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**Paranoia in *American Psycho* by Bret  
Easton Ellis (1991)**

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

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## Résumé

Cette étude examine la paranoïa dans le roman de Bret Easton Ellis *Psycho Américain* (1991). L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'explorer le rôle de la paranoïa dans la mutation d'identité du protagoniste. Également un autre objectif de cette étude est d'explorer l'influence du matérialisme et de l'abjection qui ont déjà existé comme des effets dangereux de la paranoïa.

## المخلص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو اكتشاف جنون الاضطهاد في رواية المجنون الامريكي لبرات ايستون اليس و اما الهدف من اعداد هذا البحث هو التعرف على كيف جعلت جنون الاضطهاد من البطل المجنون باتريك بايتمان قاتلا وليس هاذا فقط بل كيف جعلت منه انسانا مهوسا بالقتل و متعطش لدماء الأبرياء . من خلال رواية المجنون الامريكي و التي تعتبر من اهم الروايات العالمية في وقتنا الحاضر كقطعة فنية مميزة تستعمل كثيرا في الدراسات الادبي .الهدف الاخر من هذه الدراسة هو تفحص دور شغف المال و الاحتقار في تغيير هوية البطل المهوس باتريك بايمان كتأثيرات خطيرة لجنون الاضطهاد.



### **Dedication**

This dissertation is tenderly dedicated to God who is my paramount Guider .I dedicate it to my supervisor AIOUNI Laila who provides me with eminent , precious advice , and ropes me to finish this work .I would thank my beloved parents , my treasured father Bazine Mohamed salah, and my adored mother Derouiche Mahbouba for their perpetual encouragement , and to my darling sister Nour el houda ,and my adorable brother zaki .I would also dedicate this work to my husband Hichem who has been my strong supporter along this research .

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### **Abstract**

This study explores Paranoia in the novel of *American psycho (1991)* by Bret Easton Ellis; the main aim behind this research is to explore the impact of paranoia in the novel. This study sheds light on the influence of materialism, and abjection as vicious effects, and their impact in changing, as well as destroying the character's identity, and personality.

Key terms: Paranoia, materialism, abjection, violence, murder, obsession, fear, trauma, and dismemberment of women.

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## Introduction

Postmodern literature stands as a mirror which reflects the state of the world after the Second World War, and describes its major aspects. Postmodern literature is usually linked to American writers like: John Barth and Thomas Pynchon; it comes as a reaction to modernist ideologies and technological development. Furthermore, thinking was backed by logic during the modern period; however, the thinking of postmodernism was considered as irrational and unscientific in its approach; however, they shared common features and themes like: fragmentation, character construction, and paranoia. The use of the term paranoia dates back to the nineteenth century, and it has been used to describe the climate of fear, suspicion, and despair during the cold war. Writers tend to use paranoia in order to explain their state at that time; for example, in the novel of *Slaughter House Five* by Kurt Vonnegut (1964), the writer shows the state of the world and how it is affected by the damage of the war, especially on the protagonist Billy Pilgrim. Who is considered as a fatalistic because of the effects of war which made him as a totally pessimistic character.

At the beginning of the twentieth century paranoia has been replaced by schizophrenia. Thinkers see that paranoia served as a psychological reaction to modernism, while schizophrenia served as a psychological reaction to postmodernism; hence, modernist citizens recognized paranoia as a mirror which reflects their identity and agency. Unlike postmodernists who find themselves compelled to interpret the world through different modes of knowledge which includes neither agency nor identity, because of the multiplicity, and the fragmentation of postmodern experience (Bukowski 3). In the postmodern American novel *American Psycho*, by Bret Easton Ellis (1991), that was considered as one of his most fruitful and pulp novel; it describes luxurious life and the extravagant lifestyle of Patrick Bateman, an investment banker in New York



company, besides his serial killing and paranoid activities . Paranoia has influenced Patrick's shift in identity , and transformed him from a handsome, classic , rich , clean , and organized person , to a totally psychopathic , and paranoid character full of greed , jealousy , and thirsty to blood .Among all these aspects , this study is dedicated for exploring paranoia , because it has an eminent role more than other themes in the novel ; it serves as the dominant theme in *American Psycho*,it has been chosen to be analyzed through this research, and paranoia has been selected in order to be studied through this research , because Patrick Bateman is really driven by this psychiatric trait .

