnated in individuality becomes filtered through the spectacle which makes it disintegrate into an almost commercial identity exchanged between the individuals of the postmodern society. In this regard, this dissertation attempts to deconstruct the disintegration of identity arising within the community exhibited in the novel with emphasis on the character of the protagonist. In addition, the analysis attempts to explore the relationships between power dynamics, gender, and violence in *American Psycho* and their implications for our understanding of hegemonic masculinity. While investigate the ways in which the novel reflects and reinforces patriarchal structures and gendered violence, and assess the implications of literature for contemporary debates about gender, sexuality, and violence in American culture.

The following study incorporates a qualitative research methodology with a close reading of *American Psycho* (1991) by Bret Easton Ellis to deconstruct the text's themes, plot, and characters. While implementing a textual analysis approach on the literary scholarship of Baudrillard that is attained throughout the research, with other major critics of the postmodern condition. In attempt to breakdown the concepts of Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyperreality in the novel, and address aspects of relativism, truth, and morality. As well as investigating the implication of the theory of the spectacle as introduced by Debord on the individualistic aspects of identity in the postmodernist society. The work engages in an analysis of the dominant

capitalist postmodern setting in attempt to illuminate the manifestation of the labor market in the postmodern epoch, and provide a critique of the rise of consumer culture on the expense of homelessness, economic dislocation, and poverty.

In addition, it will employ an interpretive methodology in order to analyze the role of hegemonic masculinity in *American Psycho*. Specifically, the dissertation will endeavor in a close reading and textual analysis of the novel in order to identify and interpret the ways in which gender and power dynamics are represented in the text. It will also draw on relevant theoretical frameworks from fields such as gender studies, sociology, and cultural studies in order to contextualize the analysis and situate the novel within broader debates about masculinity, power, and violence.

The dissertation attempts to bring forth a Baudrillardian reading of the novel, as well as highlight the postmodern condition in the novel. While, it seeks to fill that gap in the literature by exploring the ways in which *American Psycho* reflects and challenges the norms of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary America. By examining the character of Patrick Bateman and the themes and motifs of the novel more broadly, this study aims to shed new light on the complex relationships between power, gender, and violence in American culture. Therefore, it attempts to contribute to the ongoing debates about the nature of masculinity and the ways in which it is constructed, performed, and contested in contemporary society.

This paper has several significant implications for our understanding of the role of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary American culture. By analyzing the representation of gender and power dynamics in *American Psycho*. In addition, it investigates the ways in which masculinity is constructed and contested in contemporary society. Specifically, it highlights the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are often intertwined with violence, power, and

domination, and how these forms can contribute to the marginalization and oppression of those who do not conform to them.

By drawing on theoretical frameworks from fields such as gender studies, sociology, and cultural studies, this study also contributes to ongoing debates about the nature of masculinity and the ways in which it is constructed, performed, and contested in contemporary society. The study provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is represented and challenged in American Psycho, and highlights the complexities of gender and power dynamics in the novel and in broader American culture.

Overall, the paper has important implications for scholars, educators, and policymakers who are interested in issues of gender, power, and violence. It investigates the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is constructed and challenged in *American Psycho*, as well as providing important insights into the complex relationships between gender, power, and violence in contemporary culture, and offers a valuable contribution to ongoing debates about the nature of masculinity and its role in shaping social relations and cultural norms.

The following dissertation will be divided into three chapters as each of these chapters attempts to discuss the novel from different angle. The first chapter will endeavor with a theoretical investigation of the concept of postmodernism discussing the definition and historical background of the theory, and unfolds the Postmodern Literature in America. In addition, an analysis of the foundational postmodern theories is conducted in an attempt to underscore a theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis of the novel. As the case study of this dissertation is a postmodern novel, the postmodern condition is highlighted in the novel through an analysis conducted by projecting the definiens of postmodernism as highlighted by Ihab Hassan. The second chapter endeavors with a Baudrillardian reading of the novel to highlight the

concepts of Simulacra, Simulation, and Hyperreality with providing a critique of disruption of labour in the late twentieth century in American society, as well as an evaluation of truth and morality at period associated mostly with relativism, and investigate the implications of the spectacle on construction of individual identities in postmodern societies. The Third Chapter attempts to define the concept of Hegemonic Masculinity in light of the postmodern era, it will probe into the inception of the concept and what are the social aspect of postmodern American society are under the influence of Hegemonic Masculinity.

Chapter One: The Postmodern Phenomenon and American Literature: An

Overview/Preface

Introduction:

The postmodern condition is a crucial manifestation of Western societies in the sense it has galvanized its culture through the integration of individuals in diversity, relativism, pluralism, and subjectivism attainable by the postmodern. The phenomenon's ramification rendered various perspectives in its respect, as it has received different interpretation across scholars of the different fields of Humanities. In this regard, the postmodern influence is demonstrated in different fields including: Philosophy, Literature, Art, and Architecture. In addition, the influence extents itself from a principle of rejection towards metanarratives of modernism that are mainly established on grounds of scientific reasoning. The following chapter attempts to conceptualize the postmodern phenomenon through providing a thorough definition following on from a variety of theatricians of the postmodern with particular regard to the perspectives of Francis Fukuyama, Jean Baudrillard, and Ihab Hassan, while examining the historical background leading to the inception of the postmodern. Also, it investigates the implementation of postmodernism in literature and specifically American Literature. Additionally, it provides a characterization of the postmodern condition according to the definiens excreted by Hassan in regards to postmodernism though which the chapter determine the postmodernism of *American Psycho* (1991). The chapter will examine the epistemological foundational of the postmodern condition according to influential theorists of the postmodern; first, it will inspect the theory of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality according to Jean Baudrillard and explain its fundamental concepts; second, it will highlight the concept of the spectacle as provided by Guy Debord; third, it will endeavor with a review of Masculinity in the

postmodern society through the perspective of Simon Winlow. Overall, these foundational

theories will be used in the analysis of the novel throughout the thesis.

1.1 Definition and Historical Background:

Postmodernism is an intellectual movement that emerged on a broader scale around the twentieth century in European and American cultures. In order to sustain a comprehensive assimilation of the phenomenon and its relevance to contemporary culture, it is essential to contextualize the postmodern condition. However, postmodernism as a cultural theory is associated with a fluid nature making it difficult to generate a thorough conventional identification to the 'postmodern.' In fact, it would not do justice by postmodernism to theorize such identification, as it would violate its core tenets. It is typically associated with a canon of totalizing concept including "discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentring, indeterminacy, and antilocalization" (Hutcheon 3), "Decentered, allegorical, schizophrenic" (Owens 1), or "fracturing, fragmentation, indeterminacy and plurality" (Malpas 5), which are all defining features of the postmodern condition. Essentially, the recognition of its inherently malleable nature is the very defining component of every postmodern work across the fields of humanities; that is, the interdisciplinarity of postmodern theory and its application swept different field including: Literature, Architecture, Philosophy, Theology, Historiography, Political Sciences, Psychoanalysis, Arts, Cinema, Music, Dance, Linguistics, Criticism, and Sociology.

In this regard, postmodernism raises a debate within the academic scene, as academics of different fields attempted to bring their sense of postmodernism and postmodernity into the debate since the inauguration of its controversial rhetoric, which yielded the emergence of "differently constructed postmodernisms and postmodernities" (Malpas 6). That is evident in the manifold of definitions of the postmodern arisen from different scholar of the different fields of Humanities, Malpas points out:

[T]he postmodern has been defined in a huge variety of different ways: as a new aesthetic formation (Hassan, 1982, 1987), a condition (Lyotard, 1984; Harvey, 1990), a culture (Connor, 1997), a cultural dominant (Jameson, 1991), a set of artistic movements employing a parodic mode of selfconscious representation (Hutcheon, 1988, 2002), an ethical or political imperative (Bauman, 1993, 1995), a period in which we have reached the 'end of history' (Baudrillard, 1994; Fukuyama, 1992; Vattimo, 1988), a 'new horizon of our cultural, philosophical and political experience' (Laclau, 1988), an 'illusion' (Eagleton, 1996), a reactionary political formation (Callinicos, 1989), or even just a rather unfortunate mistake (Norris, 1990, 1993). (qtd in Malpas 6, 7)

The interdisciplinarity of postmodernism is manifested in the plurality of perception surrounding its definition across different fields of Humanities. However, to acquire a comprehensive perception on the subject, it is worthwhile to look into the different perspectives of the major theatricians of the postmodern.

Jean-François Lyotard emerged as central figure of postmodern theory for his immaculate diagnosis of the postmodern. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Lyotard defines the postmodern as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv), which was rendered into a referential conceptualizing of defining the phenomenon. Lyotard believes that the Knowledge of the late twentieth century is called the 'postmodern' and centered in highly developed societies. The postmodern dictates for a break from the modern epoch in favor of a succeeding epoch associated to the postmodern that is pivotal "to address the question of the crisis of the narratives of legitimation in the modern" (Brügger 78). That is, the modern is characterized with the narratives of legitimization that drives the sciences and social bonds controlled by institutions;

however, for Lyotard, these grandnarratives have become labeled with 'untrustworthiness' as they disintegrate within societies while losing their reliability, grandnarratives fail to provide a universal meaning of human existence on the expense of marginalization and legitimization of oppression and domination (78, 79).

The idea of the "End of History" originates in both the writings of Francis Fukuyama and Jean Baudrillard. It is worth to mention that neither writer asserts that history unfolds to void where no progress will be marked. However, Fukuyama diagnosis of postmodern progress as the period of the "End of History" comes from the belief that liberal democracies represent the ultimate achievement of societal development, where societies achieve the utopian forms of universal "freedom and justice" as history moves towards liberal democracies. Fukuyama asserts: "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." (Fukuyama 1), this idea develops Hagel's dialectical approach to history which dictates that history is not simply a collection of events, rather it is a process through which humanity develops consciousness towards universal freedom. Hence, Fukuyama advocates that western societies have actively progressed towards this utopian state while simultaneously working to spread these values across the world; whereas other nations develop "more primitive forms of rule like theocracy or military dictatorship" (qtd. In Malpas 90). For Fukuyama, the concept of the "End of History" in postmodernism is an evolutionary process with societies becoming developed enough to adopt the absolute form of governing that is liberal democracy.

According to Baudrillard, the perception of postmodernism as the "End of History" recapitulates a radical rapture marked by the extent where reality has been replaced by models of the real, resulting the erasure of the possibility to distinguish the real from its simulations –

which part ways with Hegel's process of universal freedom or Fukuyama's revelations of liberal democracies. Baudrillard contends that the advent of advanced sciences enabled technology to generate models of reality that precede the authenticity of reality itself. Thus, humanity became lost in a dichotomy of the real and the hyperreality, or worse, the realm of hyperreality that "refuses [humanity] the distance to stand back from our experiences and question them; refuses [humanity], in other words, a sense of historical perspective" (94). That is, the postmodern world is a world dominated with produced signs whose original referents disappeared; hence, history became another commodity dominated by hyperreality exhibited for the audiences of the postmodern. Malpas explains:

> Jean Baudrillard, presents the end of history as an abject failure of the modern aspiration to reconcile reason and the world. He argues that history has 'gone into reverse' (1994: 10) as the critical distance between rationality and reality that is necessary for us to understand or change the way things are vanishes in contemporary hyperreality (95).

For Baudrillard, the modern idea of progress, which aims to bring reason and the world together, has failed. Baudrillard argues that in today's hyperreality, the necessary distance between rationality and reality is lost, making it impossible to comprehend the rational nature of reality. Thus, Baudrillard introduces his perspective of the end of history as "History: A Retro Scenario", where history is moving backward towards a nonexistent reality.

The temporal frame of postmodernism remains also nebulous, as some critics associate the postmodern phenomenon with the economical period of 'Late Capitalism', while others locate it as a post-world war phase, or "after 1945? 1968? 1970? 1980?" (Hutcheon 3). Albeit this periodization's contentious location in history, the inauguration of the term amongst

European and American academics dates back to "the late 1970s, the 1980s and the early 1990s" (Malpas 5). As this period manifested an abundance of writers, academics, articles, artistic and literary works that were hailed to be labeled as postmodern across the western media and public, assisting in the plurality of the postmodern condition (5).

The diversity of the theory is reflected in the controversy of definition it raises amongst the academics. In *The Plurality of Postmodernism* (1986), Ihab Hassan, an Egyptian American literary critic, one of the first literary figures to address the 'postmodern' in his writings, maintains: "I can propose no rigorous definition of it, any more than I could define modernism itself." (503). That is to say, the heterogenous nature of postmodernism echoed in the plurality of definitions represents the variety of perspectives on the postmodern condition. In this regard, Hassan argues: "[c]learly, then, the time has come to theorize the term [postmodernism], if not to define it, before it fades from awkward neologism to derelict cliché without ever attaining to the dignity of a cultural concept" (qtd. in Hutcheon 1). Therefore, despite the inability to determine a 'rigorous definition' of the phenomenon, and in attempt to theorize the postmodern, Hassan proposes a set of definiens which determine the characteristics of the postmodern condition as following: Indeterminacy; Fragmentation; Decanonization; Self-less-ness, Depth-less-ness; Unpresentable, Unrepresentable; Irony; Hybridization; Carnivalization; Performance, Participation; Constructionism; Immanence.

The quest to theorize the postmodern condition has demonstrated a difficulty of definition across its application in academic, cultural, social, and philosophical movements of sciences. The term's definition raised a controversial debate as it involves multiple perspectives across different fields. In this regard, Postmodern Literature attempts to challenge the normative literary

forms to reflect the aesthetics of postmodern societies and human experience, as it adopts and deploys the characteristics of postmodernism.

1.2 American Postmodern Literature:

The term Postmodernism is a contentious concept that lacks a precise definition, but it can be broadly understood as a reaction against Modernism that emerged in the mid-twentieth century. As an abstract and diversified phenomenon, Postmodernism presents challenges in terms of its description and comprehension, particularly within the context of literary studies. To better understand Postmodernism, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of Modernism.

Modernism refers to a literary style or movement that deviates substantially from traditional or classical forms of literature, and maintained a level of dominance until the end of the twentieth century when Postmodernism emerged as a significant force. The early Modernists believed that the world was an inherently good place, and its reality could be apprehended solely by the human mind. They maintained that there existed fixed laws for everything in the world, and rational thinking was a crucial means of understanding reality. The scientific findings of the likes of Isaac Newton and other scientists of his time were regarded as accurate reflections of reality by Modernists, and this view was widely accepted as a true reflection of the world.

In the nineteenth century, two influential philosophers, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, applied the scientific approach to the study of human society, leading to the development of the Social Sciences. This extended the reach of the scientific method beyond the natural world and paved the way for the emergence of new ways of thinking about the human experience. Ultimately, the rise of Postmodernism was a reaction to the perceived limitations and inadequacies of Modernism, as it sought to subvert traditional notions of meaning, language, and representation, offering new approaches to literary analysis and interpretation.

Postmodernism can be broadly understood as a response to and rejection of Modernism. It is characterized by a lack of a unified worldview, as various proponents put forth their own theories, often in contradiction with one another. However, the rejection of modernism manifested in postmodern thought galvanized a consensus amongst its adherents, and extended beyond the Criticism sphere to fields such as Philosophy, Art, Architecture, and Culture. The central focus of Postmodernism was to challenge and contradict Modernism at any level, rather than being concerned solely with the literary circuit.

1.3 Postmodern Theory: Epistemological Foundation of Postmodernism:

Postmodern theory foundation is related to a variety of influential thinkers mainly based in France including Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, and Guy Debord. These thinkers have contributed to postmodern theory in their respective fields according to their perspectives. The emergence of postmodernism has been proceeded by the poststructuralism movement that also investigated the normative structures of thought and emphasized on the relativism, incredulity, and rejection of objective truth. The investigation of reality has concerned the postmodern thought and mainly through Baudrillard's perspectives that brought into postmodern theory a novice perception of Hyperreality. Also, Guy Debord's introduction of the concept of 'Spectacle' and his criticism of postmodern western capitalist societies to the theory. The following attempts to discover these central epistemological foundations of postmodern theory and to highlight the construction of masculinity in postmodernism.

1.3.1 Baudrillard's Concepts of Simulation, Simulacra, and Hyperreality:

The postmodern condition has demonstrated a fluid nature of rejecting the normative traditional approach of preserving the world, which was dominant in modernism. This perception

has enormously shaped the culture of the late twentieth century rendering the postmodern society into an eccentric entity aspiring to breakdown the conventional understanding of reality. The association of relativism and repudiation shaped a crisis of reality to rise amid the postmodern ideology that seeks to redefine all that is conventional. Jean Baudrillard, a prominent French thinker, problematizes the concept of reality in postmodern society in his work, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). Baudrillard argues that reality has disintegrated into a postmodern hyperspace, as the defining factors of reality experienced by humanity within the metanarratives are no longer functional; rather, reality collides with the staggering quantities of produced materialistic signs, and as a result humans experience the hyperreal. That is defined by Baudrillard as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1), where society's experience of reality on the account of proliferated technology has become mediated by symbols, signs, and simulations, rather than direct encounters with the world. That is, in the postmodern society the signifier is privileged over the signified which changes the order of reality, "it is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (2). Baudrillard suggests that this substitution of images of the real with the real yields 'the death of the real'. And what we are left with is a copy with no reference to the original – simulacrum. Therefore, society's connections with reality becomes permeated with models of simulation, impeding the ability to distinguish the real and the symbolic; and humans start to perceive the hyperreal as true reality, rather than recognizing it as a constructed representation. Henceforth, the individual is introduced to the dichotomy created by hyperreality unable to differentiate between reality and its simulation.

