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Violence and the New Cultural Identity of the Late 20th Century American Character

Case Study: Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

All members of my family, of course!

Moustafa, thank you for every week's joyful mornings together.

Nani, for the comfort you give me. Thank you, I really needed it.

Hamoud, especially, I will always be grateful for everything.

Dear friend Hassna, thank God I knew you, and thank you for giving me a space in your big
white heart.

Nour, honey I love your spontaneity please keep it.

Sweet Sula, the yellow student. I know you are kind so please don't hide it.

My darling, my alter-ego, my soul mate, Hafsa. Words are not enough to express what you
are darling. What would I do without you really? You know you have my heart. I swear I will
always love you more than you will ever know darling.

Me, because I deserve it like someone once told me. I hope what you told me would always
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Abstract

The American society witnessed major cultural shifts after the Second World War. Starting with the 1960s, a counterculture also referred to as the Hippie movement, was a lifestyle that contradicted the mainstream culture in many ways. The Hippie movement was followed by Yuppiedom in the 1980s which designated a wealthy lifestyle that promoted physical appearance. Both cultures were characterized by their members' tendency toward violent behaviors. So, this study aims at examining the relationship between those cultural changes and violence and their contribution in reshaping a new American identity. The study analyzes Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) to exemplify the role of the Yuppie culture in reshaping the new American identity that was characterized with violence. The novel indeed depicts the 1980s Yuppiedom manifestations while at the same time offers constant portrayals of violent acts that characterized the 1980s America and American people. Along with a survey of the social and cultural changes that characterized the period, the study attempts to understand the character's motivations behind violence via psychology. Sigmund Freud's theory on Aggression will be used to better understand the main character's violent acts. Thus, it is argued here that despite the luxurious lifestyle that the main character leads, violence becomes an avoidable necessity for him.

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Introduction

Literature is the reflection of society as it deals with different kinds of issues, notable events, and phenomena that have a critical impact on society. Postmodern American literature, for instance, depicts the post World War Two American society discussing many subjects concerning the war and the changing American culture and identity. That era witnessed major cultural turns such as the American counterculture in the 1960s followed by 1980s which was dominated by what is known as the Yuppiedom. It is a way of living that promotes physical appearance, social status, and materialism while it demotes social norms, values, and virtues. Similarly, violence is one of the recurring themes in the literary production in general and in contemporary literature in particular starting from the 1960s and on.

Many writers in that era such as Cormac McCarthy and Bret Easton Ellis produced works that deal with violence. Others such as Tama Janowitz and Jay McInerney produced works that deal with the cultural changes occurring in society. However, there were only few writers who produced works in which they related violence to cultural changes. Bret Easton Ellis is one of those writers. His Master piece *American Psycho* (1991) creatively ties the protagonist's violent acts to the 1980s American culture he belongs to.

Contemporary American writers include violence in their works. They create characters who are not only murderous but creative murderers who invent new unexpected methods of violence while enjoying themselves doing so. This is the case with *American Psycho*. So, violence has become an essential means for self assertion as well as self-reflection. It is also a reflection of a general crisis in the Postmodern American culture. Hence, one can say that violence has become a feature of a new American cultural identity emerging in the 1980s. This study, therefore, is an attempt to reveal the role of violence in reshaping the 1980s American cultural identity.

This research aims at displaying the moral and psychological shifts in the post World War Two American social life and culture through examining the counterculture of the 1960s and its effects, which endured till the 1980s, on the American identity. In addition, the study will try to show the relevance of Freud's theories in analyzing contemporary American characters by applying his theories on the protagonist of the case study. Finally, the work will attempt to reveal the extent to which violence has become a pertinent aspect in the newly American cultural identity via examining *American Psycho*.

Actually, the nature of the theme implies the use of more than one approach. A survey of the cultural atmosphere of post WWII America up until the 1980s will be very beneficial to understand the background of the case study. The Yuppie's lifestyle is, for instance, perfectly represented in *American Psycho*, but before that a close look at the 1960s will give a better insight on the development of the American culture through three decades. On the other hand, the psychoanalytic approach, specifically Freud's theories on violence will be needed to fully analyze and understand the character's psyche, behaviors, motives, mental state, etc. that make him enjoy being aggressive.

The study will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will serve as a theoretical background for the subject matter. The first section will provide definitions and a historical background of the American counterculture of the 1960s investigating its origins. After that, there will be a sub-section about the most apparent countercultural features. In the second section, some American exemplary literary works about the counterculture will be discussed in order to consolidate the previous theoretical section. The third section will be about the new cultural shift in the United States which took place during the 1980s. This shift was characterized by the emergence of the Yuppiedom that will be discussed including its aspects. The fourth section will be, on the contrary, a psychological approach to violence on the ground of Sigmund Freud's theory on aggression.

The second chapter will include an analysis of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*. There will be only one section which will provide a search for the Yuppies' cultural features the novel includes. A close look at the protagonist as well as main characters' lifestyles, habits, interests, etc. will help reveal the Yuppiedom side in their lives.

On the other hand, the third chapter is also an analysis of the same novel, yet in terms of violence. The main protagonist's violent acts will be revealed in the first section. Then, in the other section the violent scenes will be approached through psychoanalysis while referring to some contributing social and cultural factors at the same time.

Chapter One: The American Cultural Shifts from the 1960s to the 1980s and Violence

This chapter will provide an explanation of what a counterculture is and its impact on individuals' identity. It gives a historical background of the 1960s American counterculture including its key aspects and manifestations. To illustrate, some exemplary literary works are discussed. It will also deal with the new American cultural transition during the eighties known as the Yuppie culture. The final section of the chapter will shed light on Sigmund Freud's theories on aggression and pleasure in an attempt to understand this cultural transition from the psychoanalytic perspective.

1. The American Counterculture of the 1960s

Whenever there is a culture at least one counterculture coexists with it. There are actually many countercultures that became well known throughout history such as Bohemianism of the 19th century in Europe, The Beat Generation in the 1950s, and the Hippie counterculture of the 1960s in the US. What is common between all of them, as countercultures, is the refusal of the dominant culture simultaneously with the establishment of their own cultural practices instead.

The term "counterculture" is attributed to Theodore Roszak. He used it in his book *The Making of a Counterculture* (1969) referring to the 1960s Hippie movement in the United States whose ideals and practices challenge those of the mainstream culture. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the term "counterculture" simply as "a culture with values and mores that run counter to those of established society". Similarly, John Milton Yinger states that a counterculture is "a set of norms and values of a group that sharply contradict the dominant norms and values of the society of which this group is a part" (6). That is to say, it is any culture or subculture that exists within a mainstream culture and follows a lifestyle which constitutes a set of opposing beliefs, behaviors, and values to the mainstream ones.

The American movement, in this regard, is, in simple terms, a sub-culture within the dominant American culture whose principals oppose the dominant ones for variable reasons.

In terms of history, the sixties of the twentieth century's is one of the most remarkable time periods in the American history. Many historical events such as the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Cold War clashes characterized the period and dramatically fueled the countercultural trends. Besides, the 1969 Hippie music festivals is a manifestation of the cultural shift that occurred in the period. Emily McEachern believes that the American counterculture can be divided into three categories: political, cultural, and a mix of both.

The political counterculture, as McEachern explains, is represented by the anti-war movements. As young Americans opposed the Vietnam War, they held mass demonstrations. The participants were members of political groups such as the American Friends Committee, Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, and Women Strike for Peace. To stop the war, the radical groups used the Civil Disobedience, while the Leftists protested peacefully. The Michigan University and the college campus's lectures on the Vietnam War known as "Teach-ins" were considered as the most influential triggers of the anti-war movement (McEachern).

Some political countercultures carried with them what is referred to as cultural counterculture too, as McEachern moves on. The Civil Rights Movement and the Gay Liberation Front were examples of countercultures that sought political changes as well as cultural ones. The Civil Rights Movement dates back to the 1950s and 1960s when African Americans protested to claim their political and social rights, and to stand against the racial Jim Crow Laws. Martin Luther King was the movement's leader who directed it to success. He used a set of peaceful ways such as the Civil Disobedience to express refusal of segregation and oppression. The movement, also, had a cultural side. The African American

protestors celebrated their cultural songs and music of freedom which created feelings of strength and power.

The Gay Liberation Front was a movement of homosexual men and women who attempted to change the society's views about them. It has always been held that homosexuality is a disease. So, their core objective was to normalize this negative idea. In addition, providing more social services, fighting oppression, social approval, and equality were other concerns of homosexuals (McEachern). The cultural side of Gay Liberation movement, from McEachern perspective, relies in the process of bringing social acceptance for homosexuality, whereas the political side appears in the proclamation of equal rights for homosexuals.

The cultural counterculture, as it challenges the mainstream culture, proposed a new alternative culture known as the Hippie culture. The Hippie culture or movement was in many ways related to the anti-war movement as they both took place on the same time period. Hippies were young Americans under thirty years of age back then. They were known by the consumption of drugs (marijuana, LSD, etc.), sexual freedom, and psychedelic music (Rock n' Roll) in order to realize mental and physical pleasure. Some of their famous symbols for life were "sex, drugs, and rock n' roll".

It is interesting here to know a little about the Hippie counterculture. The term "hippie" is derived from 'hipster' that refers to those people who belong to Bohemianism, which was a European lifestyle in the 19th century. However, when speaking of hippies it is the sixties of the twentieth century to be mentioned. The hippies were the best representatives of the essence of the sixties' countercultural aspects. Generally, a hippie was a young middle-class, most likely going to college, person who refused to follow after his or her parents' ideals. The social obligations, such as marriage, work, and holding familial responsibility seemed uninteresting and overwhelming for the young generation. The preplanned future guaranteed

through such social obligations did not seem to fit their circumstances which involve Hippies being born in an era of unanticipated technological revolution for example. Also, women's social status changed. They were educated and could pursue professional lives outside the house.

In addition, young men and women of that time sought rebellion against not only their families but also the whole culture and society. In this regard, Skip Stone believes that "being a hippie is a matter of accepting a universal belief system that transcends the social, political, and moral norms of any established structure, be it a class, church, or government" (11). Indeed, many names were used to label the hippies such as: the "baby boom generation" as being massively born after the Second World War, and "flower power" as the Hippie counterculture promotes peace, love, and freedom over militarism, materialism, and constraint.

As a matter of fact, Hippies owe a lot to the Beat Generation which preceded their existence a decade ago. The Beat Generation members, also called Beatniks, had a critical impact on Hippies that they were considered to be the Hippies' inspirers. The Beat Generation is a 1950s group of American literary and art producers who rebelled against the old rigid artistic modes of compositions by using unstructured forms. Jack Kerouac, a prominent leader of the movement, coined the term "beat" or "beaten down" which means tired, broken, or crushed to describe the situation of post-World War Two people. Those artists believed that they were different, and so the common social norms did not seem to fit them. Instead, they fetched new alternative ways to live by. Moreover, they wanted to depict the real life in America in a more realistic manner that contrasts the image of a beautiful unified society.