This research will examine and analyze the novel of *American Psycho*, by Bret Easton Ellis and how Patrick Bateman's identity lifted as an American postmodern character. Also , this study will shed light on the impact of paranoia on Patrick 's behavior, specifically , his serial killing , sexual and torturing activities .The madness of materialism is another aspect, which exists in all characters of *American Psycho*;will be explained throughout this research ; hence ,when we go deeply through the lines of the novel one can notice that Patrick Bateman's madness of materialism is seen through his juxtaposed superficiality , and his luxurious lifestyle . In addition, this current study will discuss and explore the issue of abjection as being considered as vicious effect of paranoia that plays a major role in Patrick's transformation in personality. : In analyzing the novel of *American psycho*, the psychoanalytical approach is incorporated for the examination of Paranoia in Patrick Bateman, and how it changed his identity.

Paranoia has been used by many postmodern writers, and appeared as a major theme in their works. This psychiatric phenomenon became of huge interests, especially for, Psychological Researchers, and writers. At first , according to Specht ; the development of paranoia occurs when there is an amplification of suspiciousness i ,e , the complex changement and combination of pleasure and displeasure .Unlike , Bebleur who have

suggested in his famous monograph “ Affectivity , Suggestivity , and Paranoia “ that , paranoia cannot be an influence of psychosis ( Chatterji 109 112) .According to Freud’s view , paranoid delusions and hallucinations are resulted from homosexual desires ; hence, he believed that paranoia can only be developed through these homosexual ambitions ( Charettji 113).

Thereby, this research is divided into three chapters, the first chapter is entitled Theoretical Reading of Paranoia and postmodernism, it will provide some background information, biography of the author, and it will tackle *American psycho* as a postmodern literature. In addition, this chapter will tackle the overview of paranoia, and its psychological theories. Moreover the second chapter is titled The Exploration of Paranoia in *American Psycho*, this chapter sheds light on the impact of paranoia on Patrick’s character and how it contributes in his shifting identity ,as well as exploring its significance in the novel. Besides; discussing fear, and trauma as vicious effects of Paranoia. The third chapter is entitled Materialism and Abjection in *American psycho*; this chapter will focus on the madness of materialism in the novel and discuss how the material desire and abjection destroys the character’s personality.

This research is concerned with the concept of paranoia in postmodern American novel which is entitled *American Psycho*. So that, the main aim of this study is to explore the role of paranoia in shifting the identity of Patrick Bateman, how this psychiatric phenomenon made him as a total psychopathic character. In few words this study will deal with the exploration of paranoia, and its impact on the protagonist Patrick Bateman. This research is mainly important for future studies hence, it will be considered as a second source of information or as a tool to write a literature review for further studies.

## **Chapter One: Theoretical Reading of Paranoia and Postmodernism**

The first chapter tackles the definition of postmodern American literature, and goes through determining the characteristics of postmodern literature. In addition, this current chapter will analyze the novel of *American psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis as a postmodern work, and what makes it as a unique, fruitful master piece .Also, this chapter will discuss Bret Easton Ellis's biography, aesthetic style, and his master pieces in postmodern literature. After that, as an overview; this study will shed light on the issue of paranoia, and its psychological dimensions.