Baudrillard introduces the concepts of simulacra and simulation to further explain the hyperreal state of the postmodern which adjuncts itself with a realm of signs.

1.3.1.1 Simulacra:

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, simulacra (plural of simulacrum) is the representation or image of a person or thing; a likeness, effigy, or portrait. Albeit the term being associated with the Platonic Theory of Forms whereby humans go through the process of enlightenment to discover the real world and its ideal forms that are only accessible by intellectual and philosophical understanding, it is until the twentieth century that the term has acquired proper significance as the period manifested an association with proliferated signs /images and transcending vigilance to the matter. For Baudrillard, simulacra resemble a whole entity that hides reality creating an illusion. Simulacra exceed a copy; they are a representation of reality that has lost its connection to any original referent. They are not accurate representations of truth; instead, they are constructed and simulated to create a new reality. In this regard, a simulacrum encompasses a representation of representation that has lost the essence of reality and evolved into an autonomous entity that constructs its own reality. Simulacra are not simply replicates of reality, but are constructed and simulated to generate a novel reality that is disconnected from the original referent. As a result, simulacra become detached from their original referents, thereby they are granted the autonomy from the referential realm they were intended to represent. In his essay *Simulacra and Science Fiction* (1881), Baudrillard suggests three orders of simulacrum: First, Counterfeit: albeit, Baudrillard expressing cautious to connect each order with a temporal framework, the first order of simulacra represent dominant paradigm the Renaissance until Industrial Revolution. It operates at the level of the 'natural law of value' where the commodity value is determined by its use value and the human labor that is necessary producing it. At this stage, the representation resembles a distinct sign from reality and has no determination to replace it. In other words, the simulacrum does not intend to replace/ precede

reality whatsoever, it acts as only as a faithful copy of reality. Second, Production: this stage is

associated with modernism. It is constrained with 'market exchange value' where the value of a

commodity is determined in terms of its ability to be exchanged for other goods or services in the

market. At the industrial age, the simulacrum becomes involved in an industrialized system

allowing the machine to produce mass-copies and make it approach reality as it blurs the

boundaries between the original and its representation. However, reality can be distinguished

from its representation keeping the balance between the two. Third, this order is associated with

the postmodern, whereby the value commodity is organized by the 'structural law of value' as

the commodity can become symbolic representations of social status, power, and identity. Here,

the nuance of the real that defines the difference becomes incorporated into the fragments of the

models of the simulacrum, it is accessible for an indefinite number of times allowing the signifier

to proceed the signified. This refers to a network of procreated simulacra with no reference to

originality (Genosko 42; Pawlett 73). To exemplify the concept, Baudrillard in *The Precession of*

Simulacra (1978) uses Borges' allegory of *On Exactitude in Science* (1946) in which

cartographers end up creating a map that covers the total Empire's territory meticulously. And

despite the Empire's destruction, few discernible fragments of the map survive in the desert and

become the only reference to the territory of the Empire making the map 'nothing but the

discrete charm of second-order simulacra.' He adds 'the territory no longer precedes the map …

it is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra' (Baudrillard 1). In

other words, theoretically, the map is a model of representation produced by imitation of reality;

however, the representation of the territory has managed to supersede the territory – thus, reality;

the map is inclined to an entity that only refers to itself – its own simulacrum. In this regard, the

simulacrum replaces reality announcing its death, and it becomes more real than the real, as the

territory starts to imitate the map making "the simulacrum gloats over the body of the deceased referent" (Hutcheon 11). At this stage, the state of hyperreality can no longer serve as an authentic mirror of reality, as the simulacra superseded the real replacing it completely. Baudrillard argues that Disneyland is a perfect manifestation of hyperreality, as the theme park creation intended to represent American culture; instead, it has become a simulation of America that bears no relation to reality. For Baudrillard Disney Land is "a play of illusions and phantasms: the Pirates, the Frontier, the Future World, etc." (12), the imaginary in Disney Land only exist in order to hide "the 'real' country, all of 'real' America that is Disneyland," he adds, "[it] is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation" – which qualifies it as a Third Order of Simulacra (12). Thus, the implications of hyperreality in society is not anymore, a question of false representation of reality, but the fact that simulacra conceal that reality is not real anymore. That is, the imaginary of the theme park revealed in its characters, environments, performances, attractions, nostalgia, and feelings promises a hyperreal experience of life, distancing people from an authentic and unmediated perception of reality. The process of Simulacra is intertwined with a broader concept of Simulation which encompasses the entire system of producing simulacra.

1.3.1.2 Simulation:

For Baudrillard, Simulation is the state where the distinction between binary oppositions disappears through incorporating the fragments of the original into its imitation. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), He advocates for someone 'to dissimulate' is the act of pretending not to have what one has, and 'to simulate' is the act of pretending to have what one does not have. He asserts that "[o]ne implies a presence, the other an absence." Albeit, simulation is not merely

pretending, for pretending and dissimulating leaves the realm for reality to exist in its normal condition and the difference between binary opposition is distinguishable. Whereas in simulating, reality is compromised as the boundaries between truth and falsehood feints leaving the individual in confusion because the imaginary and the real are merely identifiable as one another (3).

Baudrillard also attempts to differentiate between simulation and representation. He asserts that simulation is opposed to representation. Since representation preserves the principle of equivalence between the sign and the real, simulation, on the opposite, stems from the 'utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference' (6).

As the sign enters the third order that is dominated by simulation, representation is replaced with simulation. In this case, simulation is radically distinctive from representation in the sense that in the former signifiers lose connection to the signified. And we can see that ascendant in the post-industrial world where representation overall tends to be replaced by simulation. Pawlett explains our familiarity with the virtual signifier of "Lara Croft" became simulated by the celebrity signifier "Angelina Jolie" of the movie, the latter rushed to mimic the movie and make the character resemble the actress, where, in fact, neither has any relation to a signifier, both of them are "brands, sets of modelled signifiers designed to circulate through the corporate media/entertainment loop" (77). That is, the simulacrum becomes self-referent with a hidden truth and non-existent original. Baudrillard explains this further in *The Transparency of Evil* (1990), through the model by which reality is compromised and replaced by simulation, here he denounces another additional distinctive fourth order of simulacrum by which the simulacrum gradually transcends the real through four phases of the image as follows: First, it

reflects basic reality profoundly; second, it *masks* reality and perverts it from its true nature intentionally; third, it acts as the *concealer* of truth's absence in representation, thus it hides the sense of reality; fourth, it becomes its own *pure simulacrum* of reality, it bears no relation to reality nor original meaning. Thus, it enters the realm of simulation. (Baudrillard 6; Hutcheon 33) Now the model generates the hyperreal, where the principle of reality is breached with the proliferations of images making the equation free of ties to reality.

1.3.1.3 Hyperreality:

According to Baudrillard, Hyperreality is the condition where the boundaries between reality and simulation are eroded. Simulation becomes indistinguishable from reality, or even more real than reality itself. He maintains that "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" yields simulations that eventually supersede reality, he adds, "in fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere" (2). The proliferation of images, media, and consumer culture granted to the postmodern society by the irruption of technology that entered into its accelerated phase have contributed to a world where simulations, which are supposed only to represent reality as preformed in the first and second order, transcend their purpose making "nothing could be differentiated any longer from anything else." (Baudrillard 100). Hence, Baudrillard asserts that according to these factors, society experiences only the hyperreal instead of reality, as it is no longer accessible due to proliferated technology. As a result, the individual exposure to reality including human communication, intellect, relations, meaning and perception is filtered only through hyperreality.

1.3.2 Guy Debord: The Spectacle:

The foundation of the Situationist International (SI) as a cultural and political movement in the twentieth century engendered a doctrine of challenging capitalist societies, and called for a radical change in society; as the movement states: "we believe that the world must be changed. We desire the most liberatory possible change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such change is possible by means of pertinent actions" (Debord qtd in Trier 69). Guy Debord, the French Marxist critic, as the leader of the movement published his influential work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), in which Debord attempts to criticize the postmodern capitalist society, and introduces the concept of 'The Spectacle'. Debord writing is centered around the aesthetics of criticizing the capitalist society. As he cherished the pursuit of happiness as following: his "motto was to be synthesized as '*jouir sans entraves*', without fetters … jouir meaning both to enjoy and to have an orgasm in French" (Debord qtd. in Frayssé 71). The pursuit for this status coincided with his rejection of its accomplishment through the fetishism of commodities which was the reigning dogma in western societies. Debord advocates: "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation" (2). Debord hailed to scrutinize the culture behind the implication of images and its role in western societies as it jeopardizes the foundation of representation whereby unification is compromised in favor of fragmentation and commodity fetishisms.

The postmodern society experienced an opulent lifestyle shaped relatively by low taxes rates on the rich which made community as whole rejoice better standards of living. In these conditions, the spectacle dominates the social relationship in capitalist societies to the extent it has become the lens through which people experience the world that is increasingly constructed

of media, culture, commodities, advertisement, and visual images. Debord asserts that "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images." (2). That is, the spectacle represents the medium of communication in people's social interactions as it centers their daily basis making "a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the non living" (2). The concept sparks an analysis of the fragmentation exhibited in postmodern societies, where progress is achieved on daily basis towards more fragmented spheres leaving individuals isolated from their societies. The environment in which the spectacle operates is one where all individuals are isolated, i.e., separated, and "separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle" (13). It is only then that the spectacle presents itself as the "*means of unification*" (7); that is, it is introduced as the alternative that offers these isolated individuals unity only through the spectacle (Trier 69).

1.3.3 Postmodernity and Masculinity:

In his work *Badfellas: Crime, Tradition and New Masculinities* (2001), sociologist Simon Winlow analyzed the impact of globalization on masculinity in the 21st century, with a particular focus on criminal and conflict subcultures in England. Through his examination of the impact of globalization on traditional male industries, such as heavy manufacturing, Winlow identified the emergence of a new form of criminal subculture that focused on the night-time economy in London and surrounding areas. This subculture was dominated by males who previously worked in heavy industries such as mining, steel production, and car manufacturing.

Winlow highlighted the significant impact of the privatization and globalization of heavy industries on the economy of the north east, which disproportionately affected male employment in the area, resulting in a decline of traditional male industries and hard labor. He argued that employment in heavy industries provided males with the opportunity to prove their masculinity

and achieve status among their peers. The decline of these industries led to a crisis in masculinity in the area, as males looked to assert their masculinity through other forms, as seen in traditional subcultural strain theories.

Winlow observed that the males in the criminal subculture he studied viewed their work on the door as a viable career opportunity and invested in their physical appearance to maintain an image of physical dominance. He referred to this investment as "bodily capital" to demonstrate masculinity, which not only provided them with status, but also with the opportunity to earn extra income. Previously the qualifications were determined by the ability for males to provide for their families. Now, the criterium of males to qualify as men in their society is to maintain a social appearance physically fit male – it is merely reduced to being able to prove physical performance.

In his book *Men and Masculinities* (1998), Michael Kimmel addresses the concept of postmodern hegemonic masculinity and its effects on men and society. Kimmel argues that this form of masculinity reinforces a strict hierarchy of manhood, in which some men are deemed more valuable based on their physical strength, athletic ability, and sexual conquests. This perpetuates a cycle of violence, as men are socialized to use aggression and dominance to resolve conflicts.

Moreover, Kimmel points out that postmodern hegemonic masculinity places a heavy emphasis on individualism and competition, which can lead to a sense of isolation and disconnection among men. This emphasis on personal success and status also reinforces a narrow definition of masculinity, which can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and inadequacy among men who do not conform to these ideals. Additionally, the cultural norms of postmodern

hegemonic masculinity contribute to a culture of toxic masculinity, which objectifies women and promotes harmful behaviors.

Through his work, Kimmel highlights the damaging effects of postmodern hegemonic masculinity and advocates for a more inclusive and progressive understanding of masculinity that values traits such as empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence.

1.3.3.1 Definition of Hegemonic Masculinity:

Hegemonic masculinity is a diverse concept that describes the dominant form of masculinity that is culturally idealized and valued within a given society. It is a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that are considered "masculine" and are endorsed and enforced by those in positions of power. In this thesis, we critically analyze the concept of hegemonic masculinity, examining its origins, influence, and the current state of scholarly discourse.
The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first introduced nearly two decades ago during a study conducted by sociologists in Australia aimed at understanding the behavior of teenagers in terms of gender. Since then, the concept has been utilized across a range of fields, including research and education, contributing to the study of men, gender, and social hierarchy. Furthermore, numerous conferences have been organized around this particular term, leading to its growth over the last two decades.

Despite the widespread usage of the term, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has faced criticism from a variety of academic perspectives, including sociological, psychological and materialist. Critics have suggested that the concept overlooks the diversity of masculinities that exist within societies, and that it reinforces heteronormative and patriarchal power structures. Consequently, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been subjected to

reexamination in light of changing political leadership, evolving family structures, and changing understandings of sexuality.

In this thesis, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity by examining the ways in which it has been utilized, critiqued, and reexamined. We will analyze the scholarly discourse around hegemonic masculinity, paying particular attention to the critiques and alternative conceptualizations that have emerged in response to the concept. By doing so, we hope to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of hegemonic masculinity that takes into account its historical and contemporary significance, as well as its limitations and possibilities for future development.

1.3.3.2 Historical Background:

The concept of hegemonic masculinity originated in the context of social inequality research conducted in Australian high schools. In this field of study, evidence emerged of multiple hierarchies existing among men themselves, with teenagers reporting experiences of inequality within their own gender due to factors such as social class. This phenomenon led to the understanding of an active project of "gender construction" among Australian teenagers, which eventually gave rise to the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

The seminal work *Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity* (1974) by the scholar R. W. Connell, Raewyn Connell, who is an Australian sociologist criticized the "male sex role" in literature and contributed to the development of the concept, hegemonic masculinity as she defines it "Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of

women" (Connell 77). Over the course of twenty years. This concept proposes the existence of multiple masculinities, each supported by its own set of power relations and hierarchies. Through its development, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has evolved to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of masculinity within societies. It also highlights the ways in which power relations and social structures perpetuate dominant forms of masculinity, while subordinating alternative expressions of masculinity.

This thesis aims to build upon the existing scholarship on hegemonic masculinity by critically examining its origins and subsequent development, as well as its current state of scholarly discourse. Through this analysis, we seek to gain a deeper understanding of the concept's theoretical underpinnings and practical applications. Furthermore, we aim to identify the limitations and possibilities of hegemonic masculinity as a framework for understanding gender relations in contemporary societies.

1.3.3.3 Concept of Hegemony:

Establishing a conceptual framework for hegemonic masculinity is crucial for interrogating any claims of universality regarding the category of men. It is insufficient to assert that all men are fundamentally similar or equal, as such a claim overlooks the significant differentiation and hierarchy within the gender of men. In turn, this differentiation has engendered discriminatory practices and power structures that can only be properly analyzed through an understanding of hegemonic masculinity.

The adoption of the Gramscian term "hegemony" was initially intended to explain the stabilization of class relations within a specific historical context. Consequently, its usage in the context of masculinity requires a consideration of the mobilizing historical changes that have occurred within this domain. Unlike the historical context of hegemony in relation to class, the

historical context of hegemonic masculinity is much more complex and interlinked with intersexual issues in society. As such, efforts to link masculinity with hegemony must grapple with the dynamic and multifaceted nature of gender relations in contemporary societies. This thesis seeks to examine the various historical and theoretical frameworks that undergird the concept of hegemonic masculinity, in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities for applying this framework to contemporary social issues.

1.3.4 Gender Theory and Feminist Perspectives:

When considering issues of gender, it is important to acknowledge the historical context in which gender control functions. While hegemony is often understood as a form of cultural control, this simplistic notion fails to capture the complexities of gender relations. In the 1970s, sociology began to explore the concept of the "male sex role" in society, critiquing the oppressive societal norms and gender expectations placed upon men. These critiques laid the groundwork for the anti-sexist movement, which included an examination of sexism against men.

Critiques of the sex role theory highlighted the blurring of behavior and norm, as well as the homogenizing effects of sex roles. They also recognized the challenges of accommodating oneself to these specific forms in role theory, and the importance of accounting for power dynamics within gender relations. These criticisms and challenges have led to a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of gender relations, and the need for more nuanced analyses that account for the complexities of power, identity, and social change. This thesis aims to explore the evolution of these critiques and the ways in which they have shaped contemporary culture.

1.3.4.1 Conceptualizing Gender and Masculinity:

In the study of gender and masculinity, one of R.W. Connell's treatise on Hegemonic Masculinity is *Masculinities* (1995). In this seminal work, Connell explores the complex and multidimensional nature of masculinities, focusing on the concept of hegemonic masculinity and its role in the reproduction of gender inequalities.

In *Masculinities*, Connell argues that masculinity is not a fixed or universal entity but a social construct that varies across different social and cultural contexts. She introduces masculinity "to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (Connell 71) which refers to the dominant form of masculinity that embodies the culturally valued ideals, behaviors, and practices within a particular society. Hegemonic masculinity sets the standard against which other masculinities are judged and often involves the subordination and marginalization of women and non-hegemonic masculinities. In an article written by Connell and James W. Messerschmidt who is Professor of Sociology in the Criminology Department at the University of Southern Maine. The article *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept* (2005) by R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt gave a significant contribution to the study of masculinity. In this article, Connell and Messerschmidt critically examine and expand upon the concept of hegemonic masculinity, offering new insights and perspectives.

The authors begin by acknowledging the widespread influence of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in masculinity studies. However, they also recognize the need to reassess and refine the concept to address its limitations and capture the complexities of gender and power dynamics more accurately.

