

Defence Mechanisms in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*

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Abstract—This research investigates the key theme of defence mechanisms and the two sub-themes which are displacement of rage and detachment in Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* (1991) to understand the psyche of the protagonist, Patrick Bateman. Through a harsh critique of 1980s Wall Street culture, the novel portrays a world where materialism, wealth, and appearances overshadow and dominate genuine human relationships. Bateman's extreme detachment and violent tendencies are analysed through the lens of Sigmund and Anna Freud's theories of defence mechanisms, particularly displacement and detachment. Furthermore, the study highlights how Bateman's fragmented identity, rooted in superficial values, leads to a lack of genuine emotional connections as well as objectification of others. The paper also discusses Bateman's existential crisis and the dehumanization that arises from his consumer-driven lifestyle. Ultimately, this analysis provides insights into the novel's commentary on the destructive nature of a society obsessed with wealth and superiority, challenging readers to reflect on the moral and emotional void created by such superficiality.

Index Terms—*American Psycho*, defence mechanism, Bret Easton Ellis, detachment, displacement of rage

I. INTRODUCTION

Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) is a provocative exploration of the psyche of Patrick Bateman, a young Wall Street professional who hides his psychopathic tendencies behind a façade of affluence and normalcy. The novel serves as a brutal critique of 1980s American culture, marked by consumerism and superficiality, but it is also a case study in psychological defence mechanisms. Patrick Bateman epitomizes the cultural emptiness of the era while embodying deep psychological disturbances. By examining Bateman's actions and inner monologues, one can identify the defence mechanisms he employs to cope with his internal conflicts, societal pressures, and detachment from humanity.

The objective of this research is to investigate Bateman's defence mechanisms while simultaneously highlighting its two sub-themes in *American Psycho*. Understanding Patrick Bateman's mental state requires knowledge of these two sub-themes: displacement of rage and detachment. The researchers focus on applying Sigmund and Anna Freud's theories of psychoanalysis to uncover how Bateman's defence mechanisms reveal his repressed affective experiences. Surprenant (cited in Waugh, 2006) explains that, according to Freud, "creative writings are the product of unconscious processes, and that it is possible to understand how the mechanisms of the psychical forces operate in them" (p. 204). The researchers pinpoint the psychical themes and defence mechanisms embedded in Ellis's *American Psycho*.

The status of the country serves as a fertile ground that ripens these themes as the economic condition of the country affects the individuals' behaviour in the society. As noted by Conte et al. (2001), "The United States posted trade deficits in seven of the 10 years of the 1970s, and the trade deficit swelled throughout the 1980s". They further asserted that the "combination of tax cuts and higher military spending overwhelmed more modest reductions in spending on domestic programs". As a result, the federal budget deficit swelled even beyond the levels it had reached during the recession of the early 1980s. This increase in the budget deficit is accompanied by "rapidly growing economies in Asia appeared to be challenging America as economic powerhouses; Japan, in particular, with its emphasis on long-term planning and close coordination among corporations, banks, and government, seemed to offer an alternative model for economic growth" (Conte et al., 2001). These interactions create a complex web of relationships and cultural dynamics that influence everything from social norms to individual aspirations. As the economy fluctuates, citizens' opportunities shape their aspirations and social interactions within their communities. Bernhardt and Eckblad (2013) described the global financial crisis that occurred in 1987, sometimes referred to as "Black Monday," when the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 22.6 percent. Chaib (2017) mentions that Bret Easton Ellis is considered one of the well-known authors of the "blank generation," a term given to a group of contemporary American writers who discuss modern issues such as consumerism, sex, and violence. In his third novel, *American Psycho*, Ellis attempts to provide a detailed

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portrayal of the moral and spiritual decay in 1980s American culture by exposing the yuppie consumerist lifestyle of that era (Chaib, 2017).

Several studies explore the personality of Patrick Bateman. For instance, Dumas (2008) aims to highlight both the similarities and differences between Bateman in *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park* (2006). Dumas cites the following description of Bateman in his other novel *Lunar Park*: “A novel about a young, wealthy, alienated Wall Street yuppie named Patrick Bateman, who also happens to be a serial killer filled with vast apathy during the height of the Reagan eighties” (p. 103). Dumas (2008) remarks that Bateman’s obsessive pursuit of individuality is ironically conventional. He further notes that by referencing one of René Magritte’s famous surrealist paintings, Ellis creates a powerful visual parallel between his own creative process and the painter’s distinctive style. Magritte’s work often blends reality and illusion, much like how *American Psycho* blurs the boundaries between Patrick Bateman’s reality and his delusions. This comparison underscores Ellis’s approach in crafting a complex and psychologically intense narrative.