Indeed, the Beatniks wanted to express their minds freely without adhering to literary or social rules. This was reflected through their open discussion of taboo and unconventional

subjects such as love, sex, homosexuality, and drugs. Unlike the conservative society of the 1950s which considered love and sex out of marriage as a sin, the Beatniks made a movement for sexual liberation. Furthermore, they went further with the abusive use of drugs and alcohol as sources for inspiration and creativity displeasing mainstream social expectations. Last but not least, many Beat members were dissatisfied with western religions, so they shifted towards the eastern religions, mainly Buddhism. However, they did not give up Christianity totally; they adopted a kind of mixture between the two. They exposed those religious practices to the public in order to attract more people and increase those religions' popularity.

Although the Beat Generation was not that successful during its time, it did pave the way and inspire the followers, mainly the youth, to move on with its core beliefs. Here, Robert Bennett says "... the Beat Movement ... powerfully influenced the emerging counterculture of the 1960s by providing an early avenue for social protest and experimentation with alternative lifestyles" (342). This explains why the Beat Generation and Hippies share a lot in common. Still, Hippies took the Beatnik's beliefs to the extremes, creating their own unique culture without a blind adherence to the Beatniks' traditions. Yet, the political involvement is the key difference between Hippies and Beatniks. The Hippie movement is primarily political as has been referred to above. On the contrary, the Beatniks were not interested in politics at all but more on social concerns.

Following the same paths of the Beat generation, the Hippies also rejected their religious belief systems. They showed interest in Eastern religions and philosophies. Christianity and Judaism were, to a great extent, substituted by Buddhism, Hinduism, and others. In fact, some bits from a Western religion plus other bits from an Eastern one were mixed up to create a new belief system for a typical Hippie. In other words, parts of

Christianity, for example, were maintained while at the same time parts from Buddhism were adopted and joined to the Christian parts as Skip Stone notes.

This new religion required new parts. This involved living within nature, practicing yoga, and meditation because, as Ron Chepesiuk notes, their meditation brought them enlightenment (352). Moreover, Hippies made spiritual trips to India to meditate in nature while staying in temples. The main purposes of these journeys were self discovery, spirituality, mind and soul enlightenment, and finding inner peace. That latter was so important because without it life would be imbalanced for Hippies (Stone 46).

Changing the religion was not enough to celebrate rebellion against the middle-class conservative society. So, the Hippies went a step further inventing a brand new lifestyle. Of course, it was out of the ordinary and displeasing for the older generations, but satisfactory to the younger generation since such a rebellious lifestyle goes hand in hand with their mindsets and objectives. This lifestyle was mainly distinguished by the communal living where young Hippie adults and teenagers, most of them run away from home, lived together, though strangers, sharing food and clothes in small Hippie communities or neighborhoods. The famous and largest one is the Haight Ashbury Community in San Francisco.

In those communities, the dress style was what distinguishes Hippies. Those youngsters set up a new clothing fashion special for them. With the emergence of the birth control pills, women started to experiment with their bodies showing more skin than they ever did. They shocked the public when they went for nudity. That is to say, women wore sensual and sexuality- inciting garments such as shorts and mini or micro skirts to mention few. They even went out half naked especially with no bra on. Men, also, had their own provocative style. They rebelled against the conservative formal appearance through a more casual one,

sometimes looking like homeless people with loose outfits. They created peasants, farmers, and cowboys' looking preferring jeans and leather.

Along with the Hippie lifestyle, entertainment was so important for the youth generation. Music, the most appreciated entertainment, was an important tool to spread the Hippie culture not only throughout the United States, but also throughout the whole world. However, Hippie artists produced non-conventional music. It was psychedelic and a high-pitched one. The musicians developed new musical genres to fit and express their ideals. Rock and Roll, the most prominent, began in the 1940s and 1950s in Britain, and then moved to America where it was further diversified with other genres creating new sub-genres like pop, blues rock, folk rock, and the jazz-rock fusion.

Hippies made a revolution in music through that diversification. This experimentation in music occurred due to the British musicians' influence on American audience and the musical technological innovations. The British influence is referred to as the British Invasion. A set of popular British musicians gained a wide audience in the United States. The Beatles was the number one band in both the UK and the US. Many Americans imitated their dress style and long hair and responded to their calls for marijuana consumption in their songs. Electric instruments emerged, and so electronic and psychedelic music were born. Bob Dylan was famous with his electric guitar which accompanied him in every musical performance.

In addition to Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix and the Mamas & the Papas band are also two of the sixties' influential musicians. In terms of production, California and New York were centers of massive musical production. Songs' lyrics dealt with themes of love, romance, and social concerns and in some cases had a political dimension. Such songs expressed the youth's criticism of governmental decisions and some wrong social practices. For instance, Bob Dylan dedicated a whole album for the unjustified violence and murder crimes against

African Americans. Furthermore, countercultural Rock and Roll openly discussed taboo topics such as drugs and sex. For instance, the Velvet Undergrounds, another American musical band, referred to transgender, homosexuality, and drugs in their songs.

With the growing popularity of the new musical genres, the 1960s witnessed lots of festivals. The 1967 Summer of Love contributed to the prosperity of the Hippie culture in America as many festivals took place. The Monterey International Pop Music Festival is the largest and most famous. In that festival, thousands of attendants from all over the US adopted the Hippie lifestyle living in the Hippie communities, dressing like Hippies, and having free sex. This brought Hippies a public and world recognition. In 1969, the Woodstock Music Festival in New York was even larger with thirty two performers attracting about half a million attendants. The songs celebrated the countercultural ideals such as “whatever turns you on”, “sex, drugs, and rock’n’ roll”, and “light my fire”.

Sex, as a countercultural ideal, had a different story in the American culture prior to the emergence of the Hippies. It has always been a taboo to speak about sex. There was no space to discuss it in a family gathering. Up until the 1950s, American parents convinced their young sons and daughters about the possible dangers of masturbation and premarital sex. Apart from this, there was little to know about the topic. The youth, the Hippies to be, were excited, while their parents emphasized the social values of modesty and decency. This deepened the generational gap between them. The convention was that sex is only for the married couples who love each other so to have children. Otherwise, illegitimate children and sexual diseases would appear. The Hippies were thirsty for that forbidden pleasure.

With the beginning of the sixties, many books about sexuality were released, such as *Human Sexual Response* and *Everything You’ve Always Wanted to Know about Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)*, providing valid facts and details. Moreover, obscene novels written by

the Beatniks like William S Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* gave a thrilling picture about the sexual activity. So, it was time to start experimenting with sexuality. Hippies led what is today known as the sexual revolution or liberation changing radically the rigid social attitude about sex, love, and romantic relationships during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. The youth engaged in public nudity, premarital casual sex, and homosexuality. The emergence of birth-control pills, also, contributed in stressing the new attitude toward sex that it "is just another part of life like eating and sleeping" (Stone 15).

Hippies, in this manner, set themselves free from the social confinements inventing a new concept about love. "Love" for them has become "Free Love" which meant loving anyone anyway at any time which also assured love making outside marriage. Because of that, different types of sexual relationships including group sex, public sex, and homosexuality were common among Hippie communities. Besides, love was shared. That is to say, one was not restricted to his or her partner, but can engage in another relationship if there was love.

Certain products were responsible for the outburst of this phenomenon. Drugs, for instance, increased the sixties' wild sexual activity even more. Also, *The Kama Sutra*, an old Indian manual for sexual positions, spread widely between the Flower children. This had a great impact on society. Thus, even though this sexual liberation led to the legalization of abortion laws, it is worth mentioning that many underage runaways were subject to sexual abuse by adult Hippies. Furthermore, unwanted pregnancies and sexual diseases increased dramatically like never before during the sixties.

Side to side with sexual revolution, American Hippies' experimentation with drugs broke all historical records. "The Hippie counterculture, more than anything else, was about taking LSD. Seeking spiritual perfection through drugs, but particularly through psychedelic

drugs” (50) as William J. Rorabaugh notes in *American Hippies* (2015). The drug intake meant freedom, defiance while sounded a kind of “cool” experience (Stone 18). At that period, a lot of new hallucinogenic drugs were put in the reach of public. Examples are LSD (lysergic acid diethyl amine), MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine), purple haze, orange sunshine, as well as already existing ones mainly cocaine, marijuana (also Mary Jane), and heroin.

They say “if you remember the ’60s, then you weren’t there”. This describes well how America was drowning in drug consumption. People were under the effect of drugs that they were unconscious about the world surrounding them. In this regard, Stone asks why Hippies took drugs carelessly (18). He answers by providing a small historical background about drugs in the US. The story began right after the Second World War with the flourishing of the pharmaceutical industry. Thanks to advanced scientific research and technology, drugs for various uses were invented. Some were used to stop pain and diseases, others to help with psychological disturbances (18). Stone, being a member of that generation, took drugs. He, even, wondered once about its possible effects on someone well if it could ease a person’s state when sick (18). So, drugs were everywhere in that era. “Not feeling right?-Take a pill!” is one of the trendy advertisements to encourage the use of drugs. Till then, they were portrayed as good and health-friendly.

For Hippies, taking drugs was, like any other act in their culture, a matter of imitation. The group influenced each other that at times find themselves pulled into things they might not want to do on the first place (19). This is the exact case of drug intake. Anyway, Hippies liked the state of consciousness drugs drove them to. In this concern, many artists spoke about the positive impact of drugs, especially on inspiration. Furthermore, Stone claims that several present technological advances, the computer and the internet for instance, would not

be created without the LSD and marijuana's influence (20). LSD was the most popular and favorite among all other types due to its "mind-blowing potential" (20) on users.

Along with the spread of the American counterculture, many written works were published to deal with the newly emerging phenomenon. A number of newspapers, known as "underground newspaper", turned the eyes of the public to subjects usually marginalized by the mainstream press. The Hippies' counterculture was one of its main hot topics. These newspapers helped to expose aspects of the youth culture to more people. Examples of newspapers include *Los Angeles Press* and *The Rag*. Similarly, writers of literature in that era produced novels that dealt with countercultural events. William S. Burroughs, Erica Jong, and Mary McCarthy among others, published novels that involved a lot of countercultural aspects.

It was, actually, 1958 when Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* was finished. However, it was published a year later outside the US, specifically in France, because it was officially banned due to its obscene features in the US. The story is experimental as it is told in a non-linear narrative. Thematically speaking, it deals with the lifestyle and thoughts of a Hippie.

The protagonist William Lee or Lee the Agent is a drug addict and dealer. At the beginning, he runs away from the police. He makes a journey of drug seeking, marijuana and heroin particularly, throughout the US, Mexico, and arriving at South America. Some of the states he travels to are fictional. In each location, he meets drug dealers as well as doctors who write him prescriptions for drugs. He finds drug markets full of all kinds of drugs and places for sexual services where he witnesses unusual sexual behaviors including homosexuality and sex with minors. By the end of the novel, the story shifts back to beginning, with Lee killing the police officers who were following him, O'Brien and Hausser.