According to both scholars: "this is a contested concept. Yet the issues it names are very much at stake in contemporary struggles about power and political leadership, public and private violence, and changes in families and sexuality. A comprehensive reexamination of the concept of hegemonic masculinity seems worthwhile. If the concept proves still useful, it must be reformulated in contemporary terms. We attempt both tasks in this article" (Connell and Messerschmidt 03). Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed or static ideal but a social construct that is continuously negotiated and reconfigured within specific historical, cultural, and social contexts. They emphasize that hegemonic masculinity is not the only form of masculinity but one that is dominant and privileged within a given society.

The authors propose a conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity as a dynamic, relational, and contextual concept. They argue that it is crucial to examine the multiple intersecting hierarchies and power relations that shape and intersect with masculinity, such as race, class, and sexuality. This intersectional perspective expands the analysis beyond a singular focus on gender to consider the broader systems of privilege and oppression that influence the construction of masculinity.

Connell examines how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, performed, and enforced through various social processes, including socialization, education, and institutional practices. She analyzes the ways in which power operates within gender relations, highlighting the privileges and advantages conferred upon those who embody and conform to hegemonic masculinity.

1.3.4.2 Power and Hegemonic Masculinity:

Central to Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity is the notion of power. Hegemonic masculinity is characterized by the dominant position men hold within patriarchal

societies, exerting power and control over both women and subordinate masculinities. It is

through the exercise of power that hegemonic masculinity is maintained and reproduced. Power

relations are embedded within social structures and are enacted through various practices,

including physical force, economic control, and cultural influence.

Power and hegemonic masculinity are intricately linked concepts that intersect in the

construction and maintenance of dominant forms of masculinity within a given society.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the idealized and culturally accepted form of masculinity that

represents the embodiment of power, authority and dominance. It serves as a model against

which other masculinities are measured and often involves the subordination and marginalization

of women and non-hegemonic masculinities.

Power is a fundamental element in the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. Those

who embody and conform to hegemonic ideals are granted privileges and advantages in various

social spheres, including politics, economics, and social interactions. Power operates through

both explicit acts of dominance and more subtle mechanisms of social control, shaping the

social, cultural, and institutional dynamics that sustain the dominance of hegemonic masculinity.

Connell in the book *Gender and Power* says: "That relations of power function as a social

structure, as a pattern of constraint on social practice, is in one sense all too obvious. The

constraint on practice extends to the elemental question of staying alive" (Connell 107).

Hegemonic masculinity relies on the construction and enforcement of boundaries, as well as the

policing of gender norms. Power is exerted to ensure conformity to these norms and to

marginalize or exclude those who do not adhere to the dominant ideals.

The relationship between power and hegemonic masculinity is not only about men's

power over women but also about power dynamics among men themselves. The pursuit and

maintenance of hegemonic masculinity often involve competitions and hierarchies among men, as they strive to assert their dominance over one another and reinforce the existing power structures.

1.3.4.3 Gender Relations and Hegemonic Masculinity:

Hegemonic masculinity is intricately tied to gender relations and operates in relation to other genders. It is reinforced through the subordination of women and the marginalization of non-hegemonic masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity sets the standards against which femininity and other forms of masculinity are measured, creating a hierarchical gender order. The enforcement of hegemonic masculinity often involves the policing of gender boundaries and the marginalization of those who do not conform to the prescribed norms.

Hegemonic masculinity establishes a framework within which gender relations are shaped. It reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations, positioning men as dominant and women as subordinate. It perpetuates unequal power dynamics, as men who embody hegemonic ideals are granted privileges and advantages over women and non-hegemonic masculinities. Within gender relations, hegemonic masculinity often results in the marginalization and oppression of women. It perpetuates gender stereotypes, objectification, and discrimination, limiting women's opportunities and autonomy. The ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity can contribute to the normalization of violence against women and the reinforcement of patriarchal structures.

Michael Kimmel is an American retired sociologist specializing in gender studies. In his book *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (2008), Kimmel examines the role of hegemonic masculinity in shaping gender relations within contemporary society. Kimmel explores how the ideals and expectations associated with hegemonic masculinity influence not

only the experiences of young men but also the dynamics of relationships between men and women.

Kimmel argues that within Guyland, a distinct social space inhabited by young men, the performance of hegemonic masculinity here is central. The pursuit of masculinity often involves engaging in risky behaviors, engaging in hypermasculine performances, and subscribing to a hierarchy that reinforces male dominance and power. These behaviors and attitudes can contribute to the objectification and mistreatment of women, perpetuating unequal gender relations.

By examining the socialization process of young men in Guyland, Kimmel sheds light on the ways in which hegemonic masculinity impacts relationships between men and women. He explores how the ideals of Guyland can shape attitudes towards women, including notions of entitlement, objectification, and sexual conquest. As it is mentioned in his book *Guyland* (2008) "Girls today are unlike any generation in our nation's history. Decades of change in the options for women have had their effect. They seem more entitled, empowered, and emboldened than any generation in our history" (Kimmel 243). These attitudes can contribute to the marginalization and mistreatment of women, reinforcing unequal power dynamics.

Kimmel also addresses the experiences of women within Guyland and the challenges they face. He highlights the pressure on women to conform to narrow gender roles and expectations, as well as the experiences of harassment and objectification they may encounter in this social space. This quote sums up the experience quite well "A woman going to a fraternity party is walking into Testosterone Flats, full of prickly cacti and blazing guns" (243).

However, Kimmel also highlights the potential for resistance and transformation within Guyland and gender relations more broadly. He discusses how some young men and women

challenge the norms of Guyland and work towards more egalitarian and respectful relationships.

By encouraging critical reflection and fostering dialogue, Kimmel advocates for the development

of alternative forms of masculinity and more equitable gender relations.

1.4 Postmodernism:

Postmodernism, as a literary movement, builds upon the modernist tradition and uses it as

a starting point rather than a replacement. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of

postmodernism necessitates a thorough comprehension of modernism as a literary movement in

its own right. Brian McHale, in his book on postmodernist fiction, underscores a crucial

distinction between modernism and postmodernism. According to McHale, the distinction lies in

the fact that in modernism, the dominant philosophical framework is epistemological, whereas in

postmodernism, it is ontological. Epistemology is concerned with the art of knowing and the

questions pertaining to knowledge, while ontology delves into the philosophical question of

existence itself. McHale posits that a typical modernist novel is akin to a detective story, where

the focus is on uncovering a hidden truth. The reader questions the narrator's reliability and

integrity, and the detective attempts to decipher the clues to arrive at the ultimate solution. In

contrast, the dominant theme in postmodernist fiction is ontological. Questions of existence, such

as the nature of reality, the existence of parallel universes, and the limitations of our world, take

center stage. Therefore, a reader's mind is primed to grapple with questions of existence when

reading postmodernist fiction. McHale further asserts that the sister genre of modernism is the

detective story, while the sister genre of postmodernist fiction is science fiction.

1.4.1 Definiens of Postmodern Literature:

Postmodernism is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been defined and

conceptualized in various ways by different scholars. Ihab Hassan talks about this in detail in his

book Pluralism in Postmodern perspective published by the University of Chicago Press. However, there are some general definiens or characteristics that are commonly associated with postmodernism. These include:

1.4.1.1 Indeterminacy:

As stated by Hassan, it includes all manner of annuities, ruptures and displacement affecting knowledge and society. Postmodernism, which undermines the idea of fixed meanings and stable identities, is characterized by indeterminacy. According to postmodernist theorists, meaning is not an innate property of objects or texts but is instead created through social and cultural processes. They reject the notion that there is a single, unchanging truth or reality that can be known and instead see the world as multifaceted and ambiguous. Indeterminacy appears in various ways in postmodernism. Linguistic indeterminacy is one type, where meaning is formed by language use and interpretation rather than being established by language. According to postmodernists, language is never transparent, but constantly contextualized and marked by the speaker's or writer's social position.

1.4.1.2 Fragmentation:

Fragmentation is a prominent characteristic of postmodernism, which challenges the notion of a unified and coherent worldview. Postmodern theorists argue that the world is marked by fragmentation and diversity, and that there is no single, objective truth or reality. They view the world as a collection of fragmented and competing narratives, discourses, and perspectives. As argued by Hassan, the postmodernist only disconnects, and fragments are all he or she pretends to trust. Their ultimate opprobrium is "totalization".

In postmodernism, fragmentation manifests in various forms. One form is cultural fragmentation, where the dominant cultural narrative is challenged by a multitude of subcultures

and counter-narratives. Postmodernists reject the idea of a unified cultural tradition or identity, and instead celebrate the heterogeneity and hybridity of contemporary life. They see culture as a site of struggle, where different discourses and ideologies compete for dominance.

1.4.1.3 Incredulity Towards Grandnarratives:

Postmodernism rejects the idea of universal, overarching narratives or metanarratives that claim to explain and order human history and society. In the aftermath of the counterculture movement of the 1960s, there has been a growing challenge to establish grand narratives of religion, western civilization, naturalness, history, and truth in the material world. The rise of diverse constituencies, such as women, minorities, gays, lesbians, and individuals from the developing world, has resulted in their voices being heard and recognized. Consequently, sustaining universal ideas that were created through exclusions and silencing is no longer tenable, and this has paved the way for an important feature of postmodernity and postmodern literature, namely the challenge to any established grand narrative of truth. This is a crucial characteristic of postmodernism as it challenges the notion of universal truth by questioning the legitimacy of dominant perspectives and narratives that are often exclusionary in nature. In light of the emergence of diverse voices, the notion of a single truth has become untenable and postmodern literature seeks to subvert grand narratives that are used to legitimize dominant cultural, social, and political norms.

1.4.1.4 Skepticism of Objective Truth:

Postmodernism questions the notion of objective truth, arguing that truth is relative and dependent on context and perspective. The term "objective" is a critical concept that demands comprehensive understanding, given its frequent mention in various contexts. Objectivity pertains to facts and is independent of opinion or interpretation, whereas subjectivity is

concerned with opinions. Derrida and Foucault argued that objectivity is nonexistent, and this concept serves as the foundation for various ideas, such as scientific facts and logical thinking. These concepts, commonly known as Enlightenment values, date back to the 18th century. The rejection of objectivity, a notable feature of postmodernism, is highly controversial since it challenges the validity of basic and ancient ideas. The question arises: why do postmodernists reject objectivity? The basis for this rejection stems from the postmodernist theory of language, which questions the transparency of language, a notion upheld by Enlightenment thinkers who conceptualized ideas such as reason and objectivity. These thinkers believed in a firm and objective link between objects of perception and signifiers, which are words used to represent those objects. Critique of binary oppositions: Postmodernism challenges binary oppositions, such as male/female, black/white, and reason/emotion, arguing that these binaries are constructed and not natural.

1.4.1.5 Metaphysics and Intertextuality:

Intertextuality, a key idea in postmodernism, highlights the intricate connections between various texts and how they impact one another. The concept of originality or authenticity is rejected by postmodernists, who instead see writings as intertwined and interrelated, with meaning originating from the connections between various works. Intertextuality is one of the many techniques used by postmodernists to add significance to their works. Parody is a popular form where a text mocks or imitates another text to comment on or distort its meaning. Pastiche is another style where a text blends various genres and styles to produce a new, hybrid form. Postmodernists also make use of intertextuality to add layers of meaning to their own texts by making references to other literature or cultural norms. Postmodernism embraces playfulness,

irony, and intertextuality, blurring the boundaries between different forms of culture and creating new meanings through the juxtaposition of different texts and styles.

Focus on fragmentation and difference: Postmodernism emphasizes fragmentation, diversity, and difference, rejecting the idea of a unified and homogeneous culture or identity.

These definiens are not exhaustive, and there is ongoing debate about the scope and nature of postmodernism. However, they provide a general framework for understanding some of the key characteristics associated with postmodernism.

1.4.2 The Postmodern in *American Psycho*:

The novel *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis is often seen as a prime example of postmodern literature. Here are some ways in which the novel exhibits postmodern characteristics:

1.4.2.1 Fragmentation and Non-Linear Narrative:

The novel is non-linear in form, with various digressions, broken scenes, and untrustworthy narrator. This symbolizes postmodernism's rejection of linear storytelling in favor of fragmented tales. We see that through

1.4.2.2 Metafiction and Intertextuality:

American Psycho regularly references and combines other sources, including popular culture, literature, and philosophy, into the plot. This reflects postmodernism's concern in the interaction of many cultural texts, as well as its inclination to blur the lines between fiction and reality.

1.4.2.3 Playful Experimentation with Form and Language:

American Psycho dabbles in a variety of genres, including satire, horror, and humor, and plays with language in a variety of ways. Ellis, for example, routinely used brand names and

consumer goods as a sort of cultural commentary. This is consistent with postmodernism's concern in challenging and subverting established cultural narratives.

1.4.2.4 Irony and Self-reflexivity:

The novel is frequently satirical and self-referential, with characters commenting on their own behavior as well as the plot. This reflects postmodernism's inclination to call into doubt the authority of traditional narratives and language's truth claims.

Overall, *American Psycho* demonstrates numerous postmodern literary qualities, including fragmentation, experimentation with form and language, irony and self-reflexivity, and intertextuality.

1.4.2.5 Non-linear Narrative:

The structure of the story is broken; the plot frequently leaps back and forth in time and diverges on unnecessary tangents. This illustrates the postmodern interest with challenging conventional narrative structures and experimenting with alternative storytelling strategies.

1.4.2.6 Disconnected Scenes:

Because the novel frequently depicts situations that do not appear to be connected to one another, it can be difficult to identify a definite storyline. As a result, the reader may become perplexed and unsure of the story's importance.

1.4.2.7 Repetition:

The novel's sentences, situations, and descriptions are frequently repeated, generating a sense of "déjà vu" and bewilderment. This emphasizes the protagonist's mental fragility and adds to the impression of disintegration.

1.4.2.8 Incomplete and Contradictory Information:

The work frequently provides insufficient or contradictory information, leaving the reader confused of what is true and what is not. This calls into question the concept of a coherent, objective world and strengthens the feeling of fragmentation.

Conclusion:

All in all, the postmodern condition demonstrates plurality as well as a culture of rejection towards modernist metanarratives rooted across its different fields. Literature is no exception to postmodernism, since its role is providing an enhanced assimilation of culture. In this regard, American culture represents the edifice of the postmodern condition, and reflects it on the literary creation of the late twentieth century including *American Psycho* which exhibits the postmodern nature of American literature.

Chapter Two: The Hyperreality of Postmodernism in American Fiction

Introduction:

For centuries, the concepts of hyperreality, simulacra, and simulation have been a matter of fascination for philosophers and thinkers over centuries, these concepts continue to intrigue contemporary thinkers, transcending the boundaries of time. In postmodernism, the concepts gained more attraction after Baudrillard's contributions to the field, as the shift from the industrial age to the consumerist phase made the theory of hyperreality more relevant in postmodernism. *American Psycho* (1991) experiences the concepts in a unique and thought-provoking way, exploring the boundaries of postmodern societies through the scope of Wall Street yuppies culture of the 1980s in which reality has been replaced by simulation. Bret Easton Ellis' novel challenges the perception of truth and reality in the postmodern through the protagonist, Patrick Bateman, whose obsession with materialism, appearances, violence, media, and superficiality galvanizes a hyperreal universe where the surface exceeds the essence reality as manifested in modernism.

The chapter's corpus aims to analyze the narrative in the context of Baudrillardian philosophy, with a focus on the portrayal of the aforementioned concepts in the novel. By employing Baudrillard's concepts, this study seeks to critically evaluate the implication of hyperreality in a postmodern world that seems to lose the conventional perception of reality, where boundaries appear blurred and overwhelmed with simulacra. The analysis will endeavor with various themes and motifs that contribute to the novel's portrayal of hyperreality, such as the fetishization of the object, the hyperrealism of labour, the prefoliation of images in media, the disintegration of meaning and truth, and the commodification of identity, as this ongoing process

undermines the inherent individuality of identity leading to its disintegration in the age of the spectacle.

The examination of these themes will attempt to unveil the breakthrough of hyperreality in the narrative. Moreover, it will highlight the ways in which the postmodern society is shaped by images, objects, and surfaces in a world dominated by simulation affecting human communication. By exploring the novel's representation of hyperreality, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of postmodernist literature and its cultural implication, while also offering a critique of postmodernist American society's obsession with appearances, materialism, and superficiality.

2.1. The Representation of Hyperreality in Postmodernism: The Hyperreal Breakthrough:

2.1.1 Hyperreality in Postmodern Fiction:

The emergence of the postmodernist movement in Western societies has engendered an extended discussion across academics for the etymology of the term. The term "modern" signals an attitude of "pertaining to the present," then the "post-modern" implies an attitude of "pertaining to the future;" that is, the postmodernist's aspiration to define the future in attempt to incarnate the present, embodied in the 'modern,' is justifiable (McHale 4), as the detrimental consequences of World War II necessitated for a reevaluation of the modern thought, while the post-War period promised a future world granted by a revolution of technological revolution in which modern values are reevaluated. In this regard, Postmodern Literature attempts to provide an enhanced sense of literature that accommodates the currents of the twentieth century in which the world manifested advanced technologies unprecedented in human history.