### **I.1. Rethinking Postmodernism in American Literature**

Usually the term " postmodernism" is related to a number of trends which were developed in 1970 and touched many areas like: art, literature, music, and architecture Postmodernism came as a reaction to modern ideologies and thoughts, it creates a new world with a different meanings. Also postmodern literature is usually defined as a form of literature which is characterized by using various literary conventions such as fragmentation , paranoia , black humor , and pastiche , postmodern American writers tend to reject the outright meaning , instead they focus on multiple meanings of a single literary work .(Afroz 1)

Postmodern works are also regarded as a mirror which stands against enlightenment thinking and modernist approaches in literature. Postmodernism tend to deny the existence of any ultimate truth or principals; they believe that: «The only Absolute Truth is that there are No Absolute Truths“(Feyerabend 15). According to Kalle Lasn, and Bruce Grieron who think that postmodern people have failed in understanding the knowledge of reality; Because of postmodernism everything is dead , modernism , originality also dead , they have noticed in their writings that ,

Post-modernism is arguably the most depressing philosophy ever to spring from the western mind. It is difficult to talk about post-modernism because nobody really understands it. It's allusive to the point of being impossible to articulate. But what this philosophy basically says is that we've reached an endpoint in human history. That the modernist tradition of progress and ceaseless extension of the frontiers of innovation are now dead. Originality is dead. The avant-garde artistic tradition is dead. All religions and utopian visions are dead and resistance to the status quo is impossible because revolution too is now dead. Like it or not, we humans are stuck in a permanent crisis of meaning, a dark room from which we can never escape. (Kalle Lasn, and Bruce Grierson, 2)

Through this passages , and according to these lines , we can realized that the age of modernism disappeared , and born a very new age called postmodernism , this latter has changed some eminent aspects of modernism , originality , reality , utopian visions , and some artistic tradition are altered , we are now stuck in an obscure room where we cannot escape, in a world of perpetual disaster of meaning.

## **I.2. *American Psycho* as a Postmodern Literature**

Postmodern American literature is considered as a type of literature which takes place and comes to prominence after the Second World War . It stands as a shadow to mirror the face of the world after the climate of the war, especially, writers who find themselves frustrated by the damage of this struggle. Postmodern literature is marked by using various techniques,

American postmodern fiction of the 1960's marked by the use of linguistic play, experiment with the language, with referential function of the language, radical irony, postmodern parody, fragmentation, and intertextuality, the overlapping of fact, fiction, and dreams, and by the use of techniques and conventions typical of different not only genres, but also kinds of arts and media Cinema, television ("Postmodern Literature of the USA" 63)

Writers at that time aimed to label their state through postmodern writings, they tend to define their state of fear, despair, suspicion, and loss during the war, so that their conditions were represented through their characters especially, through their protagonists. For example; in *American psycho* Bret Easton Ellis put all the attitudes, and beliefs of American man in Patrick Bateman. Postmodern writers became very frustrated because of the damage and the effects of the World War 2 and the cold war. Probably the most prominent stamps of their styles are the use of irony and humor in their writings. Nicholas Guymon in his "Characteristics of Postmodern American Literature" has grasped that "The use irony, playfulness, and black humor became the hallmarks of the writing style of some postmodernist authors as serious subjects as the Cold War, Vietnam War, and World War II, are treated with distance and disconnect. Authors depict their history ironically and humorously (Guymon 6).

In *American psycho* both techniques are portrayed in a passage when a machine ATM shows "feed me a stray cat" to Patrick. In addition to pastiche; when postmodern writers try to combine multiple elements from different works so that to create a new narrative voice. We can find this technique in Thomas Pynchon's writings because he tends to use science fiction, detective fiction, and war fiction. Furthermore another postmodern technique is intertextuality;



it occurs when writers borrow or transform from other texts such as: les misérable in *American psycho*.