Dumas’s study has a different objective than Kastrupsen’s (2020), which focuses on Gothic and postmodern elements to explore the evolution of the Gothic into a contemporary form of the genre. In contrast, Helyer (2001) explores the superficiality of the normative masculine gender role, drawing on contemporary theories of postmodernism and gender identity to examine how this role is constructed and maintained.

In an interview, Andrew Grove, chief executive of technology company Intel Corp., remarked, “There is so much psychological togetherness that seems to have worked both on the upside and on the downside...It’s a little like a theatre where someone yells ‘Fire!’” (Glaberson, 1987). This observation underscores the collective mentality that permeated 1980s Wall Street culture—a culture the novel sharply critiques. The novel portrays a world where surface-level values dominate and genuine human connections are scarce. Lipinski (2021) has mentioned that *American Psycho* serves as a satirical critique aimed at exposing the moral decay and superficiality of American consumer culture, as well as the destructive consequences of a society that worships money above all else. Similarly, Granovetter (1985) adds that behaviour and institutions are affected by social relations as economic actions are embedded in the structures of social relations in industrial society. This factor plays a vital role in shaping and creating Bateman’s personality as an evil individual in American society. Freud’s theory proposes that the psyche comprises three aspects: the id, ego, and superego. The id, the seat of instinctual drives, is entirely unconscious, whereas the ego operates in the conscious mind. The superego operates both consciously and unconsciously i.e., it accumulates traces of authorial figures and acts as a critical agency towards the ego (Waugh, 2006). These factors influence the three aspects of human behaviour.

II. FREUDIAN FRAME OF DEFENCE MECHANISMS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE PSYCHE OF PATRICK BATEMAN

Sigmund Freud (cited in Smith, 2000) suggests that a psychological conflict occurs when a patient's ego struggles to reconcile distressing ideas or feelings. The process of facing such distress without the confidence to resolve it mentally can indeed lead to significant emotional turmoil. Freud develops influential theories on defence mechanisms, exploring how the ego defends itself against internal impulses, particularly sexual and aggressive desires that contradict the ego's internalized standards. He believed these defence mechanisms played a crucial role in shaping personality (Baumeister et al., 1998). Freud originated the concept of displacement, seeing it as a distortion of dreams, which he called “displacement of accent”. Hence, Freud (cited in Eysenck, 2017) defines displacement as a “process whereby the affective charge is detached from its proper object and is directed towards an accessory object – in other words, the emotion properly belonging to one object of the dream is not shown in relation to that object, but to a different one” (p. 121). In the same vein, Beaupre (cited in Gillette, 2024) indicates that displacement occurs “When we are under a lot of pressure or dealing with difficult situations, the smallest things can trigger our anger and cause us to lash out at those around us”. She further adds that “sometimes, we may be angry at someone but avoid confronting them because we fear their reaction. In this case, our anger gets displaced onto other people or things that are safer to direct it toward”. According to Sigmund Freud, detachment is another defence mechanism or coping strategy used to shield a person from pain and worry. Freud initially introduced the concept of defence mechanisms as unconscious strategies employed by the ego to manage conflict between the id, ego, and superego. His focus was on specific mechanisms such as repression, denial, and projection and he often discussed these in the broader context of psychosexual development and neurosis. Hence, the concept of defence mechanisms was originated by Freud and further developed by his daughter, Anna Freud, as ways to unconsciously protect the ego from discomfort or distress. He believed that to preserve psychological stability, people could distance themselves from particular feelings or connections. Anna Freud expanded on her father's research by explaining how the ego uses different defence mechanisms, such as detachment, to deal with internal conflicts and external pressures. She created a more clinically oriented classification of psychological defence mechanisms. In her landmark work *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1993), she wrote on how detachment enables people to tolerate unpleasant emotions and distressing experiences. She provided a more systematic taxonomy of defence mechanisms and shifted the focus toward the ego's role in actively managing anxiety and conflict. Unlike her father, she emphasized the developmental aspects of defences in childhood and adolescence and applied them more explicitly in the context of child psychoanalysis and normal psychological development. Cherry (2024) summarized Freud’s theory, suggesting that human behaviour is influenced by unconscious memories, thoughts, and urges. In short, Anna Freud's theory is an extension and elaboration of Sigmund Freud's foundational ideas. While not fundamentally

different in theoretical orientation, her contributions mark a shift in emphasis from the id and drives to the ego's adaptive functions, and a more structured classification of the mechanisms.

Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* opens with a scrawled sentence: "Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here" (Ellis, 1991, p. 3). This sentence introduces the reader to the unexpected events that are blood-red lettering on one side of the bank, alongside an advertisement for *Les Misérables* on the other side. These descriptions and this logo pave the way for the introduction of the horrible events to come. Allue (1999) thoughtfully explores the motivations behind Bateman's actions, suggesting that while no simple explanation exists, the only plausible one is that Bateman is a product of the society in which he lives. Bateman did not come from a poor background, nor was he subjected to childhood abuse, and no psychological disorder fully explains his behavior. Instead, his profound detachment and disconnection from reality can largely be attributed to several factors, with the societal environment playing a particularly significant role. Bateman critiques his 1980s society, which is obsessed with materialism, wealth, and appearance, overshadowing genuine human relationships. His detachment results from responding to superficial values, where all conversations with his colleagues revolve around material possessions and status. Bateman describes his morning routine, which includes a well-ordered breakfast, skin care, and exercise. He avidly watches "The Patty Winters Show" and frequently mocks the guests with his friends for their odd behaviours, anxieties, or perversions. Price, Craig McDermott, David Van Patten, and other members of Bateman's Wall Street social circle frequently dine at the most prominent restaurants, dress in the best designer clothing, and only pay attention to the most physically attractive women. Despite his material possessions, such as his lifestyle and morning workout regimen, Bateman's conversations revolve around his music collection, featuring artists like Whitney Houston, Phil Collins, and Huey Lewis and the News. His preference for high-end designer apparel and his opulent abode further demonstrate his emphasis on leading a luxurious lifestyle. Ellis portrays the world as predominantly harsh and unforgiving, calling it "more often than not a bad and cruel place" (Ellis, 1991, p. 87). Similarly, Bateman views the world through a bleak lens, asserting that "Surface, surface, surface was all that anyone found meaning in ... this was civilization as I saw it, colossal and jagged..." (Ellis, 1991, p. 200). Kooijman and Laine (2003) demonstrate that Bateman epitomizes the duality of the polished Wall Street yuppie and the horrifying serial killer as he "takes on an identity as a serial killer and imitates their crimes. He finds himself torn between the postmodern reality and the reality he creates in his mind" (p. 52).

Defence mechanisms are unconscious strategies used to avoid difficult emotions. Freud (2024) has mentioned ten well-known methods that come under the category of defence mechanisms. The familiar methods commonly discussed in both practical applications and theoretical writings of psychoanalysis include regression, repression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, turning against the self, and reversal in addition to the tenth method which is more relevant to the study of normal behavior than neurosis and is called sublimation, or the displacement of instinctual aims. There are two primary psychological mechanisms that researchers focus on when analyzing Bateman's behavior within the context of defence mechanisms: displacement and emotional detachment. Displacement involves the redirection of anger, where Bateman channels his aggression from societal pressures towards less threatening, powerless victims. Emotional detachment, on the other hand, functions as a coping mechanism, enabling Bateman to emotionally disconnect and avoid facing his internal conflicts directly. These two mechanisms underscore how Bateman navigates his intrapsychic conflicts by misattributing his emotions and repressing his true feelings, thereby evading accountability for both his violent behavior and his emotional disengagement. The first mechanism, displacement of rage, involves redirecting Bateman's intense anger and frustration into violent acts. This rage stems from his inability to find a meaningful place in the superficial, materialistic society he inhabits. His violent tendencies reflect his inner turmoil and dissatisfaction with the world around him. Displacement allows individuals to transfer negative emotions from their original source onto a less threatening target, often as a way to cope with unresolved tensions. Fletcher (2023) enumerates and discusses the effects of this mechanism, highlighting its influence on individuals' behavior and attitudes as well as broader societal dynamics. Displacement can lead to various negative consequences, including relationship issues. Redirecting anger onto others can strain personal connections and hinder the development of long-lasting bonds. Another potential outcome is substance misuse and addiction, as individuals with alcohol use disorder may rely on displacement as a defence mechanism, complicating their recovery. Displacement can also foster prejudice, with people attributing their challenges, such as job loss, to specific groups like immigrants. Additionally, scapegoating is a common effect, where individuals shift blame onto others for larger societal or economic problems, or even trivial daily frustrations—such as blaming a partner for a messy home after a difficult commute.