Basically, the novel discusses the theme of addiction. It equally deals with the drug addiction and sex addiction of in the American society. The aspect of drug addiction in Lee's life is depicted in details revealing his inner thoughts, hysteric state when he needs a dose, and his pathetic actions in order to get drugs. Generally, the effects of drugs are treated seriously.

Throughout Lee's travels, he comes across people who are primarily addicted to sex rather than drugs. Burroughs provides full descriptions of sexual activities including weird acts and sex with children. This latter is practiced as if normal in certain regions. Homosexual intercourse, highly hidden in society, is presented discretely to readers. Generally, the novel is believed to have contributed to a positive shift of the American views about sex and homosexuals.

The theme of sex, from the Hippie perspective is recurrent in many other literary works. Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973), for instance, tells the story of the married twenty-nine year old American Jewish journalist Isadora Zelda White who goes through a journey of self-discovery. The protagonist narrates the whole story. She has daydreams about love making with a stranger. One day, she takes the plane with her husband Bennett Wing, a psychiatrist, to Vienna in order to attend a conference on psychoanalysis. She has to write an article about it for the magazine she works for.

The title of the novel is explained by Isadora's real fear of flying and her fear of leading an independent life without a man around. There in Vienna, she meets Adrian Goodlove, an English analyst, with whom she has an affair which is barely secret. They kiss and dance publically spending much of the time together. Though their relationship is passionate, Isadora describes Adrian as impotent. One night, Bennett finds them in bed, and asks to join. However, Bennett never speaks about the incident later.

Then, Isadora finds herself between two choices: whether to join her husband, or to go with Adrian. She, finally, sets her mind on the second choice. They, both, go in a travel across Europe which Adrian recommended, as an analyst, so that Isadora can overcome her fears of taking risks. During that, she tells Adrian about her first failed marriage that ended up with divorce because Brian, her first husband, was suffering from psychological disorders and began to be violent to her.

After the trip, she decides to return to her husband Bennett, but she was sexually harassed by a stranger in the train. Only then, she realizes how dangerous her fantasies about lovemaking with a stranger can be. The story ends with her joining Bennett. She, also, comes up with a decision to live life accepting who she is, and to stop trying to appropriate herself with the social standards imposed on women concerning sexuality.

This realization reflects the aim behind writing the novel. The novel was primarily written to discuss women's sexuality and autonomy. Erica Jong claims for women's right to hold fantasies about sex, which has always been men's right only, through emphasizing the relationship between women and their sexuality.

Equally, *The Group* (1963), by Mary McCarthy, was banned in many countries because it was considered threatening for two reasons. On one hand, it contains ideas about women's freedom which would encourage women to pursue it. In other words, the novel tries to free women from the social obligations of marriage and child-bearing. On the other hand, it portrays sexual scenes in details.

Like its name indicates, *The Group* is about a group of eight women who just graduated from college in 1933. The narrative follows their lives during their twenties. First, Kay Strong marries just after graduation from her lover. Kay is beaten and betrayed by her husband and suffers financially too. Finally, she ends up divorced in a psychic hospital because of him. She dies at twenty-nine mysteriously, falling from the fifth floor window

while watching an airplane. It is not clear whether she jumped or fell. Kay rebelled against society by engaging in a love relationship before marriage. She also, unlike women of that era, asked for divorce.

Next is Mary Pothero or Pokey, a rich lazy fat girl. There is nothing special about her. She marries after Kay's funeral from someone who attends there. Pokey's friend Dottie Renfrew falls in love with a cruel man named Dick who alerts her not to do. He treats her badly. He, eventually, dumps her without any warning or reason; he simply disappears. So, she gets back home where she meets someone else. She decides to marry even though she still has feelings for Dick. Dottie is definitely an unconventional woman who, like Kay, makes a premarital sexual relationship but ends up marrying another man.

Then, Elinor Eastlake or Lakey is the richest lady among the group. She goes to Europe to study. She returns with a PhD in art history. When she gets back, she brings her partner. Here, her friends discover she is a lesbian and they argue about it. Obviously, Lakey broke all social values of women's modesty and sexuality.

Lakey's friend Polly Andrews is poor. She works at a hospital where Kay resides. She gets involved in an affair with a married publisher, who later leaves her and returns back to his wife. Polly seems to follow Lakey in breaking social laws too.

Unlucky Priss Hartshorn, on the contrary, marries a pediatrician with whom she has a baby. Her husband wants her badly to breast-feed the baby. He, also, tries to apply the medical theories he studied on her and the baby all the time. Another member of the group is Helena Davison who is blessed with a sense of humor, knowledge in music, and a high ability in physical activity. She teaches art at a school. She is the one who discovers Kay's husband affair with Norine Schmittlap, a former classmate of the group at college, yet she keeps silent. She keeps being single unlike all of her friends.

Finally, Libby MacAusland works at a publishing house writing reports about manuscripts. She speaks Italian, so her boss gives her an Italian manuscript to write a report about. The report is not accurate because the dialect of the manuscript is not familiar to Libby. Therefore, her boss fires her saying that publishing is men's thing unless she marries a publisher, referring to himself. So, she leaves the publishing house. Then, she meets someone cruel who attempts to rape her but stops when she tells him she is a virgin.

Each woman's experience in the group depicts the new versions of American women to be as the novel is set in the period between 1933 and 1940. The new versions imply American women who can pursue a professional career and who are successful and independent. Furthermore, the novel stresses the idea that a woman who does not have a man must be socially accepted. Similarly, it claims for women's right to freely seek a sexual life.

The American cultural revolution that started in the 1960s took the American culture to a fundamentally new direction in the following decades. The Hippie culture did not vanish by the end of the sixties, but it continued to force its influence on the mainstream culture during the seventies and the eighties. As an extremist culture whose members literally tackled every taboo, the sixties culture paved the way for later new cultures and groups to be introduced, accepted, and tolerated.

2. America toward a New Cultural Shift: The 1980s America

The eighties in America, much like the sixties, witnessed a cultural revolution. Basically, the American society of the eighties was so different from that of the sixties as Rich Kleinfeldt and Ray Freeman note in "The 1970s and 80s Were a Period of Change in American Society", that it was even "the opposite". Kleinfeldt and Freeman describe the sixties as a decade of protestations and claiming for rights. Examples were the anti-Vietnam War manifestations, women's rights movement, African-American Civil Rights movement and the Homosexual movement among others. At that time, the "society's hero was the

person who helped others” (Kleinfeldt and Freeman). In the 1980s, however, the hero became the one “who helped himself” (Kleinfeldt and Freeman). By helping oneself Kleinfeldt and Freeman meant collecting money in order to improve life conditions.

The cultural atmosphere of the 1980s in America had its triggers in the 1970s. Kleinfeldt and Freeman believe that the 1970s brought the change for different reasons. First, 1970s marked the end of the Vietnam War. The war, for which thousands of youngsters were protesting to stop in the 1960s, came to an end. Second, many movements succeeded to achieve most of their objectives such as the Civil Rights and women’s movements. Last but not least, the 1970s was the period of the American economic recession, high inflation, and high rates of unemployment (Kleinfeldt and Freeman).

Those events that took place in the seventies gave a room not only for social but also for cultural changes between the 1960s and the 1980s America. When comparing between the sixties and eighties in terms of culture, it is clear that the key difference between the two lies in the core principle of each culture. The 1960s counterculture was based on communal living, sharing food and clothes, and most importantly selflessness. Strangers were like brothers helping each other in the Haight Ashbury community.

However, during the eighties people became more self-centered. Kleinfeldt and Freeman believe the 1970s economic recession as the most important reason for this change in the American character. . Kleinfeldt and Freeman explain that due to the economic hardships American people suffered from, they feared bankruptcy, so they shifted the focus toward themselves. People put personal interests above all other concerns. That is to say, they aimed for earning more money to prevent the economic disaster they already experienced in the seventies (Kleinfeldt and Freeman).

The desire to earn more money in the 1980s led to a renewed interest in education. The young adults in the 1960s withdrew their education for rebellion’ sake. By contrast, by the

mid-seventies more of those young people showed interest to get higher education (Kleinfeldt and Freeman). This would allow them to get well-paid jobs and, hence, more money. Luckily for them, the American economy boosted in the eighties with president Ronald Reagan's eight-year rule. The man was able to end the recession, and reduce inflation, unemployment, and taxes. This created a desire and hope for Americans to make more money (Kleinfeldt and Freeman). Hence, the phenomenon of money collection resulted in the emergence of new cultural groups such as the 'me' generation and Yuppies (Kleinfeldt and Freeman). The common feature between both groups was materialism. Yuppies, for instance, were the most popular group of the time and the one that represented the shift in American cultural tendencies that marked the period.

First of all, Yuppie, as a term, stands for "young urban professional". Will Kenton in his article "Yuppie" (2018) states that it is not sure who invented the term "Yuppie" first, but he suggests two probabilities. Many critics consider Joseph Epstein to be the first one who coined the term "Yuppie" in 1982. Whereas, others claim that the term was coined two years earlier by Dan Rottenberg who used it in the May issue of the Chicago Magazine called "From Yippie to Yuppie" (Kenton). Then, the term began to be used widely by the American public to describe specific people belonging to Yuppiedom.

Yuppie refers to a young rich city inhabitant during the eighties. Actually, the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines "Yuppie" fully as "a young college-educated adult who is employed in a well-paying profession and who lives and works in or near a large city". Yuppiedom was a culture which composed of such people who, due to their wealth, created a new social class in the American society. Fredric Jameson, in his book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), prefers to call this social class as the "new petit bourgeoisie" (407). From one hand, "petit" because according to statistics, Yuppies made only 1.5% of the American adults below the age of forty years old at that time. From

the other, it is “bourgeoisie” because Yuppies possessed an excessive wealth despite their young ages.

So, Yuppies are those young adults, between twenty-five and forty years old, who in the seventies designated themselves to studying hard to assure their futures. As a matter of fact, most Yuppies were ex-Hippies who had awoken in the seventies on the illusiveness of the Hippie fancy ideals when they suffered from the economic crisis. As a result of their high education, Yuppies succeeded to enter the world of business attaining high positions. Not only educated, but Yuppies were also computer-literate. Therefore, Yuppies worked as bankers, engineers, managers, investors, executers in the fields of finance, academia, technology, etc. Their workplaces included prestigious banks and companies such as Wall Street. These jobs offered high incomes which explain why they were so rich. Yuppies were real achievers due to their hard work and commitment. Hence, they were more likely to get promoted.