Paranoia is considered as a sign in postmodern writing. It is usually defined as « an ordering system behind the chaos of the world (Ullah 13). Nicholas Guymon holds the view that” Authors write under the assumption that modern society cannot be explained or understood. From this point of view, any apparent connections or controlling influences on the chaos of society would be very frightening, and this lends a sense of **paranoia**” (Guymon 6) . In Kurt Vonnegut’s novel *Breakfast of Champions*, the protagonist notices himself as the only human and everyone in the world are robots. The last technique and mainly the most important is magical realism through which postmodern writers introduce impossible and fantastic elements into real events for example, Patrick in *American psycho* is described as a Bateman who chases his victims at night, in one scene he drops a chainsaw on Christine when she was running away on the stairs, this is an utter magical realism.

Bret Easton’s *American Psycho* (1991) is considered as one of the most popular postmodern novels, it received huge interest. This novel is narrated through the first point of view of the protagonist Patrick Bateman, an investment banker in his family own company, rich, and handsome American man. Cristina Ghitha holds the view that *American Psycho* is recognized as a masterpiece of postmodern American literature ,she said that :“ Bret Easton Ellis’ perhaps most popular novel, *American Psycho*, is today considered one of the best examples of postmodern literature and has become the subject of study in many literary courses in the academia “ (Githa 1) .

*In the postmodern turn:” Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture”*, Ihab Hassan has attempted eleven postmodern characteristics which are pertaining for postmodern works. He called them “definiens”: indeterminacy, fragmentation, decanonization,

depthlessness, the unrepresentable, irony, hybridization, cannibalization, performance, constructionism, immanence (qtd. in Githa 8). Many of these elements and their sub-elements like: the inconsistent narrator, black humor, pastiche, and metafiction, all these themes stand as a mirror that reflects the novel's postmodernism. In the novel of *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis, the hero Patrick Bateman is called a murderer as Githa stated in her article, "he is one of the most inconsistent narrative voices in contemporary fiction" (Githa 9). The murder of Paul Owen; is one of the persons who Patrick's dislike because he is rich, have proved that Patrick is an unreliable narrator; when we go through the lines of the novel, we can see that Patrick starts with describing Owen's apartment, then in another chapter he described it with a totally different manner. Here we can notice that there are inconsistencies in Patrick's description. As Ann Casano cited in her work, Ellis creates an unreliable narrator in Bateman. The reader begins to question the integrity of Bateman's reality. He becomes delusional to the point where he even confesses his crimes to his co-workers but everyone thinks he's joking (Casano 7).

Black humor and irony are both present in the novel of *American Psycho*; they can be illustrated throughout the passage, when Patrick is playing with a little baby since his confessions are not heard again. This scene shows that the little girl is playing with Bateman business card that is to say, these may lead us to think of the children's future as consumers (Githa 10). Patrick admits to himself saying,

I'm playing with the baby while Nancy holds her, offering Glenn my platinum American Express card, and she grabs at it excitedly, and I'm shaking my head, talking in a high-pitched baby voice, squeezing her chin, waving the card in front of her face, cooing, "Yes I'm a total psychopathic murderer, oh yes I

am, I like to kill people, oh yes I do, honey, little sweetie pie,  
yes I do. (Ellis 121)

Patrick is a real psychopathic character, he likes to kill people, to the point he confesses his incredible admission, and non-logical confessions to a little baby. Another technique which can be used as a sign for the novel's postmodernism is fragmentation. It is well recognized in the novel, hence it includes chapters which are completely split from each other, in each chapter we can notice a totally different style for instance, if one chapter reveals the criminal episodes, and the paranoid activities of Patrick Bateman, the other one will be advocated for the music of Whitney Huston or the song of hip to be square (Ghitha 10).