These effects are interwoven and include relationship problems, issues with addiction, prejudice, and scapegoating. One prominent manifestation of these issues is seen in Bateman's troubled interactions with both men and women. His relationship with women, in particular, reveals disturbing tendencies. For example, he tries to reassure himself that Patricia is safe for the night. He tells himself that he won't unexpectedly attack her. He insists he won't "pull a knife out and use it on her just for the sake of doing so." He tries to believe he won't derive any "pleasure watching her bleed from slits" he might make by "cutting her throat or slicing her neck open." He even imagines refraining from "gouging her eyes out" (Ellis, 1991, p. 42). These disturbing thoughts reveal the depth of Bateman's psychosis and his inability to form healthy, empathetic connections.

Bateman's relationship with men reveals the same violent impulses; for instance, he confesses that he keeps "a knife with a serrated blade" in his pocket and is "tempted to gut McDermott," even imagining himself slicing his face and severing his spine (Ellis, 1991, p. 30).

Bateman's prejudice illustrates a form of psychological displacement, where his personal frustrations are redirected toward marginalized individuals, such as street beggars. Upon exiting a building, he pointedly ignores "the bum lounging below the Les Misérables poster," whose sign reads, "I'VE LOST MY JOB I AM HUNGRY I HAVE NO MONEY PLEASE HELP" (Ellis, 1991, p. 62). Rather than offering compassion, Bateman mocks the man with a cruel "tease-the-bum-with-a-dollar trick," and then sneers, "Jesus, will you get a fucking shave, please." His disgust is not just verbal; it is underscored by his emotional detachment as his gaze quickly shifts to a "red Lamborghini Countach," which mesmerizes him, leaving him momentarily frozen in place (Ellis, 1991, p. 62). This shift in focus, from human suffering to material luxury, exposes Bateman's desensitized priorities and underscores how his displaced rage manifests as both dehumanization and obsession with status.

Another kind of displacement impact is scapegoating, which means transferring emotions and frustrations from larger and original issues, like economic downturns or social issues, to a more convenient target that is not directly responsible for them. This is Bateman's way of coping with stress by redirecting his emotions outward. Bateman is angry at someone but is unable to express those feelings, so he redirects them toward what he perceives as a safer target. Consequently, he shows relationship problems, which are extremely damaging to his interpersonal ties.

Detachment serves as another defence mechanism for Bateman, who frequently experiences a sense of disconnection from both his own emotions and the people around him. At a business meeting, Bateman shows off his card as the best in the room. The first time he is enraged by the superiority of his co-worker's card, Paul Allen, he feels inferior. Consequently, he displaces his anger by stabbing a homeless man and a dog in a fit of rage. Directing his anger at undeserving targets shows the negative consequences of his underlying anger toward Allen. This represents the first steps toward becoming a psychopath. His inferiority and superiority complexes lead him to become a serial killer and lose himself in the process. He continues killing, at first controlled and careful in his apartment, but eventually escalates—he cannot help killing a stranger on the street, cops, and anyone else who gets in the way, all in broad daylight. This final escalation of his loss of self-control, paranoia, and eventual hiding in his office culminates in his confession

Bateman's detachment is evident in his interactions with others, where he treats people as objects and shows a lack of empathy. His obsession with consumerism and superficial appearances further highlights his emotional detachment from reality. Ellis aptly demonstrates the shallow relationships among people who appear to be close friends superficially:

...no one would notice I was gone. No... one... would... care. In fact, some, if they noticed my absence, might feel an odd, indefinable sense of relief. This is true: the world is better off with some people gone. Our lives are not all interconnected. That theory is crock. Some people truly do not need to be here. (Ellis, 1991, p. 121)