Everything seems fine about Yuppies till now. However, Yuppiedom was more of a lifestyle than of any other aspect. The Yuppie’s culture became synonymous with materialism during the period of the eighties. Yuppies were money collectors who seemed to never get enough. They were labeled greedy for their money-oriented mentality. According to some economic studies, the average Yuppie earned over forty thousand dollars yearly (Russell W. Belk 516). The former Hippies valued money more than anything else in the world, and they were ready to do whatever it takes to get more of it as soon as possible “without much regard for those left behind”, says Jason Manning in “The Yuppie Culture”. It means that Yuppies cared about no one but themselves and their needs. They even disgusted poor people which, in a way, made sense because of Yuppies’ arrogance.

Yuppies have the tendency to demonstrate their success and wealth to everybody. They basically do this through showing off their properties and exaggerating their physical

appearance (Kenton). They were self-centered, showy, affluent, and arrogant enough to be directly recognized as Yuppies. Because they have the money and can afford it, Yuppies lived in expensive houses in rich areas. Moreover, they owned the trendy cars of the era such as the BMW and Mercedes with which they were mostly associated. Yuppies, also, wore only the famous brands and designs such as Rolex watches, Gucci clothing, Prada, Versace, etc. In addition, they visited the expensive local restaurants, clubs, and shops where they “talked in public about their stock portfolios” (J. C. Pan). Simply, they enjoyed chatting about their jobs, businesses, and investments.

Yuppies extremely took care of themselves regardless of their gender. They joined gyms to get toned attractive bodies. In addition, Yuppies possessed the market latest technological devices such as the personal computer. This style was referred to as the ‘consumption style’ which is defined as people’s tendency to spend large amounts of money on some goods and products that would assure them a more comfortable life. Nicki Lisa Cole notes that it is a “culture that values immediate or quickly acquired satisfaction”. The United States is always ranked on top as a consumerist society, yet the 1980s was the decade in which consumerism was so prominent due to the release of various technological devices. J. C. Pan believes that Consumerism “served as a way to display one’s status” which is very true for Yuppies who spent huge amounts of money on such goods.

The Yuppie lifestyle, therefore, encompasses a set of elements which *The Yuppie Handbook* (1984) summarizes into four essential conditions. So, someone could be called a Yuppie if he or she:

- (1) resides in or near one of the major cities;
- (2) claims to be between the ages of 25 and 45;
- (3) lives on aspirations of glory, prestige, recognition, fame, social status, power, money, or any and all combinations of the above;
- (4) anyone who brunches on the weekends or works out after work. (Piesman and Hartley 12)

It is obvious that the Yuppiedom was materialistic, consumerist, and superficial in its essence.

As attractive and positive as it might seem, the Yuppie style involves also negative aspects. Indeed, Yuppies consumed drugs despite the healthy life routines they led. However, unlike Hippies who consumed cheap drugs like marijuana, Yuppies went for the expensive types such as cocaine which they can afford. Not only cocaine, Yuppies took dopes and steroids in order to boost their physical and mental performances. The Yuppies' obsessive desire to get the toned bodies was one reason for their drug intake.

So, it is evident that the Yuppies' culture involved some violent aspects. This can be seen in certain practices such as excessive drug and alcohol consumption. It seems that violence was enjoyable for them as they showed no concern to future possible consequences. Moreover, it is the young generation who committed much of the violent acts. The youth can be considered victims and vicious at the same time.

In this regard, there are two ways to look at the issue. From one side, the youth, unlike their parents, were born and raised in an era of huge technological advancements. It may sound odd, but without sufficient knowledge and experience they were given new dangerous substances to consume. They, also, inconsiderably, experienced the revolutionary outcomes brought by such technology and science in some fields such as drugs. On the other side, Yuppies, experimented with whatever was new, expensive, unhealthy, and prohibited. For example, cocaine was the trendy drug that made everybody eager to try it and to experience its fancy effects. Yuppies consumed it regularly.

It is necessary here to understand the motivations of the Yuppies for violence through the lenses of psychoanalysis. Referring to psychoanalysis and Freud's theories about the aggressive drive, it is interesting that Yuppies, with their wealth and easy life had such

tendencies towards violence. Obviously, this would be justifiable only through Freudian psychology.

3. Violence from the Psychoanalytic Perspective:

Violence, in psychology, has always been an important area of investigation. Psychologists and psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Konrad Lorenz, and Albert Bandura, sought to understand, mainly, violence's origins in humans. Sigmund Freud, especially, was interested in explaining human aggressive behavior. For that, he proposed a whole theory known as the Dual-Drive Theory.

At first, Freud introduced a theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) by which he argues that human action is motivated by one force, drive, or instinct known as Eros, which is the Greek word for love. Eros is the life force responsible for life reproduction and self-preservation. Eros, also, holds a sexual energy called Libido. It is related to pleasure and sexuality, and Freud believes that human action is strongly stimulated by that sexual instinct. For Freud, when the libidinal drive is blocked, it results in aggression.

For this, Freud gives the example of the Oedipus complex as Alexandra K. Smith notes in her article "Theories of Aggression" (2008). The child develops a sexual desire for his mother which leads to a growing aggression directed toward his father who becomes the child's rival for the attainment of the mother. Despite his love for his father, the child does not want his father there as an obstacle in the way of his strong desire. The situation is resolved through time. The child learns to repress his desire for the mother acknowledging the father's eligibility for the mother over him. Even more, he realizes the inappropriateness of his desire toward the mother (Smith).

In 1927, Freud provides a revision for the previous theory labeling it The Dual-Drive Theory or the Instinct Theory of Aggression, says Tanya Sharma in "Top 3 Theories of Aggression". He added a new concept Thanatos, the Greek word for death, which refers to

the death force. The energy stemming from Thanatos is negative as it triggers desires for death and self-destruction. In addition, Freud presents those forces as opposites. It is well put by Freud in "An Outline of Psychoanalysis" (1940) as:

After long doubts and vacillations we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, *Eros* and the *destructive* instinct . . . The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus - in short, to bind together; the aim of the second, on the contrary, is to undo connections and so to destroy things. (20)

Hence, Eros is accompanied with survival, creativity, building and inventing things, solving problems, making friends, etc. while Thanatos is connected to life restraint, loneliness, hatred, anger, aggressive sexual activity, ruining relationships, etc.

Basically, the theory sets on the ground of the existence of two opposite drives which both trigger not only human behavior, but also thoughts and emotions. From here, Freud suggests that aggression is the result of the ongoing conflict and tension between Eros and Thanatos' energies. In the previous theory, violence occurs only because of a blockage in the libidinal impulses. That is to say, when the sexual energy is repressed by the person; the result is the tendency to be violent. Whereas in this new theory, Freud explains that it is the negative energy of Thanatos, mainly, that can lead to self-destruction (Smith; Sharma).

The conflict between Eros and Thanatos leads to self-destruction. Nevertheless, this can be prevented as the individual grows through certain mechanisms. The best mechanism to avoid destructing oneself is the displacement of the destructing energy to others (Smith; Sharma). To explain more, violence originating from Thanatos that can hurt the individual is redirected away from the self toward other surroundings, be it objects or people, in the

environment. The violence can take many forms including physical aggressive acts, criticism, satire, or making fun of others.

To put it differently, Eros and Thanatos are engaged in a clash between the positive and negative energies they carry. The result of that clash is the creation of violence. Violence can be directed to the self leading even to death, according to Freud. In certain cases, the individual discharges some violence to others as a way to protect the self and to avoid an inevitable self-destruction (Smith; Sharma).

So, Freud proposes Thanatos energy as the underlying condition for violence because of its negative energy. He, as well, stresses the innateness of violence as a natural human phenomenon that cannot be eliminated but reduced (Smith). Surprisingly, Freud states that whenever there is a desire for love, surely there is a desire for aggression. He illustrates that a best friend may turn in to the most hateful enemy in case of disagreement (Sharma). It means that love and aggression go hand in hand, which somehow makes sense, just like Eros and Thanatos.

Freud's theory on aggression can be a useful tool to examine the violent acts of both the Hippies and the Yuppies. During the sixties, Hippies went wild exercising a set of aggressive behaviors against themselves. Yuppies, also, maintained the tradition. Hence, Freud's theories provide a solid base to understand, explain, and examine the violent trends of the counterculture which indicate a serious crisis within the American culture as well as society.

In an attempt to illustrate the above discussions, the following chapters will provide analysis of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*. The core discussion of the second chapter will attempt to examine the elements that reflect the Yuppies' lifestyle. The third chapter, however, will rely of Freud's theories about violence to justify and explain the character's inclination towards violence despite his wealthy life and lack for reasonable justification for his violent acts.

Chapter Two: Violence as a Reflection of a General Crisis in the 1980s American Culture

As it has been emphasized earlier, violence has become a trend in the American society for no specific economic reasons. Instead, violence has become a matter of self-realization even when the individual is rich and wealthy. For this reason, this chapter will attempt to provide an analysis of Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* as an example of a work of literature that reflects this critical shift in American culture and society.

1. Counterculture and Yuppiedom in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991)

Bret Easton Ellis is a controversial American novelist, short story writer, and screen writer. He belongs to the 'Literary Brat Pack'; a group of American writers, which also includes Tama Janowitz, Jay McInerney, and Jill Eisenstadt, who produced a set of works that brought a new wave in American literature during the eighties by introducing new stylistic forms. Ellis started his career as a writer at the age of twenty-two with his novel *Less than Zero* (1985).

Ellis's third novel *American Psycho* is regarded as his master piece and the most controversial novel that drew him wider recognition. In fact, there were many attempts to ban the novel in the US from feminist and religious groups because of its depiction of extreme violent and sexual scenes. The novel tells the story of Patrick Bateman, a Yuppie Wall Street banker as well as serial killer. The book is, according to literary critics, a critic of the Yuppie' culture which emerged in the 1980s, the decade in which the novel is set. The book mirrors the decadence of the 1980s American culture that turned into a superficial, materialist, and consumerist culture. In 2000, the novel was adapted into a movie by director Mary Harron.

Basically, Patrick or Pat Bateman is a typical Yuppie. He is a young man at the age of twenty seven. Ellis notes in an article published in *The Guardian* “I was 22 when I started writing and 26 – the same age as Bateman – when it [the novel] was ready for publication”. In the novel, Patrick notes “I am twenty-six years old I am thinking. I will be twenty-seven next year” (59), and in the very last page of the novel Patrick says he is twenty-seven several times in the novel. This indicates that the novel is set in over a year as time is almost never identified.

Patrick is a rich investment banker in Wall Street at Pierce & Pierce. Like most Yuppies, he went to Harvard where he graduated from business school there. He is so serious about his work and is eager to proceed. He lives in the Upper West Side, Manhattan which is an area for rich people such as the actor Tom Cruise who lives in the same building Patrick lives in. Patrick Bateman seems a hard-worker who could make the life of his dreams.