Furthermore Murphet has mentioned that there is metafiction; it appeared through the self-reflective confessions of Patrick Bateman, mainly through his monologues: « there is an idea of Patrick Bateman; some kind of abstraction. But there is no real me: only an entity simply I am not there. » (Ellis 377). Moreover, another important element which is present in the novel is Allusion, especially to the French play *Les Miserable*; in this play which aimed at describing and maintaining the differences between the upper, low class, and how this belief shakes people's mind, as well as in *American Psycho*, in which the writer accents on the differences held between poor, rich people and how it affects human mind too. Imagery and paradox are also measured from the features which are existing in the novel. We can notice imagery through the hypercritical character of Patrick, especially when he tends to criticize people for things he does, for instance: when he criticize a man for his dangling money to the homeless. Paradox acted also in Bateman interaction with homeless people in the streets (Vardy, Alice, ahmad guaffar, et al. 4) .Personification of Patrick makes us think that he is a paranoid character, for always trusting that he is the most beautiful, the richer, the cleaner...as he has assumed: "everything getting clearer, my

body alive and burning, on fire, and from nowhere a flash of white and blinding light envelopes me and I hear it, can actually feel, can even make out the letters of the message hovering above Bono's head in orange wavy letters'' (Ellis 121) .

Jesse Pearson, and Jerry Hsu in their article Bret Easton Ellis have mentioned that the novel of *American Psycho* have acknowledged a huge importance because of its postmodernity becoming as the most controversial novel used in academia nowadays :

Then came American Psycho. This hyper detailed and occasionally incredibly violent and pornographic novel of amped-up yuppie masculinity was maybe the most controversial piece of fiction of the later 20th century. But as satire, it's up there with Jonathan Swift. And while it's easy to fall into the trap of seeing American Psycho as an offensive, gleeful misogynistic fantasy, it's really not that at all. It's an indictment of the attitudes of its main character, and the fact that Ellis chose to write it in the first person, free of omniscient editorializing, was a brave and rewarding risk (Jesse Person and Jerry Hsu 426).

The point of view in *American Psycho* is first person, and the story is narrated through the main character or the protagonist Patrick Bateman , these events take place in Manhattan 1980. The major conflict is an internal one between Patrick, and his paranoid tendencies , which totally transformed him from a usual guy at the morning to a vampire at night that is this paranoia leads to an alteration of identity in Bateman character .In the novel Patrick narrates the events of his luxurious , and extravagant lifestyle as if he is writing a journal .In addition he tends to describe his daily life routine including, his sport exercises , beautification ,and his favorite music collection too.

Besides, confessing to his crimes, as well recording the mundane events of everyday life in videotapes, Patrick throughout the novel tends to keep and transfer the reader from one plot in which, he describes his daily life activities to a totally different scene in which he kill and torture people. Thus, he described his psychopathic, non-logical fantasies. Patrick Bateman is bored with life, and hated the world around him, he just fascinated with the fact that he cannot get anyone to believe him capable of murder, despite the horrific and gruesome acts he confesses to an almost daily basis. (Micola 5)

Despite the fact that , the novel of *American Psycho* have established a vast notice and became a fruitful master piece used in literary academia nowadays , however , it faces a harsh criticism especially by feminist writers because of the violence and the dismemberment practiced and maintained on the women throughout the novel ; Alice Vardy, ahmad guaffar , and others have stated in their writings :

The novel was initially met with great hesitation, with the original publishing companies pulling out because "aesthetic differences", but it may have had more to do with the lurid depictions of sexual violence, torture, gore, cannibalism, and a plethora of other gruesome events. The novel has been highly criticized by feminist activist and journalist Gloria Steinem for it is portrayal and violence against women, whose stepson (Bale), ironically, took on the lead role of Bateman in the film adaptation released April 14, 2001 (USA). The book has since turned into the benchmark of Ellis' career, and a cultural icon, so much so that (real life) serial killer Paul Bernando has cited it as his bible. The novel has since sold millions of copies. (Alice Vardy, AhmedGuffar, and Others 8).

The lines above signpost that the novel of *American Psycho* has gain an eminent role in contemporary literature because of its touchable themes such; violence, murder, and paranoia; however, it receives a harsh criticism especially from the side of feminist writers like Gloria Steinem mainly because of violence, sexual torture, abjection, and dismemberment of women.