As a mirror of society, literature endeavors in a reflection of the human experience including the existing beliefs, values, struggles, emotions, insights, and aspirations in one's own experience in an attempt to critique the societal conditions in which the individual is fostered. The postmodern text preface for an insight into the postmodern society and the social conditions of the age, making it possible to provide an evaluation of the changes granted by postmodernism. In this context, the postmodern society is one pronounced for its hybridity, fragmentation, skepticism, subjectivity, consumerism, proliferation of technology, and hyperreality; in addition, postmodern literature establishes a foundation for critics to evaluate the implication of postmodern characteristics on the essence of western societies. In this regard, Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality assesses meticulously the disruption of reality in the postmodern societies, as the inception of the concept explains a multitude of phenomenon regarding the proliferation of

technology, media, images in the post-industrial age. Also, the concept is exhibited in a multitude of literary texts that are influenced overall by postmodern settings in pursuit to diagnose society.

In technologically advanced societies, people start to encounter the hyperrealism of simulations on daily basis resulting in a distorted perception of reality, as the sources for meaning and truth are filtered through media and overall technological devices. The literary scholarship that attempts to highlight /imply the hyperrealist element in its construction as a tool to critique the Postmodern Condition of technologically advanced societies is inexhaustible. In *Fahrenheit 451* (1951), Ray Bradbury employs a dystopian hyperrealist setting where human intellect is contested by mass media. The jeopardy lies in the perception of books as the parasite within society, for the oppressors deem any form of text as a dangerous tool that challenges the ongoing oppressive order. The novel portrays an oblivious society in which hyperreality, represented in mass media, proliferation of technology, and images, supersede reality and life is filtered by technological devices as the source for information is only attainable by media. Guy Montag, the antagonist in the novel, is a fireman in the regime of oppression where books are being burned as a censorship of human intellect; however, his perspective about this regime starts to take another shape when he happens to encounter a young woman named Clarisse, who questions the reality of their societal tents associated with submissive emulation of reality, conformity, and superficiality. This encounter sparks curiosity in Montag, leading him to question his stand on the regime's oppressive actions, and the true value of knowledge and literature. The novel presents an attempt to portray the hyperrealism of postmodern societies where human experience is reduced to entertainment, and the soul food for individuals is

attainable through dominant media on the expense of the quest to redeem one's own sense of reality.

Reality has been the epicenter of literature throughout history dating back to ancient Greece; however, postmodernism imposes a critical question of reality, as the age dictates the disintegration of its conventional understating on the expense of the emergence of a divergent conceptualization of reality. Bret Easton Ellis in *American Psycho*, the case study for this dissertation, undergo a critique of American society through the lens of Patrick Batmen who exhibits the hyperreality of postmodern individuals. The character is mostly defined with sadistic and deranged individual consumed by violence, deceit, superficiality, consumerist, and a warped sense of superiority, and the novel exhibit an edifice of hyperreality.

2.1.2 The Hyperrealism of American Psycho:

In *American Psycho* (1991), Bret Easton Ellis attempts to portray the postmodern American society through the lens of Manhattan, New York. An ideal setting for its hyperreal consumerism and capitalist culture managed to reflect on the postmodern social analysis of Jean Baudrillard through the theory of simulacra and simulation. Set in the 80s late capitalist culture in Manhattan, New York. Ellis's opening lines in *American Psycho*, borrowing from Dante Alighieri, begin with the expression 'ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE' (Ellis, 1), echoing Baudrillard's expression in reflection to the postmodern world: 'the dessert of the real itself' (Baudrillard, 1). This paves for a grotesque introductive aura in which oblivious characters gather around desperate to behave as living beings. However, the only perspective we are introduced to is the protagonist, who despite his sense of deathlessness seems to reflect upon his reality in the form of a late epiphany by the end of the narrative. Due to the exceeding entanglements with the hyperreal which centers the setting of the late nineteenth century, Patrick

Bateman, the protagonist, is a well-dressed, handsome, wealthy, and successful Wall Street

banker; however, at the same time, he resembles a narcissistic, hedonistic, self-absorbed, hyper-

consumerist, and a potential psychopathic serial killer. Bateman's disintegration

acknowledgment in the hyperrealist environment is self-recognized as confessions of lack of

state of being are stated as follows: "There is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, … *I

simply am not there*." (Ellis 201). The world of Bateman seems to lose the conventional

meanings of human life, and become lost in a dichotomy of hyperreality and reality – he

becomes a single sign existing within a system that render meaningful only in opposition to other

signs of society which are defined, mostly, with the cultural commodities and signs of the

hyperreal. The attachment to these signs replaces his reality and masks it making him numb to

the illogical around him. The setting embodies the influence of image and its power on human

life, and what Bateman resembles is a larger sample of Americanism that has become overloaded

with consumerism for the individual to even notice.

American Psycho ushers in an immaculate description of hyperreality as defined by

Baudrillard, with the components adopted in creating the novel clearly undertaking the aesthetics

of hyperreality and simulation that are undoubtedly realized in designing the plot. In Patrick

Bateman's world, the reader is introduced to living the postmodern experience of the hyperreal.

The storytelling is realized from a first-person narration perspective; a sense of pragmatic and

barely human-like voice used to reflect his retrospective thought mainly in describing the

surroundings and livelihood of himself as a protagonist, yet these descriptions are broken and do

not resonate with reality. Bateman is inclusive to accounts of brands and clothing, he continually

describes people for their detailed outfits as such: "Scott Montgomery walks over to our booth

wearing a doublebreasted navy blue blazer with mock-tortoiseshell buttons, a prewashed

wrinkled-cotton striped dress shirt with red accent stitching, a red, white and blue fireworks-print silk tie by Hugo Boss and plum washed-wool trousers with a quadruple-pleated front and slashed pockets by Lazo." (24) That is, the outfit /brand of a certain person exceeds the person in description replacing the person simultaneously, and making the person unidentified whenever the sign is unrecognizable. Simply, for Bateman, the signifier exceeded the signified and what the postmodern has left him with is a prolonged catalog of brand names conducted throughout his social interactions with humanity. This allows Bateman to exist as a simulacrum within the system of signifiers that tend to behave the same way.

Baudrillard, in *The System of Objects* (1996), maintains that "The whole philosophy of idealized consumption is based on the replacement of live, conflictual human relationships by a 'personalized' relationship to objects." (187) This quote is well exemplified in 'Morning,' a chapter that introduces the reader to an extended daily routine Bateman goes through each morning and denotes the personal relationship between him and the products he uses. This relationship is defined as intimate, as it applies to every single material object that Bateman possesses including his "chaise longue, painting, glass-top coffee table, VCR, Shampoo, towel, and microwave" (Ellis 15,16), the Bateman logic prioritizes material objects over normal social interactions which are undermined in favor of the former. That is evident in Bateman and Evelyn's relationship – which normally dictates a level of intimacy – resembles everything dysfunctional, superficial, and toxic. For instance, while feeling 'emptiness', Bateman cannot decide the cause behind the turmoil, whether he was recording over the VCR losing him content, or his refusal to Evelyn's inquiries about marriage during a date at Barcadia, which in the first place he had kept his "hands over both ears trying to block out Evelyn's voice during this whole interim" (66). That is to say, Bateman prefers to be involved in a close relationship with

commodities and materialistic objects as the closeness somehow fulfills the intimacy he needs on daily basis. Pawlett explains:

> Traditional objects 'tools, furniture, the house itself' (1996a: 200) were 'symbolic'. This means that as carriers of intense meaning they mediated social relationships as a living force binding human action and endeavor to durable and lasting sets of meanings … Such symbolic values and sentiments are relatively inflexible; they tend to be binding rather than open to debate or questioning (14).

Evidently, Bateman's obsession with commodities is merely a disabling factor of reality, rendering a fictional case of Baudrillard's concept of "fetishism of the signifier" (Baudrillard qtd. In Weinreich 67) which develops from the theory of sign values. It is essentially a refined conceptualizing of the Marxist critique of "commodity fetishism" implying "the way in which the living force of labour is hidden behind finished commodities." That is to say, the process by which signifiers become idolized within certain social groups, and setting preliminary grounds for signifiers to exceed the signified (43). Indeed, the commodities are consumed for their sign value not for the use value, meaning that, rather than the determination for using a commodity is not to satisfy certain needs or bring an added value to his life, rather, the determination to consume is tied with the sign it carries, as this sign gives its holder a sense of a defining nuance. That is evident in Bateman's intentions behind never missing the chance to mention his ownership of a 'platinum American Express card' that sets him apart of all his friends who own only a 'gold card.' Both Gold and Platinum American Express cards are only granted to individuals with top-notch credit scores and impressive spending capabilities. While Platinum cards come with a more luxurious status allowing Bateman to set himself aside from the larger sample of people as a rich person.

The emergence of postmodernism is highly associated with accelerated technology, proliferated media, and all the economic, cultural, political rapid changes by which, since the twentieth century, American society is defined with and qualified its edifice to resemble the peak of postmodernism. The United States in its essence managed to make a conversion into a world of images where their referents collapsed in favor of potential giving to the individual to compete for conformity by engaging in conversation of fancy, stylish, elegant, wealthy, and overall, who owns the most and who owns what. Where, in fact, it shows a sense of deathlessness and shallowness. In *America* (1989), Baudrillard states: "America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality It is a hyperreality because it is a *Utopia* which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved" (28), which explains thoroughly the New York aesthetics adopted in *American* Psycho, a place inhabited by hyperreality.

The state of hyperreality is identified with an abundance of objects mediated through images, signs, and symbols that are disconnected from reality and become self-referential. This means that these objects circulate within the hyperreal environment, reinforcing and reproducing themselves. Bauman states: "[i]n hyperreality, everything is in excess of itself … Piles of images, heaps of information, flocks of desires. So multiplied, the images represent nothing but themselves, information does not inform, desires turn into their own objectives" (Bauman 151, 152). In this regard, Patrick Bateman embodies hyperreality through the excessive obsession with commodities, attention to surfaces and appearances, and senseless conversations.

The accounts of Bateman as well as his conversation are rendered inconsistent whenever the reader attempts to resonate with the context within the narrative, this reinforces the idea that reality and hyperreality are intertwined and can be difficult to distinguish from one another. The conversations Bateman engages in are merely shallow, and the characters often become

irresponsive to what is being said; in a casual conversation with Evelyn and other few friends, Bateman declares: "I'm an ... evil psychopath." (Ellis 12), yet nothing seems to get the attention of Bateman's audience, nor gets him a proper response to his statement. That is, the immaculate descriptions of brand names and fashion are embraced in an attempt to achieve a form of godly perfection through the sanctification of the image. Bateman repeats the same routines, behaviors, and actions relentlessly throughout the novel, this repetition reinforces the hyperreal nature of his existence, where reality is reduced to a series of simulations and routines excreted to maintain consistency with hyperreality. Moreover, Bateman's hyperreality is characterized by his perception of himself as a fictional character, rather than a real person, as well as his implementation of a detached and ironic narrative tone, mimicking protagonists of horror or dark comedy movies. Additionally, he employs cultural and media references, like Huey Lewis and David Letterman, with immaculate descriptions of brand names and fashion that are embraced in attempt to achieve a form of godly perfection through the sanctification of the image, resulting in hyperreality.

2.1.3 Patrick Bateman as a Simulacrum:

In hyperreality, the object transcends the intentional representation it meant to serve in the first place. Thus, the object which meant to simulate reality exceeds reality through the phases of the image, becoming more real than reality itself – hyperreality. In this regard, Patrick Bateman by the end of the narrative claims: "there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory … I *simply* am not there" (Ellis 200, 201) echoing Baudrillard: in the last phase, the image "has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 6). Which corresponds to the fourth ordered simulacra making Patrick Bateman a simulacrum that holds no reference to its original reality. However, the process of the simulacrum Bateman goes

through to become "something illusory" (201) is the climax of the plot that has been in a process

of development since the reader is first introduced to Bateman in the novel.

The first Bateman the audience gets to interact with is a charcter who attempts to embody

the life of a Wall Street banker working at Pierce & Pierce, lives in Manhattan, frequents

restaurants and night clubs with his colleagues, maintains social relationships, workouts, and

sustains a healthy diet. Bateman adopts these daily routines which are common social norms

within the financial industry in Wall Street. In addition, the behaviors exhibited are reasonable;

in one conversation, Bateman expresses his desires to do good, he says: "end apartheid for one.

And slow down the nuclear arms race, stop terrorism and world hunger … prevent U.S. military

involvement overseas" (Ellis 10). At this stage, Bateman represents a first order of simulacrum,

as the character attempts to portray a faithful reflection of reality, which resonates with

Baudrillard's explanation of a first order simulacrum: the image is "the reflection of a profound

reality" (6). However, this state of Bateman develops into the second order of simulacra, where

the image "masks and denatures a profound reality" (6). At this stage, Bateman becomes

submerged with the materialistic objects of hyperreality; that is, he becomes obsessed with these

objects to the extent of becoming the lens through which Bateman sees the world, as

Baudrillard's asserts: "the map that precedes the territory" (1). In Batmen's case, commodities

connotes the map; that is, commodities exceeded reality becoming the representation of reality in

his world, whenever he interacts with another character, Bateman define the character with their

appearances signs, and objects, he says: "Once inside Harry's we spot David Van Patten …

wearing a double-breasted wool and silk sport coat, button-fly wool and silk trousers with

inverted pleats by Mario Valentino, a cotton shirt by Gitman Brothers, a polka-dot silk tie by Bill

Blass and leather shoes from Brooks Brothers." (18), and this goes for all the characters in the

novel. Later, Bateman steps into the third order of simulacra mainly after his fetishism of violent video tapes transcend to alleged horrible violent crimes committed towards various characters. At this stage, Bateman claims to kill several people in mannerisms influenced by the mediated images through media, yet his actions do not meet any consequences and do not go along with reason, making Bateman hides the truth behind his actions which is associated with the third order, "it masks the absence of a profound reality" (6), which render Bateman as a third order simulacrum that masks the truth behind his actions.

As the conclusion of the narrative unfolds, Bateman arrives at an epiphany which suggests that his perception of reality has been surpassed by hyperreality, leading him to the realization of his existence as a person has been replaced with a fourth order simulacrum bearing no relation to reality – the hyperreality of Manhattan, New York replaced the existence of Patrick Bateman resulting the realization that "there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me" (Ellis 200, 201).

2.2. Disruption of the Workforce: An Examination of Postmodern Labour:

In *"Into the Void": The Hyperrealism of Simulation* (2004), Martin Weinreich attempts to endeavor with a social critique of the late 20th century postmodern New York through *American Psycho*, while underlining the aesthetics of Baudrillard in the novel, a hyperreal setting with characters that cherish the postmodern condition as religion. He argues that the understanding of labour in postmodern societies is replaced with a new mode of labor that dictates a decline of the need to practice labour, he quotes Baudrillard in *Symbolic Exchange* (1976): "labour is everywhere, because there is no more labour" (qtd. In Weinreich 64). The concept of labour in industrial societies has been driven by the motive of production in its larger picture, yet the shift from the industrial society to a postindustrial society managed to affect as

well its foundation, in the sense of changing the formula of production to a formula of consumption. The market evolved to become overloaded with products that made the individual turn into a consumption living organism. Weinreich argues that the city has turned into the perfect place for consumption. Baudrillard believes that "Labour, once voided of its energy and substance [...] is given a new role as the model of social simulation, bringing all the other categories along in the aleatory sphere of the code" (qtd. in Weinreich 66). Thus, labour as a mode of creative production is volatilized with the abundance of proliferated signs changing its productive nature into a consumeristic ritual. Nevertheless, the need to reproduce labour as a social ritual in society is needed as it maintains the social order.

Patrick Bateman portrays this radical transition of labour. Along with his colleagues, he does not engage in any sort of labour throughout the novel, instead, the only work they frequent are prolonged conversations about clothing brands, luxury materialistic objects, magazines, restaurants, vocations, models, and fitness; the majority of the characters' relationships with their jobs are repellent, and addressed as follows: "I mean the fact remains that no one gives a shit about their work, everybody hates their job, *I* hate my job, *you've* told me you hate yours" (Ellis 4). The manifestation of the labour relationship and ignorance towards responsibility is vivid in the chapter 'Office', where Bateman is headed to his office supposedly to conduct some sort of labour; however, the chapter is voided of any form of labour where Bateman jumps back and forth between non-related work rituals; he delves into an internal monologue describing his appearance, starts a conversation with his secretary asking her to cancel a meeting at a restaurant, then asks her to take a reservation at a restaurant, reads a couple of magazines and listen to music, and finishes wishing to find the show *Jeopardy* available to watch. That is, Bateman is surrounded by an enormous number of products that labour does not seem to matter anymore

echoing Bauman "life-projects are built around consumer choice rather than work" (Bauman 1).

For Bateman, who is a wealthy individual, labour is only a social ritual to fulfill the need to

conform with society. After admitting to hating his job, he practically answers his partner's

question to her suggestion "if you're so uptight about work, why don't you just quit? You don't

have to work." He replies: "I ... want ... to ... fit ... in" (127). Baudrillard asserts this phenomenon

"You are asked only to become socialized, not to produce or excel yourself" (qtd. in Weinreich

66). In postmodern society, the individual's only role is to conform to a particular social group

not to excerpt any creative production.