Indeed, Patrick and his co-workers including Timothy Price, Todd Hamlin, David Van Patten, George Reeves, Craig McDermott, and others are so arrogant. The high social status and wealth they possess seem to increase the sense of superiority they hold about themselves. This arrogance is clear from the beginning as Price says “I’m resourceful,” ... “I’m creative, I’m young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, highly skilled. In essence what I’m saying is that society cannot afford to lose me. I’m an asset” (1). He is not only expressing narcissism but also an extreme level of arrogance.

This arrogance and superiority is practised on poor people and beggars. A sense of strong disgust is what the Yuppies in the novel feel toward such people. Patrick describes those people using words such as “ugly”, “crazy”, and “bum” particularly for women, and even uses offensive terms. He uses the word “monkey” to describe Vanden Stash’s girlfriend, and speaks sarcastically about her saying he would find her attractive if he was dating Luis

Carruthers, one of his colleagues who is in love with him (8). It means that she is so ugly that only if he is dating a man, then he would consider her more attractive than the man he is dating.

Moreover, Price in the first chapter keeps obsessively counting beggars whom he is annoyed to see. Price, also, gets irritated when he finds out that Evelyn, Patrick's girlfriend, has invited her poor sculptor friend Stash and his girlfriend Vanden to the dinner he is also invited to. He goes further asking Evelyn not to invite them anymore. In addition, Patrick once calls a homeless "a member of the genetic underclass" (200). At Harry's, Reeves tells Hamlin how he earlier teased some homeless "bums" with a dollar which he pretends to give it to them then taking it back (65). Actually, this is not the only time when Patrick and his co-workers annoy the beggars.

These friends not only scorn people but they also hurt them deliberately. For instance, Patrick despite having seen the blind beggar, he steps on that man's foot making all the change in the cup the blind man was holding spread all over the place. Afterwards, Patrick arrogantly addresses the reader asking "Did I do this on purpose? What do you think? Or did I do this accidentally?" (60).

Because the cruel Patrick is not the only educated and willing person in the company, there is a hot competition at the office with his colleagues. This competition creates some kind of envy and hatred between them. For example, everybody is unhappy with Paul Owen because he is the one in charge of the mysterious Fisher account. They consider him lucky for that. "'Lucky Jew bastard,'" (25) Preston Nichols calls him, while Patrick could not stop thinking about how Owen got the Fisher account that he ends up feeling "paralyzed" (36).

The competition at work reveals Yuppies' desire to earn more money through chasing opportunities for promotion. Even though Patrick and his co-workers earn approximately one hundred ninety thousand dollars annually, they do not seem to get enough. This is expressed clearly by Timothy Price "... am I alone in thinking we're not making enough money?"(1) However, Price later contradicts himself saying "I'm extremely satisfied with my life" (3), yet Patrick says he is satisfied "but" (3) without finishing his sentence indicating clearly his dissatisfaction as well.

Actually, the competition in the Yuppie environment extends to the social image. Patrick and his co-workers at Pierce & Pierce try to appear the best all the time. They do so by getting the latest and best quality products. For instance, they only wear the expensive famous brands and designers such as Armani, Gucci, Prada, etc. They get expensive haircuts at expensive saloons. It is literally all about physical appearance that George Reeves expresses it perfectly when speaking about women saying "If they have a good personality and they are not great-looking"—...—"who fucking cares?" (68). This is so true. Patrick's group sees a woman at a bar whom they consider seductive, but they instantly lose interest in her completely as they notice a flaw in one of her knees being a bit bigger than the other (33).

Patrick, just like his fellows, is not only obsessed with money but also with himself. He is a narcissist. In chapter one, as he approaches Stash and Vanden to greet them in the dinner at Evelyn's, his speeches reflect his self-centeredness as when he says "noticing my reflection in a mirror hung on the wall—and smiling at how good I look" (6) or when he says, at the dinner, "I notice how good the haircut I got at Gio's last Wednesday looks" (7).

Being a narcissist, Patrick is afraid of looking old. He constantly worries about what he eats and what he puts on his skin. At Evelyn's, he says "I worry about the sodium level in the soy sauce" (7). In chapter two, called Morning, Patrick describes in full details his morning

care routines for skin, hair, teeth, etc. He takes pages naming the products he uses, from where he gets them, how much they cost him, how he uses them, the results he gets, etc. without missing any detail. For instance, the following passage describes his obsession with morning care to look good:

I pour some Plax antiplaque formula into a stainless-steel tumbler and swish it around my mouth for thirty seconds...I take the ice-pack mask off and use a deep-pore cleanser lotion, then an herb-mint facial masque which I leave on for ten minutes while I check my toe nails. Then I...clean between teeth and massage the gums while the short ones scrub the tooth surfaces. I rinse again, with Cepacol. I wash the facial massage off with a spearmint face scrub. (18-19)

Furthermore, Patrick chooses his diet to assure lasting youth and glow. In the same chapter, he elaborately states everything he has at breakfast tackling unnecessary details:

I eat kiwifruit and a sliced Japanese apple-pear...I take a bran muffin, a decaffeinated herbal tea bag and a box of oat-bran cereal...I eat half of the bran muffin after it's been microwaved and lightly covered with a small helping of apple butter. A bowl of oat-bran cereal with wheat germ and soy milk follows; another bottle of Evian water and a small cup of decaf tea after that (19)

It seems that obsession is not only limited to Patrick in this concern. Complaining about his skin, Price says early in the novel "“I was getting acne on my legs and arms and the UVA bath wasn't fixing it, so I started going to a tanning salon instead and got rid of it” (3).

Another interesting fact about yuppies and their cultural traditions is paying great deal of care to their bodies. Patrick and his group practice sport regularly. For instance, Tim Price practices squash. Patrick, on the other hand, speaks about his workouts repeatedly throughout

the novel. He reveals that he is a member at a private gym called Xclusive which is close to his home. The gym is well equipped that Patrick engages in describing a lot of its machines before he describes his full and heavy workout routine. He used to have a personal trainer (53). It seems he has knowledge about fitness too that he even developed a fitness program for himself.

The obsession with physical appearance which characterizes the whole 1980s American people is perfectly depicted in the novel. Patrick and his colleagues pay attention even to what others wear too. They even hold meetings purposely to discuss what fits what. At Harry's they ask each other about the best fashion choices. The obsession leads them to acquire a great deal of knowledge about fashion, brands, and designers; a knowledge that enables them to provide advice for each other. At Harry's, David Van Patten asks about which outfit is formal or casual and which tie would suit both, and Timothy Price gives him a thorough answer in the following passage:

It's a very versatile look and it can go with both suits and sport coats. It should be starched for dressy occasions and a collar pin should be worn if it's particularly formal..." Price continues, "If it's worn with a blazer then the collar should look soft and it can be worn either pinned or unpinned. Since it's a traditional, preppy look it's best if balanced by a relatively small four-in-hand knot (23)

In fact, Patrick introduces each character in the novel including his girlfriend Evelyn, colleagues, and even minor characters such as beggars emphasizing the description of their clothes. There is no information about personalities only concentrating on descriptions of the physical appearance more. This indicates the superficiality and emptiness of Patrick's lifestyle. A person is valued according to physical and not moral criteria. Whenever Patrick encounters someone, he provides a detailed description of that person's look naming the

brands, designer, and even the price of each garment sometimes. The novel is full of such endless descriptions that it resembles a fashion magazine or a reference book for the 1980s fashion.

The first person Patrick describes is Tim Price. He informs us that Tim “is wearing a six-button wool and silk suit by Ermenegildo Zegna, a cotton shirt with French cuffs by Ike Behar, a Ralph Lauren silk tie and leather wing tips by Fratelli Rossetti” (2). As soon as the door opens, Patrick describes Courtney who’s “wearing a Krizia cream silk blouse, a Krizia rust tweed skirt and silk-satin d’Orsay pumps from Manolo Blahnik” (4). After a while, he describes Evelyn’s appearance who “stands by a blond wood counter wearing a Krizia cream silk blouse, a Krizia rust tweed skirt and the same pair of silk-satin d’Orsay pumps Courtney has on. Her long blond hair is pinned back into a rather severe-looking bun” (5). It seems like Patrick does not spare anyone that his tendency to describe how a person looks like continues till the end of the novel.

Patrick shows his knowledge about fashion in many occasions. In one incident, Todd Hamlin asks about how vests ought to be worn, and Patrick says “Well, they should fit trimly around the body and cover the waistline,” ... “It should peek just above the waist button of the suit jacket. Now if too much of the vest appears, it’ll give the suit a tight, constricted look that you don’t want.” (66). Patrick concerns himself with women’s fashion too. About Vanden’s look, he says “if she got rid of the green streak and the leather and got some color—maybe joined an aerobics class, slipped on a blouse, something by Laura Ashley—might be pretty” (9).

Seemingly, knowledge about fashion makes Patrick and his colleagues judge others on the basis of their looks. Preston Nichols madly says ““What in the fuck is Morrison wearing?” ... “Is that really a glen-plaid suit with a checkered shirt?”” (25). Patrick, also,

comments on Dibble's haircut saying "He has a good-looking, expensive haircut and I stare at it, admiringly," (47)

This obsession with fashion led to the creation of a generation who seem like a copy of each other. Since most Yuppies are drawn to the same expensive clothing style, "everyone [of them] looks familiar, everyone looks the same" (44) as Patrick himself notes. In another occasion, after the dinner at Evelyn's house, Patrick becomes certain that there is an affair between his girlfriend Evelyn and his colleague Tim. He asks Evelyn why she does not just date Tim since "'He's rich,'" (15) she replies "Everybody's rich" (15). Later, he says "'He's good-looking,'" I tell her. "Everybody's good-looking, Patrick," she says remotely. "He has a great body," "Everybody has a great body now," she says" (15).

Moreover, because Yuppies have similar physical appearance, they often misrecognize each other. Patrick and his co-workers mistake each other with other people a lot. Other times, they are not sure whether the people they are addressing are those people or not. Paul Owen, whom Patrick really hates, often mistakes Patrick with Marcus Halberstam. Patrick comments on that saying "for some reason it really doesn't matter and it seems a logical faux pas since Marcus works at P & P also, in fact does the same exact thing I do, and he also has a penchant for Valentino suits and clear prescription glasses and we share the same barber at the same place, the Pierre Hotel, so it seems understandable; it doesn't irk me" (66).

In addition to misrecognizing each other, there are a lot of incidents when characters are not sure about each other's identities. At the very beginning of the novel, a guy who according to Patrick looks like Luis Carruthers waves over at Timothy but Timothy doesn't return the wave, so the guy realizes that Timothy is not who he thought it was and looks back at his newspaper (2). Considering the situation, there may be two possibilities. The first probability is the same one suggested in the novel that the other guy mistakes Timothy with

someone else. The second is that both Patrick and Timothy did not recognize the guy who can be really their colleague Luis Carruthers. Tim, again, is not sure about a guy who is far from them the bar if he is his colleague or not “Is it Victor Powell? It can’t be” (4). Patrick also does not surely recognize two people at the Tunnel “Madison, who I [earlier] thought was Ebersol” (40), and “A guy standing behind Madison who looks a lot like Ted Dreyer” (40).