Bret Easton Ellis is an American novelist, movie writer, and short story writer who were born in the 6<sup>th</sup> march 1964 in Los Angeles, California. His father was a property developer, and his mother was a homemaker. At the age of Twenty one, he wrote his first novel *Less Than A ZERO* (1985) ; in this novel he have tackled the culture of rich , wealthy , and decadent youth in Los Angeles In1991. He has published his third novel *American Psycho* , which is considered as a successful work ;this novel is dealt with the extravagant life of Patrick Bateman , an investment banker in new york ; in his family own company , he is a symbol of self-made American man , classic , handsome , and very organized person, yet a total psychopathic character full of greed , jealousy , and thirsty to blood. According to Alice Vardy, and Ahmed Guffar, they have revealed that Bret Easton Ellis has brought Patrick character from his own experience:

Bret Easton Ellis said that Bateman's character was derived directly from his own experience of yuppie culture. Not that he became a serial killer, but in his own experiences of isolation and alienation as a result of consumerist culture. His first draft of the novel left out the more explicit scenes, which were to be added later after Ellis had widely researched murders at the New York Public Library. (Alice Vardy, Ahmed Guffar, and Others 15)

*Lunar Park* (2005) it is a mock memoir, in which Bret Easton Ellis discusses a ghost story of the memorable house and questions over the death of his father become progressively noticeable. With his past of drug consumption and intoxication, his family are reasonably doubtful of his privileges that the house is ghostly, this novel have received a positive reviews, than we have *Imperial Bedrooms* in (2010) which is considered as a continuous to *Less Than a Zero*, that is *Imperial Bedrooms* reexamines *Less Than Zero's* self-critical and disappointed adolescences as they approach middle-age in the present day,

Bret Easton Ellis is an American writer, and considered to be one of generation X , or simply those who were born following the post-world war two .Also, he was regarded to be called as one of the literary brat back to be precise , those group of American actors who shine their stars during the 1980. In addition to other authors like: Tama Janowitz and Jay McInerney. Bret Easton Ellis tends to use very young and vacuous characters in his novels; these characters are usually aware of their state of depravity. However, they like to enjoy this climate .He also tends to use common settings and dystopia locales in his novels for instance, New York or Los Angeles. . According to Ann Casano in her chapter 2 lesson 17, who maintains Bret Easton Ellis among the controversial and renowned writer of the 20 th century:” His work is often **satirical**, as he criticizes the excesses of the modern day and makes upper-class society look like greedy morally-bankrupt elitists who sometimes even become delusional maniacs.” (qtd in. Casano chapter 2 lesson 17).

Ann casano adds that Bret Easton Ellis’s novels are all shared the same aspects and genres, combining both violent and hysterically aspects, has cited,

American Author Bret Easton Ellis His novels are frequently both violent and hysterically funny at the same time. Ellis is also self-referential. Sometimes, characters from one novel will randomly reappear in another novel. Ellis also uses his old

school of Bennington College in Vermont as the fictitious framework for Camden College. Camden College is mentioned in *Less Than Zero*. It also serves as the main setting for Ellis' second novel *The Rules of Attraction*. All of Ellis' novels are controversial. However, for the most part, his novels have all been critically acclaimed bestsellers. His literary goal seems to be to expose what he deems as the pitfalls of society by using extreme graphic violence **juxtaposed** with biting satire... ( qtd in. Ann Casano , chapter 2 lesson 17 )

We can realize from the lines above that Bret Easton Ellis is one of the most important writers of the twenties century because of his style, then he tends to show the upper class as greedy, fascinated persons , and even as distrustful enthusiasts. Most Ellis's novels are adapted for screen movies, and they expected huge concerns.