The 1970's and 1980's in the United States manifested a decline of organized labour

mainly because of the rising inflation rates coupled with the shift from manufacturing jobs to

disciplines dominated by professional, technical, and service-based skills. This led to a decline in

the industrial sector leaving a rising rate of unemployment within the American society reaching

just above (10%) by the end of the 80s. For economists, this state is referred to as 'stagflation', a

state of slow economic growth and high inflation coincided with rise in unemployment rate (New

York Times "*What the Inflation of the 1970s Can Teach Us Today*" 1:50), and the novel attempts

to reflect on the issue of homelessness in New York according to Bateman's accounts which

mostly embodies the discrimination of the American upper class on the underprivileged class. He

comes across several homeless people in the narrative, this sample of people is regarded always

with a down-look that miniaturizes their human nature giving the capitalist class the privilege to

underestimate them, and Bateman is guilty of this capitalist trend as across his enouncements

with the homeless, or as he prefers to categorize them as 'bums' – shows the discrimination

towards this sample which seems to exist in every corner of capitalist New York. The intentions

behind Bateman's actions seems to conform to the standards of his entourage, the instances

where Bateman discriminates are almost countless, but the most striking incident is when Bateman was going back home and happened to bump into a black homeless guy called Al where brings out five dollars bill and teases him with it, then asks him an undermining question about not having a job, Al responds saying "I lost my job" he continues: "I was fired. I was laid off." Bateman responds later to Al asking for help saying: "Al ... I'm sorry. It's just that... I don't know. I don't have anything in common with you." Bateman ends up returning the bill into his jacket and bringing out a knife from the pocket and he carefully "push[s] maybe half an inch of the blade into his right eye ... instantly popping the retina" before deciding to stab Al killing him then his dog in the most gruesome ways possible (Ellis 71, 72).

The contrasting relationship resonates with the troubling circumstances of underprivileged individuals living in the postmodern societies. As Bateman later visits a regular MacDonald's restaurant in attempt to "go somewhere Al would go" (72) and perhaps fit into the victim's life – a reaction regularly done by Bateman to his victims as in the case of Paul Owen – however, this leads him quickly to regret and starts "cursing [himself] for not going to that Salvadorian bistro with Reed Thompson and the guys" (72). In this regard, Bateman does not find Al's life particularly interesting as it lacks the necessities Bateman requires to feel alive – commodities.

2.3. The Gospel of Media:

The postmodern is correlated with media as it represents an integral component of postmodern societies, where individuals shape their identities through the lens of media. Baudrillard argues that media neutralized truth through the process of simulacrum resulting "the destruction of meaning and of all relation to reality" (Hutcheon 33). In this regard, Baudrillard scapegoats the media for the profound implication of hyperreality on society, as it preforms the

role of the medium through which signs are communicated to the mass, leading to a loss of meaning, identity, and overall disconnecting people from reality (33). Baudrillard in *The Consumer Society* (1998), on the contrary to the Frankfurt School which deems media as a producing tool for "isolation" and "alienation," argues that the media, through solicitation, have giving the individual the "gift of the 'self'" or the illusion of the individual finding an understanding in relation to themselves (Pawlett 24). That is, the messages spread in media platforms hold meanings intended for the masses under the influence of certain power dynamics in attempt to manipulate, control, and influence the masses in favor of consumerism.

Patrick Bateman as an agent of postmodern American society, is subjected to the effects of "mass" media and the influence all the mannerisms it uses to shape the individual. Perceptibly, the entourage of Bateman is ultimately flawed with the gigantic simulacra endorsed through media that evokes specifically vapid consumerism, and falsehood throughout society overall. That is to say, the attachment of Bateman to the bond of media-sign is a controlling factor in his presence, decisions, etiquette, and behaviors. As Bateman obsessions with TV shows, and specifically the fictional show *The Patty Winters Show* which come across his discussions very often across different occasion. This show is a reflection of the hedonistic reasoning forecasted on TV that is adopted in the novel and mimics the late nineteenth century show business in America as a whole. The show is notorious for its ridiculous, terrifying, racist, and delusional themes: "UFOs That Kill" (Ellis 63), "a new sport called Dwarf Tossing" (90), "women who've been tortured" (137), "boy who fell in love with a box of soap" (158), "a machine that lets people talk to the dead" (174). In other words, this influences Bateman on daily basis, and the instances are giving a layered meaning by Ellis to tease the postmodern. The

teachings of media represent to Bateman personal values and principles which substitute his fundamental reality with these sorts of simulations projected by the postmodern media.

The unreliability of Bateman's narration contradicts the whole essence of truth, and portrays every defining component of the protomodern, and eventually results in suspecting all the actions of the characters in the novel. Nevertheless, the projection of these simulations onto the world of Bateman are reflected in his actions and the perception of the world around him. Evidently, the alleged violence committed by Bateman is by no means reasonable nor justifiable. However, in such violence, the human nature of Bateman is set aside and the reader is introduced to the hyperreal version of Bateman influenced by the simulacra projected in certain content exposed to him through technology. That is to say, Bateman obsession with serial killers' biographies the such of 'Ted Bundy' or David Berkowitz, also mentioned in novel as the 'Son of Sam' – who both were serial killers in the 1900s with several bodies to their names – is a result of the abundant amount of violent content normalized to the 'mass' through the media. Zaller points out the relation between the media, Dahmer (serial killer from the 1990s), and Bateman:

> Dahmer is in many respects Patrick Bateman brought to life a compulsive
> murderer whose modest, submissive demeanor belies the acts of which he is
> accused? torture, dismemberment, the stewing of body parts, etc. These atrocities,
> not imaginary but real, not attached to fictional personae but to actual victims,
> were depicted at length in the media, without inciting complaint (323).

Thus, the simulacra of serial killers escape the boundaries of media finding its way to Bateman's reality exceeding the innocence in his world. As a result, Bateman starts to carry several weapons on regular basis; Bateman carries: "three knives and two guns carried in a black Epi leather attaché case ($3,200) by Louis Vuitton" (87), commits several murders as he kills an

innocent dog on the streets as following: "I pick the dog up quickly by the neck … I've got such a tight grip on its throat it can't bark and I can actually *hear* my hand crush its trachea. I push the serrated blade into its stomach" (89), and acts violently towards women as in the case where he "beat[s] up a girl … who was asking people on the street for money" (114); among other tremendous atrocities proclaimed by Bateman influenced and normalized by postmodern media.

2.4. Irreverence of Truth:

Lyotard defines the postmodern as the condition of "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv), as most postmodernists claim to scrutinize the totalizing theories of history, social, and humanity that attempt to provide a thorough explanation of humanity. This privileges skepticism towards absolute truth, objectivity, or legitimacy rendering the postmodern into an entity which perceives truth as subject to the individual. Baudrillard, in this regard, is highly critical as he "rejects subject-centred claims to knowledge" and attacks subjectivism as "the person or individual, in this approach is not the source or foundation of representation or knowledge" (Pawlett 3). In this context, Bateman corresponds to the skepticism surrounding the postmodern as truth finds a way towards subjectivity in all of his accounts throughout the narrative. The narrative is merely intrapersonal narration grounded in the subjective constructs and perspectives of Bateman, which makes truthfulness inaccessible for the readers to obtain causing an illusion of truth to both Bateman and the readers. Truth is held as self-evident unquestioned by Bateman; however, if one critically and skeptically perceives the statements of Bateman and question truth behind his fictional experiences, the truth might be unveiled through a dichotomy that one path declines any sense reliability in the accounts, and another that makes truth of these accounts. That is, the audience is left with an ending interpretable in different ways. Here, two positions are taken into consideration; on one hand, the interpretation perceives Bateman as a

misogynistic, racist, and psychopathic violent serial killer who managed to kill countless lives and made a truthful report on his actions; albeit, to conclude to this, one must neglect the unreliable nature of Bateman's storytelling, on the contrary, an interpretation concludes that his actions are merely the construct of hallucinations and delusions blurring access to truth and creates a sense of uncertainty.

It is difficult to determine the truth behind the protagonist serial killing actions in the novel for there is no eyewitnesses to manifest the homicidal behaviors, nor any decisive evidence discovered by other characters in the novel including the detective appointed to investigate the disappearance of Paul Owen. By the end of the novel, Bateman's recognition of the abnormality in his reality concludes to these confessions he makes to his lawyer Carnes while describing a law enforcement aerial intervention. The killing spree of Bateman reaches an extended body count to the extent that he does not hold a specific number of the people he supposedly killed, he affirms: "admitting everything, leaving nothing out, thirty, forty, a hundred murders" (Ellis 188). Nevertheless, the confession of Bateman does not seem to hold any meaningful consequences nor to reveal any evidence. The investigation conducted about the disappearance of Paul Owen folds into Bateman's vocal message left in Owen's voice mail making what seems a general consensus around this lie covering Owen's death. In fact, the confessions Bateman makes to Carnes on the phone are perceived only as prank from Bateman's side, and even when Bateman confronts Carnes in person about the murder, Carnes follow along the consensus of lying that he had dinner with Owen ten days prior. This confusion is echoed in Baudrillard:

> If truth and reality can clearly come only from the subject and his consciousness,
> then illusion, which is the opposite of these, must necessarily come from

elsewhere. From the world of the object, from some other thing than the subject.

Illusion, like profusion, comes to us from the world. (128)

For Baudrillard, the essence of truth and reality contradicts the concept of illusion. And for one to redeem truth as the byproduct of the individual and his personal interpretations of the world, which is the dominant belief in the postmodern, then illusion becomes only perceived as the outgrowth of the 'object' that exists in the postmodern world that is associated with media proliferation. Bauman asserts, "[i]n hyperreality, truth has not been destroyed. It has been made irrelevant" (151). In this regard, the correlation between the words of Baudrillard and Bateman's reality and perception of truth galvanizes an interpretation that advocates that these proclamations of Bateman are merely a recitation of mediated images of antagonistic accounts portrayed in the spectacle surrounding him; that is, he subverts these mediated accounts as personal experiences, and proclaims himself as the central serial killer in his illusive narrative, which render the illusion exceeds the imagination and cited as truth – merely heroic actions and creation of his mind influenced by media. Another possible interpretation is that these accounts of Bateman are actually a truthful killing spree that takes place in Ellis' fictional narrative, which teases the eccentric behaviors of the postmodern American society with violence extreme narcissism, materialism, and cruelty.

The concept of truth seems in this case to exist abnormally within a system subject to relativism that drives the characters' unreliability in storytelling, and reflects the sense of uncertainty unto the narrative concluding in confusion which controls now both the readers and the plot. Ellis utilizes an unreliable narrator to convey the distortion of truth in postmodern reality, Beville asserts that "The postmodernist approach to literary creation … aims at leading the reader to the general conclusion that truth, reality and experience are in essence purely

subjective and personal" (47, 48). Hence, this technique challenges the essence of truth and portray it as the construct of the imaginations. Ellis approaches the creation of *American Psycho* in attempt to convey the subjectivism and relativism of truth and reality in the postmodern. Bauman says: "truth is false when nothing has the courage and the stamina to declare itself as truth for everybody and for all time" (VIII) echoing the postmodern tenet of truth relativity in a hyperreal world that holds no longer a static truth for all men and all times.

One question remains unanswered in regards to the novel about the reliability of Bateman's killing outburst. However, an answer to this question would violate the nature of the novel itself, *American Psycho* as a postmodern text embody the intrinsically inherited irreverence of truth established in postmodern societies. In this regard, Patrick Batmen adopts the standard subjective perception of knowledge of a postmodern society, and undergo a first-person storytelling manifesto in which he narrates the events of the novel subjectively which leaves no room for the readers to determine the reliability of his actions. The novel deploys such setting as a mirror for the dominant narrative approach in postmodernity; specifically in Postmodern Literature.

2.5. Individuality in the Age of The Spectacle:

The novel discusses a conundrum of identity loss in which the characters' individual identities merge with their acquaintances /colleagues' identities yielding a network of people identified as one another with oblivion to any personal consequences. The protagonist introduces himself as Patrick Bateman to his inner circle and to the readers; however, Bateman meets several characters throughout the narrative who identify him as someone else. Notably, Batmen's relationship with Paul Owen which encompasses a sense of deception from Batmen's side, as his intention is purely to find out "how Owen got the Fisher account" (28). It is evident that

Bateman's Greediness had his eyes want what his colleague has. However, Owen, on the other hand, constantly misidentifies Bateman as 'Marcus Halberstam' and Bateman actually considers this incident as a "logical faux pas" since both him and Marcus work at P&P (49). And do not bother to correct Owen, nor allows Evelyn to do so; he reacts to the moment Evelyn "mentions of [his] name [he] immediately start blabbering, hoping that Owen didn't notice" (100). In this regard, the characters' individuality has submerged with their colleagues' identities creating a confusion of identities which also seems to mislead even Bateman who says: "I've forgotten who I had lunch with earlier and, even more important, *where*. Was it Robert Ailes at Beats? Or was it Todd Hendricks at Ursula's" (80). The confusion reflects the spectacle effect on the postmodern individual; that is, the individuals altogether become involved in the spectacle adopting the elements it provides for their individual identities which causes their identities to dissolve into a single entity shared amongst most of the characters of the novel.

In theory, the concept of individuality is relevant in postmodern culture as represents a central matter in defining postmodern societies. In *Søren Kierkegaard and the First Explosion of Individualism* (2021), Douglas Giles endeavors in his research investigates the inception of individualism in recent history. The concept originates in social and political theories of Hegelian perspective which advocates that the individual is merely a part of a historical process. Which suggests that the construct of individual identity is actively shaped through interaction with the social and cultural systems where one is fostered. Hence, "[humans] do inherit the value system of the society into which [they] are born" – that is human behaviors are determined by the very cultural and social systems of their societies. However, in this context, Individuality is considered from the perspective of Søren Kierkegaard who rejects any totalizing narratives, as the ability of the individual to exist as an independent entity; particularly of being a uniquely

identifiable person from other members of society, and possessing one's own needs or goals, rights and responsibilities in pursuing one's own meaning behind their lives. That is, individuality is intact with uniqueness, where individuals possess the free will to adopt the systems provided in their cultural and social systems, and chose to define an individualist moral compass that drives their decisions aside from the crowd, while also sustaining the sense of subjectivity ("*Søren Kierkegaard and the First Explosion of Individualism*" Giles).

In this regard, the individual identity of Bateman is centered around conformity which is shaped around the postmodern apparatus surrounding the American 80s' culture overall. Jameson explains:

> [T]oday, from any number of distinct perspectives, the social theorists, the psychoanalysts, even the linguists, not to speak of those of us who work in the area of culture and cultural and formal change, are all exploring the notion that this kind of individualism and personal identity is a thing of the past; that the old individual or individualist subject is 'dead'; and that one might even describe the concept of the unique individual and the theoretical basis of individualism as ideological. (6)

Malpas discusses individuality and the alienation experience in the context of Postcolonialism. He states: "[i]ndividuality is built from memories and associations, but when these are generated in a culture that denies one's humanity, the comprehension of the self as whole becomes impossible. Identity becomes a masquerade as one attempts to 'fit in'" (Malpas 70, 71). However, the words are also applicable in the case of Bateman, who no longer identifies the unique 'self' within himself; as his social relationships, memories, and personality are mediated through the spectacle which denies him the sense of the 'self'. That is associated with

Bateman's feeling of lacking a sense of humanity, mainly through the adoption of the serial killer attitudes exposed to him in the spectacle to which he confesses when committing a crime: "I can imagine that my virtual absence of humanity fills her with mind-bending horror" (175), and verbally later with Evelyn: "I'm [inhuman] … I'm in touch with humanity" (182). Therefore, the sense of alienation is experienced in Bateman's own identity which deprives him from the experience of individuality, and sets his ultimate quest "to ... fit ... in" (127) within the cultural and social systems exhibited by the postmodern that simply denies Bateman from the sense of humanity. He states:

> There wasn't a clear, identifiable emotion within me, except for greed and, possibly, total disgust. I had all the characteristics of a human being—flesh, blood, skin, hair—but my depersonalization was so intense, had gone so deep, that the normal ability to feel compassion had been eradicated, the victim of a slow, purposeful erasure. I was simply imitating reality, a rough resemblance of a human being, with only a dim corner of my mind functioning. Something horrible was happening and yet I couldn't figure out why — I couldn't put my finger on it." (Ellis 151)

Guy Debord manifests that "the spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a *means of unification* … the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation." (7). In this regard, Bateman's society, which is mostly associated with the spectacle, navigates its daily basis through a depthless universe where long conversations are controlled by supreme mimicry. In quest for a false '*unification*' granted only through the spectacle with the cultural and social practices these individuals frequent, such as the meetings in restaurants, meetings, and personal lives that are subordinated to commodities and

fetishisms. Yet, this 'unification' is illusory as it stems from the language and images of the spectacle which serves as an alienating tool in postmodern societies. That is, the spectacle presents itself as a tool of unification here in fact it alienates individuals' identities. Nevertheless, at an early point, a side of Bateman's identity seems to be conscious enough to care about global issues, as in a conversation with a group of his friends, he points out that problems such as apartheid, nuclear arms race, terrorism and world hunger must be stopped (Ellis 10); however, Bateman's early epiphany seems only to be as a facade adopted from the spectacle mediated through images of media/ news outlets to the society in which he attempts to fit into, so he communicates these mediated images verbally in quest to express social interaction to the rest of society that is affected profoundly by the spectacle.

The protagonist is a product of the spectacle as much as his friends are. Society as a whole becomes galvanized into one form; that is to say, Bateman looks the same as every other yuppie in the finance industry like him, where all of them wear suits and ties that are similarly describable, the women as portrayed in the novel fit in the stereotype of what Bateman would describe them as 'hard bodies' that are blonde, well-dressed, and fit, and everyone strives to own the same possessions as their peers. This encompasses the association of postmodernism with the idea of the death of the individual, as through the fragmented sense of reality that is only possible through the spectacle excerpted by media.