In fact, there is a situation where Patrick and his colleagues are trying to figure out someone’s identity but fail. However, when one of them suggests a name for that person, the others are trying to correct him suggesting another name. “That’s not Morrison,” Price says. “Who is it then?” Preston asks, taking his glasses off again. “That’s Paul Owen,” Price says. “That’s not Paul Owen,” I say. “Paul Owen’s on the other side of the bar. Over there.” Owen stands at the bar wearing a double-breasted wool suit” (26).

In another situation, Patrick does not like that Tim cannot recognize someone. In Patrick’s words, ““No. That wasn’t Conrad,” I say, surprised at Price’s inability to recognize co-workers. “That guy had a better haircut.”” (36). Patrick does not depend on the physical features of that person to identify him, but instead he depends on his haircut to judge.

Another characteristic of their cultural traditions is the visits Yuppies regularly pay for specific expensive places. Patrick and his co-workers spend much of their time at the same clubs and eat at the same restaurants. Examples include The Russian Tea Room; Harry’s; Café Luxembourg, cafeterias; Pastels; Tunnel, bars; the Vertical Club; Bedlam, clubs; and Camols; Dorsia; Barcadia; Crayons, restaurants. These places cost a lot. At Pastels, the check cost \$475, but Patrick commented “much less than we expected” (37). This reflects the material life of Yuppies from one side. From the other, it shows the extent of arrogance of Patrick and the other people like him.

The Yuppies have obsession about and competition over such places. This is evident through their constant reservations in these places and especially in restaurants. It is Craig McDermott who makes the reservations at Pastels. There was no plan where to dine, and even though it is late McDermott manages to guarantee a table in a nice place as he knows the person in charge there. Commenting on this, Patrick says “It’s really impossible to get a reservation at Pastels and I think Van Patten, myself, even Price, are impressed by, maybe even envious of, McDermott’s prowess in securing a table” (28). Obviously, the competition leads to feelings of discomfort, jealousy, and envy even around such a trivial subject as making reservations in expensive restaurants.

Even more, this subject can easily stimulate the characters’ discomfort. In the chapter “Date”, Patrick tries to make a reservation via phone at Dorsia restaurant for his date with Patricia Worrell. He becomes obsessively worried about not to be able to get a table. Patrick describes his pathetic situation saying:

it takes every ounce of courage I can muster to stay on the line and not hang up. I’m on hold for five minutes, my palm sweaty, sore from clenching the cordless phone so tightly, a fraction of me realizing the futility of this effort, another part hopeful, another fraction pissed off that I didn’t make the reservations earlier or get Jean to..., “Dorsia.” I clear my throat. “Um, yes, I know it’s a little late but is it possible to reserve a table for two at eight-thirty or nine perhaps?” I’m asking this with both eyes shut tight. (54-55)

Patrick could not get a reservation at the “hilarious” Dorsia, yet manages to secure a reservation at Barcadia restaurant at nine. Patricia, who is as obsessed with such restaurant as Patrick, gets disappointed when she knows she is heading to Barcadia instead of Dorsia. Indeed, Patrick could convince her to go out with him only by saying he got a reservation at

Dorsia. Only when she hears this, she cancels her plan to attend a concert of her ex-boyfriend whom she promised to come. After the date and the disappointment she had for the issue of the restaurant, she ignores Patrick refusing to talk to him. Moreover, she shed some tears.

Patrick describes how uncomfortable the situation is in “Even though dinner lasts only ninety minutes it feels as if we have been sitting in Barcadia for a week and though I have no desire to visit Tunnel afterwards it seems appropriate punishment for Patricia’s behavior” (57). Patricia gets softer only after she uses a dose of cocaine and gently apologizes to Patrick. This scene specifically shows the superficiality of Yuppiedom. Yuppies’ obsession over such a simple thing as booking in a famous restaurant reflects the moral decadence the American culture was heading to.

In the ongoing competition between Yuppies, everybody tries to prove to be the best. In the same incident at Pastels, Patrick, being extremely jealous of McDermott, wants to impress his peers too. So, he shows them his business card, but he ends up having a tense feeling of jealousy again. Patrick proudly says “I decide to even up the score a little bit by showing everyone my new business card. I pull it out of my gazelleskin wallet (Barney’s, \$850) and slap it on the table, waiting for reactions” (31). He gets some reactions of impression from his peers, so he carries on ““Picked them up from the printer’s yesterday” (31), and that the coloring is called bone whereas the lettering is Silian Rail (31).

Patrick thinks he has achieved the desired effect on his colleagues until Van Patten shows his own business card. Then a “brief spasm of jealousy courses through me when I notice the elegance of the color and the classy type” (31) Patrick’s words. Patrick’s state is worsened that “cannot believe that Price actually likes Van Patten’s better” (32) than his card. The incident does not end here. Price and Montgomery present their cards too. Here Patrick says “I am unexpectedly depressed that I started this” (32) and “I’m finding it hard to

swallow” (33), but he is “relieved when Montgomery’s card is placed away, out of sight” (33). Patrick picks up his card, and even later in the evening says “I’m still thinking about Van Patten’s card” (35). It is a real psychological war.

Obsession with materialism is a common phenomenon between Yuppies. Patrick seems so obsessed with furniture and the house’ stuff. He keeps describing each piece he sees without neglecting the details about the expensive brands. At Evelyn, he describes “the beeswax candles from Zona lit in their sterling silver candleholders from Fortunoff” (6), and “a tapestry pillow from Jenny B. Goode” (11). In the chapter “Morning”, he dedicates much of the narration to his apartment and the expensive furniture it includes:

Over the white marble and granite gas-log fireplace hangs an original David Onica...The painting overlooks a long white down-filled sofa...A hurricane halogen lamp is placed in each corner of the living room. Thin white Venetian blinds cover all eight floor-to ceiling windows. A glass-top coffee table with oak legs by Turchin sits in front of the sofa, with Steuben glass animals placed strategically around expensive crystal ashtrays from Fortunoff...Next to the Wurlitzer jukebox is a black ebony Baldwin concert grand piano (17)

As Yuppies are computer-literate and depend on technology in their jobs, they always keep up with new releases of different electronic devices. Not only the devices needed at work, Yuppies also like to buy entertaining devices. For instance, in “Morning”, Patrick continues mentioning and describing the expensive and up-to-date electronic possessions he has:

a thirty-inch digital TV set from Toshiba; it’s a high-contrast highly defined model plus it has a four-corner video stand with a high-tech tube combination from NEC with a

picture-in-picture digital effects system (plus freeze-frame); the audio includes built-in MTS and a five-watt-per-channel on-board amp. A Toshiba VCR...; it's a super-high-band Beta unit and has built-in editing function including a character generator with eight-page memory, a high band record and playback, and three-week, eight-event timer...a complete stereo system (CD player, tape deck, tuner, amplifier) by Sansui with six-foot Dutch Sovereign 2001 speakers in Brazilian rosewood...a Panasonic thirty-one-inch set with a direct-view screen and stereo sound and beneath...the Attire Sot sass pushbutton phone... (17)

Obviously, Patrick is a showy person. He makes sure that his wealth and success are perceived by the others. He does so by carefully selecting each garment of his clothes. For example, he describes what he wears once in a while like in "I'm wearing a light weight linen suit with pleated trousers, a cotton shirt, a dotted silk tie, all by Valentino Couture, and perforated cap-toe leather shoes by Allen-Edmonds" (21). In some instances, he regrets his choices as when he says "I'm beginning to feel bad that I'm not wearing the new Versace pullover I bought last week at Bergdorf's". It would look good with the suit I'm wearing (28-29).

Patrick always makes sure he looks his best. A good example is in the incident in the gym when he has to get back and fix his look before beginning his workout "I check myself in the mirror before entering the gym and, dissatisfied, go back to my briefcase for some mousse to slick my hair back and then I use a moisturizer and, for a small blemish I notice under my lower lip, a dab of Clinique Touch-Stick" (52).

Patrick does not want others to only notice his clothing; he wants them to notice and to appreciate his fit body. He usually spends over two hours at the gym to keep his muscles toned. In the following passage he describes how he wants to show his flat belly to Evelyn

after the dinner “I pull my Armani shirt up and place her hand on my torso, wanting her to feel how rock-hard, how halved my stomach is, and I flex the muscles, grateful it’s light in the room so she can see how bronzed and defined my abdomen has become” (15).

2. The Other Face of Yuppiedom

Despite Patrick and his colleagues’ care about their health and their memberships in Health clubs, they take drugs. In the first chapter, Patrick tells that Tim revealed to Patrick that he had taken steroids (3) before he played squash. Evelyn, also, is addicted to an antidepressant called Pirate. At her house, Patrick suspects she and Tim has taken some cocaine when he notices that they are not eating dinner (9). In addition, Price and Patrick go to Tunnel to get “some Bolivian Marching Powder” (39). Also, Patrick gets some more cocaine for him and Patricia Worrell from Tunnel again when they went out together. Along with drugs, Patrick and his colleagues drink alcohol not only at night but at different times in the day. Patrick usually favors J&B. the intake of drugs and alcohol contradict Patrick’s obsession to eat healthy and practice sport heavily.

The character of Patrick is interestingly dual. From one side, he is a typical Yuppie of the 1980s; rich and arrogant person who indulges in life’s luxuries. From the other side, he is a serial killer who violently kills men, women, children, and even animals. Thus, one can say that Patrick is a representative not only of the good and charismatic image of the yuppies of his time, but also the cruel side that is, in most cases, so recurrent among Yuppies. The following chapter, therefore, will attempt to shed light on this cruel side to have a full understanding of the character of Yuppies. The discussion will concentrate on describing the criminality of Patrick along with attempts to explain it in psychological terms.

Chapter Three: Violence as a Means for the New American Character's Obsession with Self-Assertion

This chapter will cite some of Patrick Bateman's most horrifying crimes in the first section. Moreover, it will attempt to explain these crimes from a psychological perspective while considering some cultural and social factors as well. The second section will conclude by providing a comparison between the violence in contemporary literature and in previous literature.

1. Violence in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*

Along with the positive Yuppie lifestyle, Patrick lives a secret life as a psychopathic serial killer. By almost the end of the first half of the novel, the plot suddenly turns to violent acts. Patrick, surprisingly, shows a different aspect of his personality, which is for the record so horrific.

Actually, violence is foreshadowed right from the beginning and constantly throughout the novel. That is to say, there are signs and indices that pinpoint the coming of violent events later in the novel. The first indication of violence is the very first sentence in the novel. "ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE" (1) written in red in a board near the Chemical Bank. This sentence stands above the portals of hell in Dante's poem *Divina comedia*. This allusion indicates that New York City is referred to as a hell and the novel will prove this.