Bateman's extreme detachment from human emotions and his surroundings is a central theme in *American Psycho*. One of the most well-known excerpts of Bateman's detached description of anger is: "I have all the characteristics of a human being: flesh, blood, skin, hair; but not a single, clear, identifiable emotion, except for greed and disgust" (Ellis, 1991, p. 151). This reflects Freud's idea of detachment as a defence mechanism. Bateman's lack of identifiable emotions suggests a deep-seated detachment, protecting him from the moral and emotional weight of his violence. Anna Freud's concept of the ego using detachment to manage internal conflicts is evident in Bateman's description of himself as an "abstraction" and an "entity," pointing to a profound dissociation from his true self, allowing him to maintain his outward appearance while suppressing his inner turmoil. Bateman's words are: "There is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction. But there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory" (Ellis, 1991, pp. 200-201). The protagonist's psychological violence and inner turmoil are shielded by his detachment and complete emotional withdrawal. He does not show only his detachment, but he wants his actions to be inflicted on others. His lack of empathy is highlighted in his detached tone, particularly when he contemplates and ponders the pain he inflicts:

Is evil something you are? Or is it something you do? My pain is constant and sharp, and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact, I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape. But even after admitting this—and I have countless times, in just about every act I've committed—and coming face-to-face with these truths, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge about myself, no new understanding can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant nothing. (Ellis, 1991, p. 201)

Bateman and his colleagues have commonalities: they frequently indulge in heavy drinking and superficial conversations, obsess over fashion norms, and objectify women, treating them merely as tools of pleasure. They often mistake the identities of people, particularly within their Wall Street circle—Paul Owen being a prime example. Their relationships lack depth, mirroring the fragmented nature of their own identities. Bateman's identity is strongly tied to material possessions and social status, making his sense of self fragile and fragmented. His detachment from a sense of identity results in a lack of genuine emotional connections with other humans.

Despite Bateman's social mask, he becomes acutely aware when someone superior threatens his sense of identity. His façade cracks, revealing his underlying detachment and psychopathy. This is manifested in his descriptions of the

notorious crimes he commits. The reader may feel that if Patrick's crimes actually occurred, they are mostly and mysteriously overlooked, though they are occasionally brought up. Although Patrick is a terribly untrustworthy point-of-view character, one cannot help but believe that at least some of his crimes must have happened, even though one is left wondering about the extent of their reality.

Bateman's interactions with women, especially sex workers, expose his deep-seated objectification and dehumanization of others. He views them not as individuals, but as tools to satisfy his own desires. This detachment extends to his relationship with his fiancée, Evelyn Williams, whom he keeps around not out of affection, but to maintain his social image and pursue wealth, further underscoring his inability to form genuine human connections. Bateman's emotional detachment is particularly clear during moments like their dinner together, where he focuses on the menu and the restaurant décor rather than on Evelyn and her conversation. He said: "Evelyn laughs, trying to look sexy, but she's so spaced out and hungry that she just looks drunk" (Ellis, 1991, p. 14). He makes fun of her way of talking. This creates a sense of disorientation and distraction. The overlapping dialogue and inability to listen highlight the narrator's fragmented attention and the surreal nature of their thoughts. Bateman is mentally pulled in different directions, unable to concentrate on what's happening around him because of a bizarre and personal distraction. He is preoccupied with the fact that their rabbit has been cut to look like a star. The following sentences show that each one is in a different valley:

Evelyn is talking but I'm not listening. Her dialogue overlaps her own dialogue. Her mouth is moving but I'm not hearing anything and I can't listen, I can't really concentrate, since my rabbit has been cut to look ... just ... like ... a ... star! (Ellis, 1991, p. 67)

Bateman's objectification of women is evident as he regards women as objects. This is clear when he mistakes the name of a Chinese woman: "I pretend to spot an oncoming cab across the street through the glass door and, faking gratitude, tell her, "Thank you, uh...Samantha." "It's Victoria." "Oh right, Victoria." I pause. "Didn't I say that?" "No. You said Samantha" (Ellis, 1991, p. 47).

Another event involving his relationship with women is Jeanette whom Bateman has an affair with. It illustrates Bateman's cold demeanour. He shows indifference when he asks her to terminate the pregnancy. He describes the event with a detached, emotionless tone, as if he had done nothing significant to her. The relationship between Bateman and Jeanette seems quite complex. His actions and words indicate a level of control and detachment. Bateman's casual and cold remarks about Jeanette's situation and future suggest a lack of empathy and a tendency to dehumanise her. This detachment may point to a more significant underlying issue in their relationship, where power dynamics, control, and emotional distance play a crucial role. Jeanette, on the other hand, seems to be in a vulnerable position, subject to Bateman's whims and control. He shows a lack of genuine concern for Jeanette's well-being, treating her more as an object or a pawn. By instructing the chauffeur to buy specific items for Jeanette, the narrator appears to be performing a calculated gesture, perhaps to show some form of superficial care or manipulation. The things to stop by F.A.O. Schwarz to be purchased are as follows:

a doll, a rattle, a teething ring, a white Gund polar bear, and have them sitting in the backseat for her, unwrapped. Jeanette should be okay—she has her whole life in front of her (that is, if she doesn't run into me). Besides, this girl's favorite movie is *Pretty in Pink* and she thinks Sting is cool, so what is happening to her is, like, not totally undeserved and one shouldn't feel bad for her. This is no time for the innocent. (Ellis, 1991, p. 203)