Postmodernism has demonstrated an essence of plurality, fragmentation, hybridity, and diversity intrinsically inherent in societies of the late twentieth century. In this context, American represents the edifice of the postmodern condition as it manifests a supreme level of reliance on proliferated technology, media, excessive commodification, and simulations; Baudrillard deems the United States as a desert, one which he addresses in *America* as following:

America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality … [e]verything here is real and pragmatic, and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too. It may be that the truth of America can only be seen by a European, since he alone will discover here the perfect simulacrum – that of the immanence and material transcription of all values. The Americans, for their part, have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model. (23)

That is inherently embedded in the woven of America, as it has behaved as such since its beginning – the promised land. The Individuals associated with the American identity each has a sense of hyperreality engraved in their essence. As result of the prevalence of hyperreality over reality in postmodernism results the submerge of one's individualism with the spectacle yielding an individual with limited, if none at all, access to reality as manifested in premodern history. In this regard, the novel, as the mirror of society, attempts to bring to the fore such rising societal issue to attention, and endeavor with defining the highlines between reality and what attempts to veil it. *American Psycho* on its behalf, encounters the postmodernism, hyperreality, and simulation of values inherent in America. And Patrick Bateman manifests the postmodernism of America, by the end of the novel, he realizes an epiphany; he states:

[W]here there was nature and earth, life and water, I saw a desert landscape that was unending, resembling some sort of crater, so devoid of reason and light and spirit that the mind could not grasp it on any sort of conscious level and if you came close the mind would reel backward, unable to take it in. It was a vision so clear and real and vital to me that in its purity it was almost abstract. This was what I could understand, this was how I lived my life, what I constructed my

movement around, how I dealt with the tangible. This was the geography around

which my reality revolved: it did not occur to me, *ever,* that people were good or

that a man was capable of change or that the world could be a better place through

one's taking pleasure in a feeling or a look or a gesture, of receiving another

person's love or kindness. Nothing was affirmative, the term "generosity of spirit"

applied to nothing, was a cliché, was some kind of bad joke. Sex is mathematics.

Individuality no longer an issue. What does intelligence signify? Define reason.

Desire—meaningless. Intellect is not a cure. Justice is dead. Fear, recrimination,

innocence, sympathy, guilt, waste, failure, grief, were things, emotions, that no

one really felt anymore. Reflection is useless, the world is senseless. Evil is its

only permanence. *God is not alive*. Love cannot be trusted. Surface, surface,

surface was all that anyone found meaning in … this was civilization as I saw it,

colossal and jagged. (Ellis 200, 201)

All in all, one can observe the major critics of postmodernism and its foundational

epistemological ideas advocating for the inconsistency of postmodernism – "the dessert of the

real itself" (Baudrillard 1), "passion for the Real" (Zizek 1), "the Death of God" (Nietzsche 120),

"revaluation of all values" (Nietzsche 656), and "truth has not been destroyed. It has been made

irrelevant" (Bauman 151) – or, simply, contemplate Patrick Bateman reveals the superficial

nature of postmodernism as he digests the vivid truth about the hyperreal world manifested in

New York, his fostering home. Both Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and Debord's theory of

the spectacle, might be of relevance in the diagnosis of the postmodern condition, however, still,

both theories stood the test of time to be manifested in the contemporary age.

Conclusion:

In regards to the aforementioned, this chapter concludes to the nature of postmodernity in the American society of the 1980s through a consequential postmodernist work of literature. Bret Easton Ellis managed to portray thoroughly the lives of a large sample of Americans affected by the hyperreality of postmodernism. The world of corporate business and finance, with its emphasis on materialism, appearances, and superficiality, arranged for a perfect setting that aligns itself with Baudrillard's concepts of hyperreality, simulacra, and simulation. Here, essentially the reader can manifest the extent of Baudrillard's description of hyperreality, where reality is replaced with proliferated signifiers voided of any reference to the signified.

As critical as Baudrillard's perspective regarding postmodernism, Patrick Bateman grounded for representing the hyperreal according to Baudrillard. The hyperreal state blurs his boundaries between reality and representation, while deprives him from the sense of humanity and qualifies him as a fourth order simulacrum which exceeds Bateman's reality, replacing it entirely for the hyperreal. Consequently, the reader is introduced into the void of Bateman; characters are merely materialistic objects, conversations are pointless, labour is reduced to socializing on the expense of preforming any form of creativity, and media is perceived as the bible in the sense it dictates the alternative conceptualization of reality embedded with a postmodern thought that advocates for it characteristics.

The postmodern condition exported the irreverence towards grandnarratives; that is, the perception of truth as objective, and universal reality is regarded as the emblem of modernism, instead, skepticism in regard to truth is inherited in postmodern societies. Thus, truth became encumbered with subjectivity and relativism. *American Psycho* embraces the theme relativism as the actions of its protagonist lead the reader to ongoing conversations and speculations. In

addition, the protagonist's individuality is lost within a postmodern spectacle that stems from hyperreality creating a conundrum of identities blended in a single person which is Patrick Bateman.

All in all, the chapter scrutinized the postmodern condition in the novel, in attempt to introduce the hyperrealism within this era of American Postmodern Literature. The book also reflects on another aspect of Americanism which is 'Hegemonic Masculinity', where the next chapter attempts to examine the concept within the prospect of the postmodern society as manifested in the narrative.

Chapter Three: The Portrayal of Patrick Bateman's Hegemonic Masculinity

Introduction:

In the postmodern era, there is such diversity amongst men which shows the necessity of a multi-methodological approach which acknowledges the concept of "multiple masculinities" that there are multiple definitions and dynamics of masculinity. This diversity from unassertive heterosexuals to toxic or dominant or aggressive masculinity highlights the point that understanding how men enact manhood in different ways is central to deciphering gender politics and gender relations. In this chapter, we shall take up the concept of masculinity in detail by looking at the embedded and embodied plurality of masculine subject and masculinities as a discourse.

Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* has been widely recognized as a scathing critique of late capitalist culture, but its commentary on gender and masculinity has been equally significant. The novel's protagonist, Patrick Bateman, embodies the ideal of hegemonic masculinity: he is wealthy, powerful, and violent, and he exerts his dominance over others through physical and psychological abuse. This chapter explores the concept of hegemonic masculinity in *American Psycho*, analyzing how Bateman's behavior reflects and reinforces dominant gender norms in contemporary America. Drawing on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and feminist critiques of patriarchy, this chapter examines how Bateman's performance of masculinity contributes to the oppression of women and other marginalized groups. Through close readings of key scenes in the novel, this chapter argues that *American Psycho* exposes the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are constructed and reinforced in contemporary society. By critically examining the novel's portrayal of gender relations and power dynamics, we try to shed

light on the ways in which hegemonic masculinity operates in our culture and to suggest ways in which it can be resisted and subverted.

3.1 The Hegemonic norms in the novel:

3.1.1 Image over Individual:

Easton Ellis, the author of *American Psycho*, noted that the character of Patrick Bateman represents the "id of the culture," the extreme embodiment of societal values and desires. Bateman's obsession with conformity and self-image is a reflection of the pressures placed on individuals, particularly men, to conform to societal expectations of success and masculinity. In the case of Patrick Bateman, his obsession with image and appearance exemplifies the emphasis placed on external validation and conformity in his social and professional circles. Bateman's life revolves around maintaining a carefully crafted image of success, wealth, and physical attractiveness. He meticulously follows fashion trends, obsesses over his physical appearance, and maintains an extensive grooming routine. His typical suit is a black Armani suit, Armani shirt and a silk Armani tie (45).

Bateman's preoccupation with image extends beyond personal grooming and fashion choices. He constantly seeks validation and approval from others based on material possessions, such as his expensive apartment, designer clothes, and high-end accessories. He measures his self-worth by the external markers of success, which he believes will grant him social status and dominance. that is shown every time he cuts off a conversation or even himself "'Wait, how does my hair look?' I ask, interrupting myself" (201). His hair becomes a symbol of his carefully curated image and serves as a manifestation of his obsession with maintaining an impeccable facade. This obsession extends beyond vanity; it becomes an integral part of his identity construction.

It is also worth examining the ways in which Bateman's portrayal of masculinity intersects with other identities such as race and class. The novel and its film adaptation have been criticized for their lack of representation of marginalized communities and reinforcing dominant narratives of white, wealthy, and heterosexual masculinity.

3.1.2 Homosociality:

Bateman's interactions with his male colleagues and acquaintances are often marked by competition, one-upmanship, and a shared interest in materialistic pursuits. They bond over their shared experiences in the corporate world, engage in competitive conversations about clothing brands, personal achievements, and compare possessions such as business cards. These interactions are driven by a desire for social status and validation within their peer group, reflecting the homosocial nature of their relationships. Those who do not conform to norms get rejected as Bateman colleague gets ignored just because he's not wearing the latest fashion suit "I spot Luis Carruthers standing at the bar next to Price, who ignores him utterly. Carruthers is not dressed well" (18). This quote illustrates how Bateman observes Luis Carruthers, a fellow male acquaintance, standing at the bar next to someone named Price, who completely disregards Carruthers. Additionally, it notes that Carruthers is not dressed well according to Bateman's standards. Carruthers' lack of fashionable attire further highlights his divergence from the group's shared values and appearance-based criteria for acceptance. In this context, the quote underscores how homosocial dynamics, based on superficial markers such as clothing and status, can lead to exclusion and marginalization of individuals who do not conform to the group's standards.

Furthermore, Bateman's relationships with his male friends involve engaging in traditionally masculine activities such as dining at exclusive restaurants, attending high-end

clubs, and discussing topics like fitness and grooming. These activities and conversations serve as a way for Bateman and his peers to assert their masculinity and reinforce their shared interests and values.

Bateman seeks validation and self-assurance from superficial standards. His reliance on physical attractiveness to cultivate a sense of well-being perpetuates the harmful notion that one's worth is determined by societal beauty standards. This critique raises concerns about the negative impact of valuing surface-level qualities over genuine character and personal growth. Moreover, Bateman's reliance on external validation through attractiveness contributes to a culture that objectifies and commodifies individuals. His perception that looking good equates to feeling good reinforces the notion that self-worth is primarily derived from outward appearances rather than inner qualities or achievements. This perpetuates an environment where individuals may prioritize image maintenance at the expense of their true selves, suppressing individuality and hindering authentic connections.

3.1.3 Suppression of Individuality:

Bateman's obsession with image over individuality reflects the pressure to conform to hegemonic ideals. He declares:

> [T]here is an idea of a 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*. (200, 201)

The quote suggests that the idea of Patrick Bateman, the persona he presents to the world, is merely an abstraction, a construct that he has created. There is a disconnect between this persona and his true self, as he describes the "real me" as non-existent, and the entity he portrays

as "illusory." This reveals the extent to which Bateman suppresses his individuality and authenticity in favor of conforming to societal norms and expectations.

Bateman's cold gaze and the flesh-on-flesh contact of shaking hands are mentioned, emphasizing his ability to mimic human interaction and create the illusion of connection. However, these interactions are superficial, lacking genuine emotion or connection. It further reinforces the idea that Bateman's identity is performative, and he hides behind this constructed entity rather than revealing his true self. as he constantly seeks approval from his peers "I'm looking at Van Patten's card and then at mine and cannot believe that Price actually likes Van Patten's better". The notion that others can sense that their lifestyles are comparable suggests that Bateman's peers, who are also consumed by materialism and superficiality, may be similarly detached from their authentic selves. They share a common facade, a shallow and homogenized existence that prioritizes image and external appearances over individuality and genuine human connection.

Bateman's statement sheds light on the detrimental impact of hegemonic masculinity on individual identity. The pursuit of an idealized image and the suppression of emotions and vulnerability suppresses Bateman's authentic self. In conforming to societal expectations of dominance and power, Bateman negates an essential aspect of his humanity—compassion. Bateman's loss of compassion reflects a broader issue of disconnection from one's authentic self within the construct of hegemonic masculinity. The pressure to project an image of invulnerability and emotional detachment can cause individuals to disconnect from their own emotions, leading to a sense of internal emptiness and a lack of genuine connection with others.

3.2 Hypermasculinity in *American Psycho*:

The novel *American Psycho* is set in the hyper-competitive and ostentatious business environment of Wall Street, where one's success and status are determined by their ability to excel in any given situation. The portrayal of this world highlights the importance of material possessions and image, particularly for men, as they strive to fit into the prescribed image of a successful Wall Street yuppie. *American Psycho* is a disturbing portrayal of hypermasculinity, which is characterized by excessive aggression, violence, detachment, and a rigid adherence to gender norms. Raewyn Connell, usually cited as R. W. Connell, is an Australian sociologist, talked about this concept in depth and this thesis engages with Connell's framework from her book *Masculinities* (1993) to critically analyze the text and unravel the underlying power dynamics and societal structures that perpetuate hyper masculine ideals.

3.2.1 Hypermasculinity as an Exaggerated Form of Masculinity:

American Psycho offers a compelling illustration of hypermasculinity through the character of Patrick Bateman. According to Connell Hypermasculinity can be understood as an exaggerated form of masculinity that amplifies and intensifies certain traits and behaviors associated with traditional gender norms. She states in her book "Hypermasculinity is a style of masculinity marked by an exaggerated emphasis on attributes such as physical strength, aggression, dominance, and a suppression of emotions. It represents an extreme and rigid form of masculinity that enforces hierarchies and perpetuates harmful gender norms." (46) Connell explains that hypermasculinity often prioritizes qualities such as physical strength, aggression, domination, emotional repression, and adherence to rigid gender roles. It represents an extreme manifestation of hegemonic masculinity, which is the dominant form of masculinity within a society. Connell argues that hypermasculinity functions as a performance, wherein individuals

strive to conform to exaggerated and idealized notions of masculinity. This performance is influenced by cultural and societal expectations, which often portray hypermasculinity as a desirable and powerful form of masculinity. In the pursuit of this ideal, individuals may engage in behaviors or adopt attitudes that are more extreme or exaggerated than what is considered the norm. As Bateman states "there is no real me" or when he said "It is hard for me to make sense on any given level. Myself is fabricated, an aberration. I am a noncontingent human being" (201). These quotes speak to the erasure of individual identity within hypermasculinity. Bateman's statement reflects a loss of authenticity and a disconnect from his true self. In his pursuit of conforming to societal expectations of hypermasculinity, Bateman suppresses his own identity, denying the existence of his inner self. This self-negation is a consequence of exaggerated masculinity, which prioritizes external image and conformity over personal authenticity. Connell's theories of hypermasculinity as a performance align with this quote, emphasizing the performative nature of Bateman's hypermasculine identity and the erasure of his true self.

3.2.2 Hypermasculinity Effect on the *American Psycho*:

3.2.2.1 Violence and Aggression:

Michael Kimmel, a sociologist known for his work on masculinity highlights the association between hypermasculinity and violence, noting that hyper masculine ideals often valorize aggression and the use of force as a means of asserting power and dominance. In his debate with other scholars such as Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, he argues "Hypermasculinity is a form of masculinity that is rigid, aggressive, and frequently violent. It is a performance designed to prove and assert dominance, often at the expense of others." (25:07). This link between hypermasculinity and violence reinforces and perpetuates harmful gender

norms. "I want to stab you to death, and then play around with your blood" (Ellis 33), this statement encapsulates the extreme aggression and violence associated with hypermasculinity and it reflects his disturbing fantasies and the depths of his violent desires, emphasizing the graphic nature of the violence depicted in the novel. Bateman's desire to inflict harm on others reflects an exaggerated need for power and dominance. It showcases the dark side of masculinity, where violent tendencies become a means of asserting control. Connell's framework of hypermasculinity as an exaggerated form of masculinity aligns with this quote, highlighting the extreme nature of Bateman's behavior and its connection to societal expectations of masculine power.

3.2.2.2 Emotional Repression:

Connell discusses how hypermasculinity promotes the repression of emotions as a means of upholding an image of toughness and invulnerability. Men are socialized to suppress and deny vulnerable emotions, which can have negative consequences for their well-being and interpersonal relationships. We see that in Bateman when he utters "I had all the characteristics of a human being—flesh, blood, skin, hair—but my depersonalization was so intense, had gone so deep, that the normal ability to feel compassion had been eradicated" (151). This highlights Bateman's acknowledgment that despite possessing the physical attributes of a human being, his ability to feel compassion has been eradicated. It exposes the dehumanizing consequences of hypermasculinity, which often suppress emotions and empathy in favor of a cold, detached demeanor associated with power and control. When he also said "All it comes down to is this: I feel like shit, but look great", the phrase "I feel like shit" indicates a negative emotional state, possibly encompassing sadness, frustration, or other negative emotions. However, the emphasis

on looking great implies a prioritization of outward appearance and presentation, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a positive image to the outside world.

This quote reflects the societal pressure to project a desirable image while suppressing or downplaying emotions that may be perceived as weak or vulnerable. It suggests a tendency to prioritize superficial appearances and to conceal or repress genuine emotions, potentially as a coping mechanism or a response to social expectations.

Emotional repression involves consciously or unconsciously suppressing or minimizing one's emotions, often as a means of conforming to societal norms or protecting oneself from perceived vulnerability. In this quote, the focus on looking great can be seen as a way to mask or compensate for the internal turmoil. Also, it underscores the detrimental effects of hypermasculinity on the capacity for compassion and emotional connection. Bateman's admission highlights the dissonance between his external presentation and internal state. By eradicating his ability to feel compassion, he sacrifices an essential aspect of his humanity, reinforcing the toxic and shallow nature of hypermasculine ideals. This critique calls for a reevaluation of societal norms that prioritize power and control over genuine empathy, urging for a more compassionate and emotionally attuned understanding of masculinity.