Moreover, Patrick expresses some violent desires in many occasions. The very first one is when he wants to murder McDermott because Van Patten is making fun of him telling Van Patten that Patrick is crazy because he does not like the pizza made at Pastels "I have a knife with a serrated blade in the pocket...and I'm tempted to gut McDermott with it right here in the entranceway, maybe slice his face open, sever his spine; but Price finally waves us in and

the temptation to kill McDermott is replaced by this strange anticipation to have a good time” (39)

It seems that when it comes to murder, Patrick’s imagination goes wild, when Patrick has a date for dinner with Patricia Worrell he says that fortunately she “is safe tonight, that I am not going to unexpectedly pull a knife out and use it on her just for the sake of doing so, that I am not going to get any pleasure watching her bleed from slits I’ve made by cutting her throat or slicing her neck open or gouging her eyes out. She’s lucky” (57)

Furthermore, at Tunnels as Patrick is trying to get some cocaine, the Euro trash girl, who is standing next to the drug dealer Ricardo, says she likes his expensive gazelle skin wallet. Despite that, Patrick replies that he would “fuck her” and cut her arms. Luckily, she cannot hear him because of the loud music (58). Later in the “Dry Cleaners” chapter, Patrick surprisingly declares that his bloody clothes are back from the Chinese dry cleaners. He, simply states that without explaining from where the blood comes from.

Indeed, Patrick reads a lot about serial killers. He seems obsessed with such kind of stories that even his peers know this about him. For instance, Reeves, speaking about the serial killer-related articles Patrick reads, says “You’ve always been interested in stuff like that, Bateman,” ...“Bateman reads these biographies all the time (69)

After gradually introducing violence for several times, the actual violent scenes occur. It is specifically in the chapter “Tuesday” that the first murders take place. Patrick is making a walk along the West Side Village as he notices a black homeless man called Al with his dog Gizmo. Al has a written note which says “I AM HUNGRY AND HOMELESS PLEASE HELP ME” (97). Patrick approaches them teasing Al with a five dollar bill, but he does not give it to him. Patrick starts asking Al “If you’re so hungry, why don’t you get a job?” (98). Al says he lost his job, and Patrick asks him again “Why don’t you get another job?” (98) and

again “Get a goddamn job, Al,” (99). Then, just before he stabs him with a knife Patrick says “Do you know what a fucking loser you are?” (99). Patrick does his crimes in a cold blood.

He describes his crimes of murdering Al and his dog Gizmo:

push maybe half an inch of the blade [of the knife] into his right eye...I start stabbing him in the stomach, lightly...and I keep stabbing at the bum [Al] now between his fingers, stabbing the backs of his hands...I grab his head...push it back and then...hold the other eye open and bring the knife up and push the tip of it into the socket...and... finally...I slit his nose in two...Then I turn to the barking dog and when I get up, stomp on its front legs...immediately shattering the bones in both its legs (99-100)

After the horrible murder, Patrick, with a cold blood, takes a taxi and goes to the McDonald's, surprisingly, to eat. Moreover, no one says anything about the blood on his jacket even though the person who takes the orders keeps staring at Patrick.

In another walk in the street, Patrick encounters a homeless woman. At first, he wants to kill her, but he decides not to because “she's too easy a target to be truly satisfying” (123). However, after a while his attention is caught by a brown and white sharpei named Richard and its owner the old queer. Patrick starts a friendly conversation with the old queer while petting the dog Richard. Patrick asks if the dog is a sharpei. Patrick grabs a sharp knife and stabs the Richard's belly causing the intestines to get out only because the old man insists on correcting his mistaken pronunciation of the word “sharpei”. Patrick, then, throws Richard and starts stabbing the shocked old queer in the face, the head, and finally the throat. Patrick is about to leave when he decides to assure the death of the old queer by shooting him twice in his face. Only then, Patrick walks away.

In another incident, Patrick needlessly kills a delivery boy. He was just out of the Rusty's club after having drinks with Charles Murphy when a Japanese delivery boy in a bicycle passes by him. Patrick pushes him to fall, grabs him, and “slit his throat—easily,

effortlessly” (136). When Patrick opens the box of food the boy was carrying, thinking he would find Japanese food such as Sushi, he realizes that the boy is actually Chinese and not Japanese, since he finds Chinese noodles. Only then he admits that he killed the boy accidentally.

Not a long while after killing the delivery boy, Patrick kills his co-worker Paul Owen simply because of the work competition between them. He meets Paul, when he attends a concert of an Irish band called U2 with his colleagues and their girlfriend. Taking the advantage that Paul, who believes Patrick is Marcus Halberstam, is also there, Patrick decides to get some important information about the Fisher account from him. Patrick sets an appointment with Paul for a dinner. At the infamous Texarkana restaurant, Patrick gets Paul drunk first then takes him to his apartment. Patrick brings an ax from the bathroom, and then he hits Paul’s face aiming at chopping his head. He hits him again opening his head this time. Patrick reveals that “It takes Paul five minutes to finally die. Another thirty to stop bleeding” (164). After that, Patrick starts using Paul’s apartment for his other crimes hiding corpses there.

Indeed, the most horrific murders Patrick commits are those against women. Patrick begins with a girl called Bethany he dated at Harvard but left him. Patrick meets her coincidentally, so she invites him to lunch. Bethany reveals that she is dating Robert Hall who is a chef and co-owner of Dorsia restaurant. After lunch, Patrick insists to take Bethany to see his apartment. There, he tortures, cannibalizes, and kills her. The following passage depicts the cruelty of the scene:

her left thumb which I manage to chew all the flesh off of, leaving the bone exposed...
with a pair of scissors I start to... stab at her breasts, accidentally (not really) slicing off
one of her nipples through the bra... I lean down ...force her mouth open and with the

scissors cut out her tongue... Then I fuck her in the mouth... and then I try to fuck her in the mouth once more” (186)

Patrick, who seems to never get enough with murder, invites Elizabeth and Christie to his own apartment. Elizabeth is a twenty-year-old model while Christie is a prostitute. First, he has sex with them and makes them have sex with each other almost the whole night. Then, he begins with Elizabeth butchering her neck with a knife and stubbing her stomach. He takes off her right arm and leg and her head. What he does to Christie is as worse as what he has done to Elizabeth. He kneads her breasts with a pair of pliers, mashes them up, and says “I laugh when she dies” (220).

Later, Patrick invites two prostitutes to Paul Owen’s apartment. Just as he did with Elizabeth and Christie, he makes love to them, and then starts his crimes. Actually, what he does to Torri is excessively inhuman. In Patrick’s words:

I’m biting hard, gnawing at Tiffany’s cunt... Torri awakens to find... her face covered with blood because I’ve cut her lips off with a pair of nail scissors... I start by skinning Torri a little, making incisions with a steak knife and ripping bits of flesh from her legs and stomach while she screams in vain... I keep spraying Torri with Mace and then I try to cut off her fingers with nail scissors and finally I pour acid onto her belly and genitals, but none of this comes close to killing her, so I resort to stabbing her in the throat and eventually the blade of the knife breaks off in what’s left of her neck, stuck on bone, and I stop... finally I saw the entire head off... lowering Torri’s head to my lap I... start fucking it (230)

When Patrick finishes with Torri, he rests for a while. Then, he murders Tiffany, and cuts their corpses into pieces keeping them in Paul’s apartment. Patrick, also, commits cannibalism when he makes a sausage using the remains of a nameless girl he killed (263).

Actually, these are only few examples of Patrick's cruelty. It is evident that Patrick's motivations are unreasonable. He is a rich man, a gorgeous one who can get what he wants whenever he wants. However, his thirst for cruelty indicates a certain flaw in his personality. It is obvious, however, that the flaw is not a social or economic but instead a psychological one.

2. Interpreting Patrick Bateman's Violent Acts from the Freudian Perspective

Julian Murphet in *Bret Easton Ellis's American Psycho: A Reader's Guide* (2002) believes that Patrick's murder of Al has to do with "an entire system of race and class prejudice" (42). Al is an African-American, and a poor person who lost his job because of the economic crisis. He is not white nor a Yuppie that Patrick tells him "Al ... I'm sorry. It's just that ... I don't know. I don't have anything in common with you." (99). Simply, Al belongs to a race and a social class that is different from Patrick's. Here, Patrick expresses a strong sense of superiority, and killing Al represents his "expression of class hatred" (Murphet 42) that is an innate trait within him.

Concerning the motive of Patrick killing old queer and his dog Richard is simply envy. In fact, envy is a highly possible reason for Patrick to kill the old queer. As Murphet says "contempt and...envy for the possession of the precious Sharpei" (42) might be a reason enough to kill a person for Patrick. Patrick expresses his desire to possess a sharpei several times in the novel. The fact that Patrick used both the knife and gun unnecessarily to execute old queer can only refer to how strong his envy is (Murphet).

"Race hatred" is also an unreasonable reason for Patrick to kill the Asian Boy. Just before his encounter with the delivery boy, Patrick was already talking about the Japanese businessmen with Charles Murphy who says "They've bought the Empire State Building and Nell's" (136). Murphet believes that Yuppies share a "persistent fear"(43) from the Japanese. Patrick and his colleagues fear losing their jobs and so their social status if the Japanese take

over the market especially that the American economy was trembling during the eighties. Harold Carnes says to Patrick: “Face it . . . the Japanese will own most of the country by the end of the ‘90s” (295) warning him about the threat of the Japanese. Unfortunately, the boy Patrick killed was not a Japanese but a Chinese.

Murphet suggests that Bethany was killed because of two reasons. The first is that Bethany does not belong to Patrick’s world, so it is unlikely to be checked on (40). It means that she is not as rich and important as Patrick and his peers who work at Wall Street. Second, Bethany has mistakenly made “two unforgivable acts of Violence’ against Patrick’s monumental egotism” (40). The first act is telling him she is dating Robert Hall, the chef and co-owner of Dorsia restaurant that Patrick effortlessly tried to make a reservation at. When Patrick hears this he says “my brain does explode and my stomach bursts open inwardly—a spastic, acidic, gastric reaction; stars and planets, whole galaxies made up entirely of little white chef hats, race over the film of my vision (180). Second, when she tells him laughingly that his precious painting is hung upside down (40) Patrick immediately murders her. Though he was hoping to spend the night with her, he just could not forgive her laughing at his mistake.

In addition, Paul’s murder is definitely due to envy. Patrick Bateman uses the fact that Paul confuses him with Marcus Halberstam, and invites him to dinner. The aim behind dinner is to get some information about the mysterious Fisher account which Murphet describes as “something like the Holy Grail of the investment-banking world . . . presumably worth billions, and carrying with it arcane secrets and privileges, it is the secret of Patrick’s desire (44). Paul avoids giving any vital information about it “and by so . . . instigate the desire to kill” (44) in Patrick even more. Paul’s murder represents Yuppie’s strong envy and greed to get more money and power.