Bateman's bloodlust overflowed into his days, escalating the peak in the final chapter. As one reads the following lines, the visceral descriptions evoke a deep sense of disgust and unease: "...I'd made a necklace from the bones of some girl's vertebrae and wanted to stay home and wear it around my neck...." (Ellis, 1991, p. 210).

Freud's therapeutic method involved encouraging patients to express every thought that came to mind "even if it is disagreeable, even if it seems unimportant or actually nonsensical" (cited in Waugh, 2006, p. 199). The author's access to Bateman's mind as a stream of consciousness over the day allows readers to hear all his thoughts even if they are unfamiliar to him. Bateman's language unconventionally replicates the way thoughts move through his mind. These alien thoughts intervene in all manner of ways to reveal his repressed or unconscious stream: "...and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there" (Ellis, 1991, pp. 200-201).

Bateman's addiction to alcohol use disorder exacerbates his bad behavior. As he begins acting on his violent tendencies, indulging in excessive drug use, and committing numerous assaults, rapes, murders, and even acts of cannibalism, he descends further into madness. Bateman's violence escalates throughout the novel with his increased drug consumption. He informs Evelyn and his co-workers about his horrible deeds, but they do not believe him and frequently brush off his confessions as jokes. Bateman's unconscious dexterity in transforming impulses and inner motives into visual form is vividly depicted through his treatment of the weakest and most innocent creatures. This time, his displaced anger targets the seals, not because of the animals themselves, but due to the public's affection for them, which he finds irritating. When the zookeepers are not around, he tosses a handful of coins into the seal pool, which is a passive-aggressive attack on the public's simple joy. It reflects his inner disconnect and resentment toward emotional connection, innocence, and societal norms.

The novel ends with a sentence that holds important connotations, “This is not an exit,” above one of the doors, which is covered by red velvet drapes (Ellis, 1991, p. 212). The phrase suggests the absence of a true way out, symbolizing the protagonist Patrick Bateman's entrapment and imprisonment in his own superficial, violent, and materialistic existence. The red velvet drapes emphasize the facade of luxury and opulence that conceals the dark reality beneath, reinforcing the idea that the glamorous lifestyle Bateman pursues offers no real fulfillment or escape from his inner turmoil.

III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the character of Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* serves as a profound critique of 1980s Wall Street culture, highlighting the detrimental effects of materialism, superficiality, and a lack of genuine human connection. Bateman's extreme detachment and disconnection from reality are by products of a society that values appearances and status over meaningful relationships. His violent tendencies, stemming from his displacement of rage and detachment, underscore the novel's themes of identity crisis, dehumanization, and the impact of a consumer-driven world. This reflects Bateman's internal conflict and the pervasive influence of his environment, which continually traps him in a cycle of excess and despair. His inability to escape signifies a deeper commentary on the nature of identity and psyche within a corrupted society. Bateman's tumultuous journey encapsulates the profound struggle between his inner conflict and the external environment that perpetuates his cycle of excess and despair. His inability to break free from the corrosive influences of a society steeped in materialism and superficiality underscores the pervasive corruption that defines his existence. This relentless pursuit of Bateman's ego, navigating between the id disintegration and the superego amidst the chaos, not only highlights his moral disintegration, detachment and displacement of anger but also serves as a stark commentary on the broader implications of societal values. Ultimately, Bateman's descent into madness reveals a haunting truth: when an individual is ensnared by personal demons and a morally bankrupt environment, the quest for genuine identity becomes an elusive endeavor, leaving behind a hollow shell devoid of meaning and connection. Through the lens of Bateman's interactions and actions, Ellis illustrates the dark underbelly of a society obsessed with wealth and image. Bateman's fragmented identity and emotional detachment reflect the hollowness that can accompany such superficial values. Ultimately, Bret Ellis's *American Psycho* challenges readers to examine the consequences of living in a world where material wealth is prioritized over human connections and moral integrity.

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