3.3 Misogyny and Alienation in *American Psycho*:

3.3.1 Misogyny:

In her book *Masculinities* (1993) Raewyn Connell extensively discusses the issue of misogyny within the framework of masculinity. Connell acknowledges that misogyny, which refers to the hatred, contempt, or prejudice against women, is deeply ingrained in many forms of masculinity. She examines how various manifestations of masculinity perpetuate and reinforce the subordination and marginalization of women (73). Connell argues that hegemonic

masculinity, the dominant and most esteemed form of masculinity in a given context, is inherently connected to misogyny. Hegemonic masculinity embodies a set of norms and expectations that idealize and prioritize masculine traits while devaluing and marginalizing femininity. It creates a hierarchical power structure where men hold more power and authority than women, reinforcing gender inequalities. Furthermore, Connell emphasizes the role of socialization and cultural norms in shaping masculinity and its relation to misogyny. From a young age, boys are often socialized to adopt behaviors and attitudes that reinforce male dominance and control over women. They learn to associate power, aggression, and control with masculinity, while traits such as empathy, nurturance, and emotional expression are devalued or stigmatized.

Patrick Bateman's relationships with women in *American Psycho* are portrayed as cold and transactional. His girlfriend is merely a trophy wife he has acquired to conform with the expectations of his peers as he introduces them with a low manner "Cheryl, this dumpy chick who is in love with me" (38), treating women as objects that can be bought with money in exchange for sex. Upon closer examination of the scene where he first meets Courtney, his lover, it becomes apparent that he is not concerned about her infidelity with Bryce, his co-worker. He reveals that he himself is cheating on her with Courtney, who is engaged to Luis. Patrick's affair with Courtney seems to stem more from a desire to establish dominance over his peers and support his masculinity, rather than simply out of lust. "Holy Christ—let the fucking bitch freeze to death, put her out of her own goddamn self-made misery" (5). Firstly, the use of derogatory language, referring to the woman as a "bitch," dehumanizes and objectifies her, reducing her to a demeaning and disrespectful term. Such language perpetuates a degrading view of women and contributes to a culture that normalizes the belittlement and dismissal of their worth. Secondly,

the phrase "let the fucking bitch freeze to death" displays a complete lack of empathy or concern

for the woman's well-being. The callousness and disregard for her life and suffering reflect a

misogynistic mindset that devalues women's lives and perpetuates harmful stereotypes about

female vulnerability and weakness.

Additionally, the phrase "self-made misery" suggests blaming the woman for her

circumstances, holding her solely responsible for her difficulties. Even how Bateman and his

peers react to each other in terms of treating women like he explained how "[n]o one makes fun

of his peer McDermott's revelatory statement or of his inability to react more aggressively with

this chick" (20). This exemplifies Bateman's objectification and dehumanization of women. It

reveals his belief in exerting control and power over women, reducing them to objects of desire

for his own gratification. It demonstrates his misogynistic view that women exist solely for the

pleasure and satisfaction of men. When Patrick said "'[y]ou are a fucking ugly bitch I want to

stab to death and play around with your blood,' but I'm smiling. I leave the cunt no tip" (33). It

shows that he harbors a strong disdain for the women around him, as he is sickened by their self-

absorption and vanity and it clearly demonstrates Bateman's derogatory and dismissive attitude

towards women. He not only belittles the intelligence and agency of the woman in question but

also generalizes his perception of women as foolish and lacking awareness. It highlights his

misogynistic belief in the inferiority and incompetence of women. However, upon reflection, the

novel highlights the irony of his perspective. Patrick is equally, if not more, obsessed with his

own appearance and how others perceive him. In essence, Patrick embodies the very traits that

he repulses in women. His anger towards women is directly tied to his own unresolved

masculinity, as he views femininity as the antithesis to masculinity.

3.3.2 Alienation:

In *American Psycho* (1991), Bret Easton Ellis explores the idea that to be a man, one must project an image of perfection and avoid any display of weakness. This results in the creation of a facade or "masculine mask," which conceals any inner struggles or vulnerabilities, and leads to a sense of entrapment within one's own mind. The novel suggests that this need to present a flawless image creates a duality in one's identity, with the mask representing the idealized masculine self, and the true self, which is often weak and emasculated. Connell points out that hegemonic masculinity often requires men to suppress or reject certain aspects of their identities, such as vulnerability, emotions, and non-normative expressions of gender. Men who do not conform to these expectations may face exclusion, ridicule, or marginalization within male-dominated spaces. As a result, they may experience alienation from both themselves and their communities, as they are unable to fully embrace their authentic selves while conforming to hegemonic ideals. "*I simply am not there*" (201). This quote reveals Bateman's profound sense of alienation from his own identity. He describes himself as an abstract concept, lacking a true sense of self. He feels disconnected from his own existence, emphasizing his detachment from genuine human experiences and emotions. It exemplifies his inner turmoil and the existential alienation he experiences. That is illustrated by him "How could she ever understand that there isn't any way I could be disappointed since I no longer find anything worth looking forward to?" (200). Bateman reflects on his inability to experience disappointment due to a profound sense of alienation. He expresses a lack of anticipation or excitement for the future, suggesting a detachment from the normal range of human emotions and a deep sense of apathy.

Bateman's statement reveals a key aspect of alienation, which is the loss of meaning and the diminishing sense of connection to the world or as he defines it "the world is senseless. Evil

is its only permanence. God is not alive. Love cannot be trusted. Surface, surface, surface was all that anyone found meaning" (200). This underscores the existential void that Bateman experiences, where he no longer derives satisfaction or fulfillment from the usual sources of pleasure or anticipation. It reflects his deep sense of disconnection and alienation from the things that might typically provide meaning, purpose, or excitement. Bateman's sense of alienation and detachment from the world around him. He acknowledges living in a world of superficiality and materialism, indicating a lack of genuine connection or meaning in his life. It highlights his disconnection from deeper values and his identification with the shallow, consumer-driven society he inhabits.

3.3.2.1 Social Isolation:

Bateman's interactions with his peers often highlight a sense of social isolation and detachment. Despite being surrounded by a circle of wealthy and privileged acquaintances, he feels disconnected from them. His conversations are often shallow, focused on materialistic concerns and status symbols. The lack of meaningful connections contributes to a sense of alienation, as Bateman is unable to find genuine companionship or understanding among his peers. This is illustrated as the narrative moves forward where Bateman reveals his inability to communicate with others, and he only difference within his society is that he admits. Here, Bateman acknowledges the difficulties of communication and connection that plague not only himself but also others. However, his self-awareness sets him apart from those who may be unaware of their own social isolation. This quote underscores the pervasive sense of disconnect and the barriers to authentic communication that contribute to Bateman's social isolation.

3.3.2.2 Identity Crisis:

Bateman struggles with a deep-seated identity crisis throughout the novel. He grapples with questions of selfhood and authenticity, often feeling like a stranger to himself. This inner turmoil reflects an alienation from his own sense of identity, as he attempts to conform to societal expectations of the successful, powerful man while suppressing his true self. The tension between his true desires and the performance of hegemonic masculinity contributes to a profound sense of alienation as if he stares into a mirror thinking, who is this person? What happened to him? Is there any possibility of getting him back? he looks but there is no one there yet still he continues to look and stare into the glass searching for meaning. He expresses his confusion and sense of loss regarding his own identity. He feels estranged from himself, questioning who he has become and yearning to rediscover his true self. The act of staring into the mirror represents his desire for self-reflection and connection, yet he is left with a profound feeling of emptiness and social isolation.

3.4 Capitalism Hegemonic Role in *American Psycho*:

The novel critically examines the role of capitalism in the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. Through its portrayal of the protagonist, Patrick Bateman, and his interactions within a hyper-consumerist society, the novel exposes the ways in which capitalism intertwines with and reinforces traditional notions of masculinity.

The hierarchical nature of capitalism perpetuates a cycle of power dynamics that reinforces the masculine ideal of superiority. The protagonist occupies a position of power that enables him to control and manipulate those beneath him, who are deemed inferior and elicit feelings of disgust. The novel depicts how the capitalist system reinforces and perpetuates the

masculine desire for power and dominance. This desire for power is closely tied to the societal norms that shape masculine identity.

Patrick's lack of emotional depth is not only a product of his desire to appear powerful, but also a consequence of living in a capitalist society. In order to achieve respect and admiration, individuals must have money and success, which requires hard work and efficiency. Emotions, such as anger, can hinder productivity and socialization with others, leading to a separation of internal feelings from external presentation, this passage of Bateman "I'm sitting in the back of a pitch-black limousine parked in front of a nondescript, brownstone off Fifth Avenue trying to read an article about Donald Trump in the new issue of Fame magazine" (203). The setting of Bateman in the back of a luxurious limousine, parked in front of a nondescript brownstone in an affluent area like Fifth Avenue, represents the materialistic and consumer-driven culture associated with capitalism. The limousine itself is a symbol of wealth and excess, reflecting Bateman's desire for status and his adherence to societal expectations of success. The mention of Fame magazine and the article about Donald Trump further emphasize the capitalist culture in which Bateman operates. Fame magazine, with its focus on celebrity culture and wealth, represents the commodification of fame and the idolization of individuals who embody capitalist ideals of power and success. Donald Trump, a prominent figure in business and later politics, exemplifies the influence and allure of wealth and status within the capitalist system. The emphasis on material possessions such as: "Next to the Panasonic bread baker and the Salton Pop-Up coffee maker … the Sharp Model R-1810A Carousel II microwave oven" (17), or when he constantly tries to get his peers to admire his possessions by exhibiting his belongings, one of his proudest possessions is his watch "I say, checking my Rolex" (130) which indicates that material possession creates status and acceptance.

Bateman's admission of lacking clear and identifiable emotions other than greed and disgust speaks to the dehumanizing impact of capitalism. The constant pursuit of wealth and material possessions becomes the primary driving force in his life, overshadowing and eroding his capacity for authentic emotional experiences. Capitalism, with its emphasis on consumerism and material accumulation, fuels a culture of emotional detachment and objectification. As a result, the life that individuals present to the outside world becomes an empty facade, designed to gain power and influence. The only emotion that remains is the hunger for more money and power, which further reinforces the masculine pursuit of dominance.

One of the key aspects of capitalism in *American Psycho* is its emphasis on materialism and the acquisition of wealth and status. Bateman's relentless pursuit of expensive designer brands, lavish dining experiences, and extravagant possessions reflects the capitalist-driven culture of consumerism. These material pursuits become a means through which Bateman seeks to validate his masculinity and assert dominance over others. The novel underscores the link between financial success and the perception of power, reinforcing the association between wealth and masculine identity.

Moreover, *American Psycho* portrays the objectification and commodification of women as integral components of capitalism's influence on hegemonic masculinity. Bateman's interactions with women are characterized by a dehumanizing and transactional nature, where women are reduced to mere objects of desire and status symbols, and that is perfectly illustrated with how he treats Evelyn, his girlfriend, as a trophy and even goes on activities with her like riding bicycles just to show off his trophy (150). Bateman reflects on his deteriorating ability to genuinely engage with others. Despite appreciating the sound of a woman's voice, he recognizes that he has become desensitized and disconnected from the experiences and emotions of those

around him. This highlights the dehumanizing aspect of hypermasculinity, which promotes a lack of empathy and active listening in favor of self-centeredness and superficial interactions. This exposes the erosion of empathy and genuine connection within hypermasculine frameworks. Bateman's focus on his own needs and desires inhibits his ability to truly listen and engage with others on an emotional level. It reveals the toxic effects of hypermasculinity, which often prioritize self-interest and dominance over authentic relationships and emotional connection. This critique emphasizes the importance of fostering empathy and active listening as integral components of healthy masculinity, challenging the notion that power and success come at the expense of genuine human connection. This objectification of women serves to reaffirm Bateman's masculinity within the capitalist framework, further perpetuating the notion that power and control over women are markers of masculine dominance.

The novel also explores the influence of capitalism on the construction of masculine identity through the portrayal of competitiveness and ruthless ambition. Bateman and his peers engage in a constant pursuit of success and social validation within the cutthroat world of investment banking. The drive to outperform and outshine one another reflects the hyper-competitive nature of capitalism, where notions of dominance and superiority are closely tied to masculine identity. This competitiveness contributes to the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity as individuals strive to conform to societal expectations and climb the corporate ladder.

Furthermore, *American Psycho* highlights the impact of capitalism on emotional detachment and the suppression of vulnerability. The relentless pursuit of wealth and success in a capitalist society often demands emotional resilience and a stoic demeanor. Bateman's emotional numbness and inability to connect with others on an authentic level can be seen as a

manifestation of the emotional toll that capitalism extracts. The pressure to constantly present oneself as strong and invulnerable limits the expression of a full range of emotions, reinforcing the idea that vulnerability is antithetical to masculinity.

3.5 Mass Culture Role in the *American Psycho*:

Raewyn Connell the Sociologist touches upon the influence of mass culture on the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. She argues that mass culture plays a significant role in shaping and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity as she described in her book *Masculinities*. Mass culture, including popular media, advertisements, and entertainment industries, often promotes and celebrates certain forms of masculinity as the dominant and desirable norm. These cultural products contribute to the construction of a collective understanding of what it means to be a "real man," reinforcing traditional gender roles and behaviors (63).

Connell highlights that mass culture often portrays idealized masculine figures who embody strength, dominance, and control, while simultaneously marginalizing and objectifying those who do not conform to these ideals. These depictions not only influence individual perceptions of masculinity but also shape societal expectations and reinforce existing power structures. Patrick says "All it comes down to is this: I feel like shit but look great" (58), here, he acknowledges the emphasis placed on appearance and image in mass culture and recognizes that the external appearance, rather than inner emotions or well-being, is often prioritized. This quote reflects the superficiality and image-consciousness that characterizes the influence of mass culture on societal values and ideals of masculinity.

Mass culture's influence on hegemonic masculinity can be seen in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and norms. Advertisements, for instance, often portray men as strong,

independent, and sexually aggressive, while women are often objectified and portrayed as submissive or decorative. Such representations reinforce a hierarchical gender order where men are expected to dominate and women are positioned as subordinate. We see that in the novel when Patrick was having a gathering with some girls, who he claims. This exemplifies the influence of mass culture on self-presentation and the pursuit of trends. The girls' willingness to transform themselves into lifeless objects for the sake of a party underscores the conformity and lack of individuality prevalent in mass culture. It demonstrates how individuals are willing to sacrifice their authenticity and personal identities in favor of adhering to societal expectations and the latest fads.

Furthermore, mass culture often reinforces the idea that consumption and material possessions are closely tied to masculinity. Advertisements, movies, and other media portray men as successful and powerful through the acquisition of status symbols, reinforcing the link between consumerism, masculinity, and social status.

In the context of the novel *American Psycho*, conformity to the group mentality is a pervasive theme. The characters are so preoccupied with fitting in with their peers that they become indistinguishable from one another, adopting identical hairstyles, suits, and glasses. The standard fashion suit worn by Patrick Bateman and his Wall Street colleagues is described as a symbol of conformity and status within their social circles. The characters in the novel place great importance on their appearance and use clothing as a means of projecting success and power. While specific brands and designers are not explicitly mentioned, the novel emphasizes the obsession with high-end, tailored suits as a representation of wealth and social standing.

Bateman often meticulously describes his own attire and pays close attention to the suits worn by his peers. He highlights the precision of the tailoring, the quality of the fabric, and the

overall stylishness of the suits. The standard fashion suit in the novel is characterized by its impeccable fit, attention to detail, and luxurious materials.

However, it is important to note that the focus on fashion and suits in *American Psycho* serves a satirical purpose. The excessive emphasis on appearances reflects the shallow and materialistic nature of the characters and the culture they inhabit. The obsession with the standard fashion suit becomes a manifestation of the characters' conformity and their desperate attempts to maintain a façade of success and social acceptance.

The recurring descriptions of these suits underscore the shallow values and surface-level interactions that dominate the characters' lives. The obsession with fashion and outward appearances serves as a critique of consumerist culture and the ways in which it can contribute to the erosion of individuality and genuine human connections.

The emphasis is not on individuality, but rather on one's ability to acquire material possessions and achieve success. This extends beyond the wealthy businessmen to the prostitutes hired by the protagonist, Patrick, who show no interest in his identity or occupation. The novel thus portrays a world in which social status and material wealth are prioritized above all else, resulting in a culture of homogeneity and superficiality.

The present discourse examines the interplay between power dynamics, masculinity, and capitalism in the novel *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis, and its connection to the societal norms that shape masculine identity. The central argument contends that the novel illustrates how the hierarchical nature of capitalism reinforces the masculine ideal of superiority and perpetuates a cycle of power dynamics that deem those lacking power as inferior and eliciting feelings of disgust. The discussion is situated within the broader context of a documentary film called *The Mask You Live In* (2015) by Jennifer Siebel Newsom the American documentary

filmmaker, which examines the ways in which American society's narrow definition of masculinity has a negative impact on boys and men.

In the documentary, specialists in the field of sociology and gender studies, including Michael Scott Kimmel who is an American retired sociologist specializing in gender studies, explore how societal norms shape masculine identity. Kimmel suggests that boys are indoctrinated with the notion that being a male requires one to be aggressive, dominant, and in charge. This harmful notion is reinforced by societal expectations that boys must learn to fight, be tough, and stoic.

Bret Easton Ellis portrays several instances where the notion put forth by Michael Scott Kimmel, that boys are indoctrinated with the belief that masculinity necessitates aggression, dominance, and authority, due to societal expectations, is prominently displayed. Through the character of Patrick Bateman, the novel vividly explores the ways in which boys are socialized to adhere to the norms of masculinity, emphasizing the importance of fighting, toughness, and stoicism as integral aspects of male identity.

One notable scene that highlights the indoctrination of male aggression is depicted in Bateman's interactions with his peers. During a conversation among the male characters, a discussion emerges regarding the superiority of particular brands of business cards. This seemingly innocuous exchange escalates into a heated debate, ultimately culminating in Bateman's violent outburst. The intensity of this confrontation illustrates the societal pressure placed upon men to assert dominance and exhibit aggressive behavior, even in mundane situations.