Reflecting upon the murders of women, Philip Simpson in *Psycho Paths: Tracking the Serial Killer through Contemporary American Film and Fiction* (2000) believes that Patrick is “a woman-hater”. There is no other reasonable explanation for the extreme violent acts he commits toward women. Patrick is definitely a sexist as Elizabeth Young suggests that “Ellis has . . . created a most unusual creature, a serial sex-killer who is also, at the same time, prepared to kill absolutely anyone” (115).

Indeed, there are more factors that contribute to Patrick’s engagement in violence. Basically, Patrick can do whatever he wants simply because he can get away easily. He is a rich Yuppie that even when he gets caught, he can manage things to avoid imprisonment. Similarly, in “Why the Politics of American Psycho Are Shockingly Relevant Today”, Witney Seibold believes that “In the minds of characters like these [Yuppies in *American Psycho*], extreme wealth is what allows them to get away with... well, just about anything they want, no matter how wrong or illegal”. Within the novel, Tim Price says “When I tell them what my annual income is, believe me, my behavior couldn’t matter less.” (39) When he is talking about women saying he can treat them the way he wants just because he is so rich. Relatively, despite the terrifying series of crimes Patrick commits, he is never caught, actually never discovered.

It is interesting that despite being surrounded by many people, Patrick is a loner. The social group he hangs around with, including his colleagues, his girlfriend, and the other women he dates, are not close to him or to each other as they might seem. In fact, these relationships are superficial. There is no real connection between anyone of them. Their conversations are superficial; they only speak about clothing and sex. No one truly cares about another. Even Patrick and Evelyn’s relationship is loveless that eventually Evelyn betrays then leaves Patrick.

The hilarious Yuppie lifestyle is deceptive. Though it reflects the image of a happy life, it is empty and meaningless. Patrick Bateman's life is purposeless; it seems to go nowhere. In other words, he already achieved everything he needs at twenty-six years of age. There is nothing thrilling in his life, and hence he might have found the thrill in violence. In this regard, Jaap Kooijman and Tarja Laine in *American Psycho: A Double Portrait of Serial Yuppie Patrick Bateman* confirm that "by creating himself an identity as a serial killer, Bateman attempts to connect with something real beyond the superficiality of... his identity as yuppie..." (1). Surely, part of Patrick's identity is a Yuppie that he constructed through hard work at Wall Street. However, Patrick constructs another identity of a mass murderer to escape his Yuppie identity.

Another important fact that cannot be ignored is that Patrick is feeling cultural and social pressure. In the consumerist society he belongs to, where physical appearance is all that matters, everything he does is for the sake of preserving his social image as a rich Yuppie. He does all the things he does to keep this image and not simply because he wants to. This can be obviously seen in various activities that he does obsessively. He does exercises daily at the gym for two complete hours to maintain a fit shape. He only goes to expensive places especially clubs and restaurants that reflect his social status. Patrick states that his first priority before Christmas is "to get an eight o'clock reservation on a Friday night at Dorsia with Courtney" (133). Also, Patrick is so careful when choosing his clothes to fulfill his desire to look the best version of himself all the time. After stating a long list of the things he forces himself to do to enhance his skin, Patrick says "All it comes down to is: I feel like shit but look great" (79).

Definitely, all the previous factors contribute to Patrick's already ongoing conflict between Eros and Thanatos. From the Freudian perspective, violence is the result of the conflict originating mainly from Thanatos. The violent behaviors Patrick commits indicate

the over domination of the negative energy of Thanatos' over that of Eros resulting in more violence than in normal cases. In Patrick's case, actually, violence is described as extreme. In order to avoid self-destruction, Patrick directs his aggression toward the others instead of himself. Similarly, Patrick avoids hurting himself by murdering others creatively.

Patrick's case, unfortunately, reflects the case of many other American people during the 1980s. Murphet argues that "What is not a fiction is the fundamental social reality that Patrick represents in the work" (53). *American Psycho* "reflect[s] contemporary consumer culture" (88), as Sonia BaeloAllué confirms. Back in the eighties, Americans experienced consumerism to a great extent creating the most consumerist society and hence culture in the American history. It is an empty culture that promotes physical appearance and power over social standards and morals.

In such a culture, one is privileged on the basis of his looks, wealth and lifestyle. Otherwise, the person is considered as an alien and even mistreated as in the case of Al in *American Psycho*. Here, Murphet explains "the new ruling class of Reagan's America [the Yuppie group] was inflicting all kinds of violence on workers, homeless people, ethnic minorities and women" (54). The consumerist type of life was not only limited to Yuppies like Patrick Bateman, it was actually desired by almost everybody back then and even now.

Yuppies, as Patrick represents them, exercised violence on people from lower classes to confirm their superiority. Violence, unlike in earlier works of literature, is a prerequisite of the main character that indicates not his heroism but shows his arrogance and self-centeredness. In *Gendering Men: Re-Visions of Violence as a Test of Manhood in American Literature* (2007), Josep M. Armengol explains that violence is traditionally viewed as "a test of manhood" (82). He adds that this traditional view is best represented by Ernest Hemingway in twentieth-century American literature (81).

Bravery and heroism is what characterize violent characters in Hemingway's works (Armengol 83). His works present male characters that go through "violent hunting and fishing expeditions...to prove their masculinity, bravery and heroism" (84). Both hunting and fishing have been always perceived as men's thing. Hemingway's protagonists get engaged in hunting and fishing experiences in order to confirm their merits of being real men. In Hemingway's short story *An African Story* (1954), David, his father, and their African guide Juma go through a journey of hunting an elephant for its tusks in Africa. The elephant is huge, and Juma has already tried to chase it but failed. During the chase, Juma is severely injured, but he shoots the elephant again choosing "death to humiliation" (84). By doing so, Juma is perceived as a real man and a hero.

Hemingway's short story is set in the 1950s when America was still maintaining its social and cultural principals. Violence, back then, was a proof of manliness and masculinity. However, the many social and economic changes that occurred after the Second World War contributed to a fundamental cultural change which also led to another change in the American identity as well as character. Even violence was viewed differently since. In the 1980s, for instance, violence, as the novel attempts to show, is the ultimate result of racist and sexist mindsets. It, also, resulted from feelings of hatred and envy.

Conclusion

As a summary, the whole story of Yuppies began with the emerging influence of the counterculture back in the sixties. Indeed, the Hippie group constituted the largest cultural group in the US, making approximately 10% of the American population. Despite that, it could radically reshape the American culture as well as American identity. It shook the ever long lasting American ideals that had always been sacred, unquestioned, and nonnegotiable as the youth brought a social and a cultural wave of change. They broke away from social conformity, inventing their own rules, and experimenting with whatever was considered taboo in their parents' time as new style of clothing, dropping education, psychedelic music, sex, and drugs, Baby-Boomers just did not leave anything without trying it out.

This initial cultural shift gave rise to a successive one , that of the Yuppies, during the eighties. Yuppiedom was a culture of physical appearance and social status. It is the result of the awake of Hippies from their beautiful dreams. Yuppiedom required a wealthy lifestyle which involved living in an apartment of high rent in an expensive area within a large city. Moreover, Yuppies were arrogant and selfish, yet successful and hard working.

Seemingly, the main aspects of the American Counterculture were not that peaceful and healthy. Yuppiedom is the tradition of a young generation listening to psychedelic music, having sex with no protection procedures, and consuming dangerous drugs. This created a cultural and social turning point in the American history. The turning point brought a shift in the American mainstream culture extending to society and identity. The shift can be seen in the practice of the violent acts simply for self-realization and satisfaction.

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ملخص

شهد المجتمع الأمريكي تحولات ثقافية كبيرة بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. ابتداءً من الستينيات ، كانت هناك ثقافة مكافحة يشار إليها أيضًا باسم حركة الهبي و هي نمط حياة يتناقض مع الثقافة السائدة من نواح كثيرة. تبعت اليوبيدوم حركة الهبي في الثمانينيات من القرن العشرين والتي تعتمد أسلوب حياة غنيًا عزز المظهر الجسدي. تميزت كلتا الثقافتين بميل أعضائها نحو السلوكيات العنيفة. لذا ، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة العلاقة بين تلك التغييرات الثقافية والعنف ومساهمته في إعادة تشكيل هوية أمريكية جديدة. تعتمد الدراسة على تحليل رواية برييت ايبستون اليس مجنون أمريكي لسنة 1991 مثالاً لدور ثقافة يوبي في إعادة تشكيل الهوية الأمريكية الجديدة التي تميزت بالعنف. في الواقع ، تصور الرواية مظاهر اليوبيدوم في الثمانينيات ، بينما تقدم في الوقت نفسه صوراً ثابتة لأعمال العنف التي تميزت بها أمريكا والشعب الأمريكي في الثمانينات. اعتماداً على دراسة استقصائية للتغيرات الاجتماعية والثقافية التي ميزت هذه الفترة ، تشير الدراسة إلى فهم دوافع الشخصية وراء العنف عبر علم النفس. سيتم استخدام نظرية سيجموند فرويد حول العدوان لفهم الأعمال العنيفة للشخصية بشكل أفضل. وهكذا ، يقال هنا أنه على الرغم من نمط الحياة الفاخر الذي تؤديه الشخصية الرئيسية ، يصبح العنف ضرورة لا يمكن تجنبها بالنسبة له.

Résumé

La société américaine a été témoin de changements culturels majeurs après la deuxième Guerre mondiale. À partir des années 1960, une contre-culture, également appelée mouvement Hippie, était un mode de vie qui allait à l'encontre de la culture dominante à bien des égards. Le mouvement Hippie a été suivi par Yuppiedom dans les années 1980, qui désignait un style de vie riche qui favorisait l'apparence physique. Les deux cultures étaient caractérisées par la tendance de leurs membres à adopter des comportements violents. Cette étude vise donc à examiner la relation entre ces changements culturels et la violence et leur contribution à la refonte de la nouvelle identité américaine. L'étude analyse Psycho américain de Bret Easton Ellis (1991) pour illustrer le rôle de la culture Yuppie dans la refonte de la nouvelle identité américaine caractérisée par la violence. Le roman décrit en effet les manifestations de Yuppiedom des années 1980 tout en offrant des représentations constantes d'actes violents qui ont caractérisé l'Amérique et le peuple américains des années 1980. Parallèlement à une enquête sur les changements sociaux et culturels qui ont caractérisé la période, l'étude tente de comprendre les motivations du personnage derrière la violence via la psychologie. La théorie de Sigmund Freud sur l'agression sera utilisée pour mieux comprendre les actes de violence du personnage principal. Ainsi, il est soutenu ici que malgré le style de vie luxueux que le personnage principal mène, la violence devient une nécessité inévitable pour lui.