### **I.3. An Overview of Paranoia**

The use of the term paranoia in literature dates back to the nineteenth century. Writers at that time tend to reflect their state of fear, despair, loss, and suspicion during the climate of the war. Thus, this psychiatric phenomenon serves as a weapon, for writers to describe their conditions. Usually, when we hear the term paranoia the first thing that comes to our mind is that is a mental or emotional disorder, or may be craziness since this term is usually used in a medicine domain. However, when it comes to literature paranoia stands as a mirror which reflects the writer's intention. The concept of paranoia has been used by both modern and postmodern writers, so according to Nassrullah Mambrol in his article "postmodern paranoia" (2017) he defines postmodern paranoia as follows:

Paranoia, or the threat of total engulfment by somebody else's system, is keenly felt by many of the dramatis personae of



postmodernist fiction. It is tempting to speculate that this is an indirect mimetic representation of the climate of fear and suspicion that prevailed throughout the cold war. (Mambrol Postmodern Paranoia).

Through this definition one can realize that paranoia is a real sickness which threatens the psycho of the person, the use of this term is mainly to enhance the idea of fear and despair during the war. Another nuanced definition of Paranoia is taken from Timothy Melley's *Empire of Conspiracy*, in which he categorizes paranoia as an interpretive disorder

Paranoia is an interpretive disorder that revolves around questions of control and manipulation. It is often defined as a condition in which one has delusions of grandeur or an unfounded feeling of persecution, or both. Understood less judgmentally, it is condition in which one's interpretations seem unfounded or abnormal to an interpretive community. (qtd in .Bukuwski2014)

John c Farrell in his book *Paranoia and modernity* reports that paranoia is served as a key in modern literature and played the role of the dominant concern in modern writings as well. Paranoia and its major symptoms as: grandiosity, suspicion, unfounded hostility, delusions of persecution and conspiracy are all considered as the mirror which reflects the modern hero (Farrell 1).

Furthermore, at the beginning of the twentieth century paranoia has been replaced by "schizophrenia" Thinkers see that paranoia served as a psychological reaction to modernism, while schizophrenia served as a psychological reaction to postmodernism; hence, modernist citizens recognized paranoia as a mirror which echoes their identity and

agency. Unlike postmodernists who were find themselves compelled to interpret the world through a different modes of knowledge, which include neither agency nor identity because of the multiplicity, and the fragmentation of the postmodern experience (Bukowski 3).

Bukowski Danielle in his Article, “Paranoia and schizophrenia in postmodern literature: Pynchon and Delillo” (2014), the author focuses on the shift in ways of seeing the self; from a modern perspective, and how it is changed in the postmodern era. Bukowski made a comparison between two novels *The Crying a Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon and *Libra* by Delillo. In the first novel the protagonist “oedipa” (Bukowski, 15) becomes a paranoid character because she noticed that she does not only lack control over her world, and her identity, but rather there were many people who gain control over her besides, she failed in becoming a total postmodern character. Thus, she never considered identity and agency, without non paranoid and non-modernist perspectives. In the second novel *Libra*, the author has noticed that paranoia can only be experienced throughout a paranoid schizophrenic mode, in his significant study he ends up saying:

In *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Libra*, it becomes clear that paranoia did not cease as a mode of knowledge in the age of late capitalism; that a schizophrenic mode of knowledge does not mean a loss of the self; and that while agency and identity will be refigured in postmodernism, they will certainly not be lost (Bukowski 42 ).

Through this quotation we can recognize that paranoia did not come to an end, and schizophrenia does not mean a loss of identity, both agency and identity will never come to an end as they reflect and mirror the postmodern picture. The concept of paranoia has been used by many postmodern writers and appeared as a major theme in their works. This

psychiatric phenomenon becomes of huge interest, especially for the Psychological researchers. Paranoia has been studied by many psychologists to determine its causes, its symptoms, and more importantly to find out the most beneficial treatments to get rid of this delusional disorder:

Paranoia is thinking and feeling as if you are under threat even though there is no (or very little) evidence that you are. Paranoid thoughts can also be described as delusions. There are lots of different kinds of threat you might be scared and worried about. Paranoid thoughts could also be exaggerated suspicions. For example, someone made a nasty comment about you once, and you believe that they are directing a hate campaign against you.