Furthermore, the novel presents various instances where Bateman engages in acts of physical violence. These acts serve as a manifestation of the societal expectations imposed upon

boys to display their masculinity through aggressive behavior. From brutal assaults on homeless individuals to his gruesome murder of Paul Owen, Bateman's actions not only reflect his own psychological state but also symbolize the societal conditioning that encourages men to resort to violence to assert their dominance and power.

Additionally, Bateman's obsession with physical appearance, fitness, and body image further underscores the societal expectation that men must strive to embody an idealized version of masculinity. The protagonist's relentless dedication to maintaining a muscular physique and his rigorous exercise routine reflect the pressure on men to conform to societal norms of physical strength and dominance.

Moreover, the novel highlights the pressure on men to suppress their emotions and present a stoic façade. Bateman's own struggles with his identity, feelings of emptiness, and internal conflicts are masked by his meticulously constructed image of a confident, unemotional, and detached individual. This portrayal aligns with Kimmel's assertion that boys are taught to be stoic and not express vulnerability, reinforcing the societal expectations that being a man requires emotional suppression.

The documentary further explores these norms and highlights the harm they can cause to boys and men who do not conform to them. This discourse adds to the ongoing conversation surrounding masculinity, power dynamics, and capitalism in American society.

Tony Porter, an author, educator, and activist working towards gender and racial justice, contends that the societal pressure on boys to conform to a certain standard of masculinity is a form of violence. He argues that boys are taught to be powerful, emotionally impassive, and tough, which deprives them of experiencing the complete gamut of human emotions.

One way in which Bateman is shown to be taught to be powerful is through his professional life. He is depicted as a successful investment banker, constantly striving to climb the corporate ladder and assert his dominance in the competitive world of finance. Bateman's pursuit of power and success is fueled by the societal pressure to achieve and maintain a position of authority. His relentless drive to acquire wealth, status, and material possessions reflects the emphasis placed on power and dominance in shaping his identity. Emotional impassiveness is another characteristic instilled in Bateman. Throughout the novel, he exhibits a detached and apathetic demeanor, especially when confronted with instances that would typically evoke emotional responses from individuals. Bateman's emotional detachment is reinforced by the societal expectation for men to suppress their emotions, maintaining a facade of stoicism. This emotional suppression deprives Bateman of authentic human connections and inhibits his ability to fully experience and express emotions. However, this emphasis on power, emotional impassiveness, and toughness ultimately deprives Bateman of the complete gamut of human emotions. The novel subtly hints at Bateman's internal struggle and his yearning for genuine emotional connection and fulfillment. Despite his outward facade of power and emotional detachment, there are glimpses of vulnerability and moments when Bateman's true emotional state briefly emerges. These moments of vulnerability highlight the toll that societal expectations have taken on Bateman, preventing him from fully experiencing and expressing a wide range of emotions.

Caroline Heldman, an expert on the presidency, media, gender, and race in the documentary, supports Porter's argument by stating that boys are taught that their emotions are not valid, and they must suppress, hide, or ignore them. This pressure to suppress emotions undermines boys' ability to connect with their human side. Backing her thoughts, Dr. Niobe

Way, a developmental psychologist and founder of the Project for the Advancement of Our Common Humanity at New York University, emphasizes that this pressure on boys to disconnect from their emotions, bodies, and relationships is dangerous. She advocates for a different kind of culture that values empathy, compassion, and relationships. And that is portrayed by Patrick when he said "Something can be done about it," I say. Then, not knowing why I'd said that, I modified the statement, telling her straight on, "Maybe something can't. I don't know. I've thrown away a lot of time to be with you, so it's not like I don't care." (200). that is said to a girl after she modestly confesses her feelings to him which he instantly didn't know how to respond to.

In conclusion, the present discourse highlights the harmful impact of societal pressure on boys to conform to a certain standard of masculinity. The discussion is grounded in the documentary *The Mask You Live In,* which explores the negative impact of societal norms on boys and men. The voices of experts like Tony Porter and Caroline Heldman provide valuable insights into the need for a cultural shift that values empathy, compassion, and relationships over outdated and harmful societal norms.

3.6 The Impact of Hegemonic Masculinity on Gender and Crime in the Novel:

The novel explores the themes of gender and crime, shedding light on the complex relationship between masculinity, violence, and societal expectations. Through the character of Patrick Bateman, the novel examines the intersections of gender identity, power, and deviant behavior.

According to James Messerschmidt in his book *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification* (2018), males are overrepresented in crime statistics due to their socialization into behaviors that deviate from societal norms and values, leading to

criminality. Messerschmidt's perspective is grounded in social, rather than physiological, constructs of gender. He argued that the dominant form of socialization for males, which he termed "Hegemonic Masculinity," leads them to engage in behaviors that create conflict, particularly with other males who exhibit similar characteristics, ultimately resulting in criminal behavior (81). This notion is exemplified in the character of Patrick Bateman. One aspect where socialization is depicted is the influence of wealth and privilege. Bateman and his wealthy peers are shown as being detached from the consequences of their actions and immersed in a culture of materialism and excess. Their privileged upbringing and exposure to a certain lifestyle contribute to a sense of entitlement and a distorted perception of right and wrong. This socialization into wealth and privilege can lead to a disconnection from societal norms and values, making it easier for individuals like Bateman to engage in deviant behaviors without feeling the same moral constraints as others.

Furthermore, *American Psycho* explores the impact of peer pressure and conformity on deviant behavior. Bateman and his peers exist within a hyper-competitive and conformist environment of investment banking, where success and status are paramount. The pressure to conform to societal expectations of success and achievement can lead individuals to engage in deviant behaviors to maintain or elevate their social standing. The desire to fit in and be accepted by one's peers can override moral considerations, contributing to the adoption of deviant behaviors.

Additionally, the novel suggests that the media and popular culture play a role in shaping attitudes and behaviors that deviate from societal norms. Bateman's obsession with popular culture, from music to fashion, reflects a society where external appearances and superficiality hold significant sway. The media's glorification of violence, objectification of women, and

obsession with materialism can influence individuals like Bateman, leading to a distorted understanding of acceptable behavior and contributing to deviance.

Jackson Katz further supports this argument in his documentary *Tough Guise* (1999), stating that the culture of violence that pervades American society is closely tied to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which emphasizes aggression and dominance as essential components of manhood.

Males are also socialized to be dominant, particularly physically, with physical strength valued over intellect, resulting in conflict not only with their partners but also with those who challenge their assertion of dominance. Moreover, Messerschmidt argued that the dominant form of masculinity promoted a heterosexual image that often fostered misogynistic behaviors and the belief that men should be dominant over women. Katz adds to this perspective, asserting that hegemonic masculinity reinforces gender inequality and discrimination by positioning men as superior to women and perpetuating harmful stereotypes and attitudes towards women. In the novel it is the extreme version as Patrick kills a woman for pleasure and an example of that would be "But she's still talking and I'm nodding as if I understand her gibberish, then I break into a smile and lean right into her face. 'If-you-don't-shut-your-fucking-mouth-I-will-kill-you-are-youunderstanding-me?'" (45). This demonstrates Bateman's obsession with violence towards women. His admission that killing is his "real profession" emphasizes the normalization of violence and the objectification of women within the novel's hyper masculine culture. It underscores the disturbing nature of Bateman's actions and his detachment from empathy or remorse.

It is crucial to note that *American Psycho*, as a work of fiction, raises ethical questions about the representation of violence, particularly violence against women. While the novel seeks

to critique the excesses of capitalism and toxic masculinity, the graphic depictions of violence can be highly distressing and have prompted extensive debate and criticism.

Katz added in his documentary that the norms and values of hegemonic masculinity are reinforced through the media, which often depicts men as hyper-masculine, aggressive, and violent. The Hollywood action genre, for instance, often portrays male characters as tough-talking, emotionally limited hard men who dominate their opponents both physically and emotionally. The novel portrays Bateman as deeply influenced by popular culture, particularly through his obsession with music, fashion, and movies. The media's impact on Bateman can be seen in several ways. First, Desensitization to Violence: The media's portrayal of violence desensitizes Bateman to its gravity and normalizes it in his mind. He is exposed to a constant stream of violent imagery, whether it be in movies, music videos, or news reports. This exposure blurs the line between reality and fiction, contributing to his detachment from the consequences of his own violent actions. Distorted Perception of Reality: Bateman's immersion in a media-saturated world contributes to his fragmented sense of reality. He struggles to differentiate between his own experiences and the mediated versions of reality presented in movies and advertisements. This blurring of boundaries further fuels his disconnection from empathy and moral accountability. Influence on Identity Construction: The media's emphasis on appearance and status fuels Bateman's obsession with physical beauty, fashion, and material possessions. He meticulously follows the trends and brands promoted by the media, believing that external appearance is essential for societal acceptance and success. This obsession with surface-level attributes reinforces his shallow and narcissistic personality. Reinforcement of Hypermasculinity: The media perpetuates and reinforces traditional notions of hypermasculinity, which Bateman internalizes. The media's portrayal of aggressive, dominant, and objectifying

behaviors towards women reinforces Bateman's own objectification and mistreatment of women. It reinforces the belief that power and control over women are markers of masculine dominance. Another important factor is how Bateman's jokes around about murder as if it is normalized in their social circle "If all of your friends are morons is it a felony, a misdemeanor or an act of God if you blow their fucking heads off with a thirty-eight magnum" (20). In terms of crime, this quote raises several important points. Firstly, it highlights Bateman's disregard for the value of human life, suggesting a complete absence of empathy or ethical boundaries. His question regarding the legal classification of his potential actions reveals a twisted perspective on the severity of the crime he contemplates and it demonstrates Bateman's extreme detachment from morality and his willingness to commit heinous acts without remorse.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is an important lens through which to understand the overrepresentation of males in crime statistics. The socialization of males into behaviors and reactions that deviate from the norms and values of society is a key factor in this phenomenon, and the media plays a significant role in reinforcing these norms and values. Understanding hegemonic masculinity is crucial to addressing gender inequality, discrimination, and harmful stereotypes and attitudes towards women.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Bret Easton Ellis's American Psycho offers a damning critique of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary America. Through the character of Patrick Bateman, the novel exposes the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are constructed and reinforced in our culture. Bateman's adherence to hegemonic masculine norms--wealth, power, and violence— leads him to commit horrific acts of violence against women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. This chapter has analyzed how Bateman's behavior reflects and reinforces societal expectations of dominant masculinity, and how this reinforces systems of oppression and marginalization.

However, *American Psycho* is not simply a condemnation of hegemonic masculinity; it also offers the possibility of resistance and change. By exposing the violence and harm inflicted by hegemonic masculinity, the novel opens up the possibility of imagining alternative forms of masculinity that prioritizes empathy, compassion, and respect for others. Furthermore, the novel's critique of late capitalist culture suggests that the root causes of hegemonic masculinity are not simply cultural, but are also deeply embedded in economic and political structures. Therefore, any attempt to subvert hegemonic masculinity must also address the broader social and economic conditions that underpin it.

Generally, this chapter has argued that American Psycho is a powerful critique of hegemonic masculinity, exposing its violence and harm while also pointing towards the possibility of alternative forms of masculinity. By analyzing the novel's portrayal of gender relations and power dynamics, this chapter has sought to shed light on the ways in which hegemonic masculinity operates in our culture and to suggest ways in which it can be resisted and subverted.

General Conclusion:

Literature and history are two concepts that complement one another in distinct ways. Historical events were used as stories to rescue the finest, intriguing, interesting, and inspiring ideas made by the human race, which resulted in solutions to our current dilemma. Nothing beats a good story, they say, and these stories frequently exaggerate in telling for entertainment purposes, demonstrating the contrast between the two; history, on the other hand, strives to chronicle events as precisely as possible, literature brings history to imaginative levels to mimic life at certain historical periods. In this regard, literature acts as the doorway to history through which humanity is able to revisit society and reflect upon culture, intellect, consciousness, ideology, and existence. The intricate interplay between literature, society, and history weaves a tapestry of cultural consciousness, where the written word serves as a powerful catalyst, shaping the collective memory and reflecting the profound socio-historical forces that propel humanity forward.

Postmodern literature has demonstrated a fluid nature of fragmentation, indeterminacy, plurality, and rejection. As literature attempts to reveal the reality of American society, Bret Easton Elis's *American Psycho*, as a postmodern literary text, managed to portray the postmodern condition exhibited in America throughout the twentieth century. Where reality is bound the intellectual perception of Baudrillard as simulacra dominates reality paving for the inception of a world associated exclusively with the hyperreal experience. In this regard, Patrick Bateman wonders in postmodernity that is intrinsically inherent in a world defined with reverence of images, relativism, superficiality of identity, and relationships that are mediated through the spectacle.

Technology as the medium of communicating images for long have resembled a pathway of escapism for humans. However, as technology advanced throughout history, media developed in different forms which made the waves of images proliferate constantly to the extent where no one is able to manifest a day without encountering one form of images. *American Psycho* demonstrates this incorporation of images in the daily lives of Americans and the implications it holds on the individuality of a person resulting its disintegration. That is, the hyperreal world holds a reverence of images engraved in the minds of the postmodern individuals who redeem superficiality as the code to live their lives by, which results the commodification of identity as it becomes subject to a market of images by which it is identified with. Evidently, Bateman's world is a manifestation of this claim, as most characters are identified simply with the clothes (commodities) in their possession; thus, their identities are subject to commodification.

The truth in the postmodern is deemed as an abandoned metanarrative where ambiguity leads the world of Bateman into a subjective experience of narration reflecting a rather less realistic narrative for the audience. The integrity of the narrator constantly keeps being the epicenter of a susception through the narrative, as the actions of Bateman do not resonate to reality with the no repercussions to the escalating murder count. The implementation of such ambiguous aura in the novel by Ellis is an attempt to expose the relativism surrounding the postmodern world of *American Psycho* where Bateman's actions ,whether happened or not, do not encounter any sort of consequences because in such world God, incarnated in morality, is dead as manifested in the words of Bateman. This death leaves the world open to relativism of truth that drives the narrative towards a questionable void.

The theory of the spectacle encompasses the controlling dynamics of relationships in the narrative, as Guy Debord suggests that the spectacle presents itself as the pathway of unification

to the fragmented individuals of the postmodern. *American Psycho* reflects the fragmentation of these individuals, that are subject to the proliferation of images/ signs projected in the spectacle through media, and simultaneously presents their unification through the spectacle. That is, the spectacle operates through media outlets which dissimilate signs on a global scale, the audience is exposed to a shared experience and collective consciousness that creates a sense of unification amongst individuals. However, this sense compromises one's own individuality, as these shared experiences spontaneously create an exchanged identity amongst the audience of the spectacle. In this regard, Patrick Bateman and his colleagues/ friends are subject to such disintegration of individuality, where their experiences are merely restricted to conformity, collectivity, obsession of appearances, superficiality, dehumanization, and commodification as a result of their exposure to the spectacle

Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* offers a profound critique of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary America. Through the character of Patrick Bateman, the novel exposes the ways in which dominant forms of masculinity are constructed and reinforced in our culture. Bateman's adherence to hegemonic masculine norms – wealth, power, and violence – leads him to commit horrific acts of violence against women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. The dissertation analyzes Bateman's behavior, reflects and reinforces societal expectations of dominant masculinity, and shows how they reinforce systems of oppression and marginalization. The novel is a clear portrayal of what capitalism stands for; it is like the jungle where only the survive, but in this modern scenario, it is a question of moral depravity and violence toward the other.

The other here represents the woman, the boy, and the homeless. When we get to know Patrick Bateman, it becomes clear he is obsessed with appearances, it is clear he does not stand

out from the crowd. That is, Bateman is just another yuppy conforming to the actions of every other yuppy around him. However, when we learn more about him and listen to his internal monologues, we realize he is not like them and is simply trying to be. His true self, as shown to the audience, is a cold-blooded killer. That may be an extreme and rare interpretation of what masculinity is capable of, but it does not minimize the fact that it is capable of depravity. Ellis tries to criticize masculine behavior under those norms and show us what status and power truly looked like in terms of who gets it, who receives it, and who gets wronged in the process. The large sample of the readers of the novel questioned the truth behind Batmen's actions. As aside from the self-proclaimed actions of killing, there is a long list of evidence supporting the claim that Bateman has to be imagining everything.

As a result, we asked a different question during this investigation. That is: could Patrick imagine all of that just because he was trying to conform and if so, what is this thing he was trying to conform to? That is, mainly, hegemonic masculinity and it is bound to powerful patriarchal structures that operate within the society. In this day and age, we could see the resemblance where every society striving for economic power has a small fraction of that image, at least if not significant in some of them.

However, *American Psycho* is not simply a condemnation of hegemonic masculinity; it also offers the possibility of resistance and change. By exposing the violence and harm inflicted by hegemonic masculinity, the novel opens up the possibility of imagining alternative forms of masculinity that prioritize empathy, compassion, and respect for others. By exposing those kinds of discriminating behaviors that hide under that masculine shadow. Furthermore, the novel's critique of late capitalist culture suggests that the root causes of hegemonic masculinity are not simply cultural, but are also deeply embedded in economic and political structures. Therefore,

any attempt to subvert hegemonic masculinity must also address the broader social and economic conditions that underpin it. Overall, the dissertation highlighted the aspect of hegemonic masculinity in *American Psycho* as it constitutes a profound critique of the phenomena, showing its brutality and devastation while also pointing to the possibility of other forms of masculinity.

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