(Foster 4)

According to Foster's definition paranoid visions are considered as delusions, or simply hallucinations, and illusions. So through this eminent definition Foster empowers the climate of Patrick Bateman who suffers a lot from that delusions and paranoid suspicions. Foster Clare in his article entitled "Understanding Paranoia" (2016); investigates the causes, and the symptoms of paranoia:

No one knows exactly what causes paranoia. There are lots of theories and different people will have different explanations for their own experiences. It's likely to be a combination of things. Researchers have identified some general risk factors – these are things that could make paranoid thoughts more likely: Having confusing or unsettling experiences or feelings that you can't easily explain. The way you feel – if you are anxious or worried a lot or have low self-esteem and expect others to criticize or

reject you. The way you think – if you tend to come to conclusions quickly, believe things very strongly and don't easily change your mind. If you are isolated. If you have experienced trauma in the past. (Foster 10-11)

When we read the causes of paranoia, we can realize that Patrick suffers from almost of them like: feeling anxious, and worried a lot about his appearance, specifically his beautification. Having a low self-esteem and caring a lot about other's comments or refusal. One scene in which we can sign that Bateman was really care about his and others' appearance too, to the point he describes every detail in their clothes, shoes, and even their glasses. Patrick shows a great deal of obsession , and paranoia to the point , he gathers and describes very small details of cloths , glasses , haircuts ,and even the tissues , all are of high quality , so fancy ,and made by great markets as valentiono , Oliver twist glasses.

First, according to the psychologist researcher Bleuler who is also a psychiatric doctor, and a teacher in the university: “paranoia can be related to the degeneration, or the deterioration of the mind. Also, he has believed that "prodromal symptom formation, before the release of paranoid symptoms, the appearance of the paranoid symptoms usually in the advanced age, remissions and exacerbations occurring from within independently of the external conditions are points in the favor of the view that this disorder might have originated as a result of degeneration of brain" (Chatterji104 ). Degeneration or deterioration of the brain is a disease, it occurs by the weakening or the demise of the nervous system cells called the neurons, it causes many dangerous diseases like, Alzheimer. Bleuler has also suggested in his famous monograph “Affectivity, Suggestively, and Paranoia “that, paranoia cannot be an influence of psychosis (Chatterji 109 112).Likewise, Bleuler emphasized the idea that paranoia has no relation with mental

illness or foolishness, however, it is strongly linked to the degeneration of the mind, in other words, and according to Bleuler paranoia is connected to the worsening of the brain.

Furthermore, according to Specht, development of paranoia occurs when there is an extension of suspiciousness that is the complex change, combination of pleasure and displeasure. In Freud's view, paranoid delusions and hallucinations are resulted from homosexual desires; hence, he believed that paranoia can only be developed through these homosexual ambitions (Charettji 113).

Moreover, Bleuler has noted in his study that paranoid suspicions, at the beginning of its development appeared just like that of a normal person; however gradually it takes up the compulsive form (Charettji 114) as the case of our hero Patrick Bateman ,at first , he seemed as normal guy practicing his daily life activities ; However later , it has discovered that his paranoid suspicions are getting compulsive, and worst by maintaining abnormal violent acts, and torturing bodies by cooking and eating them . Taking quote from Bleuler's: *'Text\_Book\_of\_Psychiatry'* to make his view point clear; "In the cases of paranoia which I have been able to analyze in the recent year, the same cause for the direction and content for the delusions could be easily given. It was always from the affectively determined errors which spring up from a way similar to the daily experience of the normal person but which are fixed and extended" ( qtd , in Charettji ,N, N Theories of Paranoia 110 -11).

#### **I.4. Freud's Theory of Paranoia**

Freud not only wrote about paranoia, he was also a victim of paranoia from the very beginning, Freud saw paranoia in its psychological and social dimensions. According to Freud, The purpose of paranoia is to defend against an impression that is unequal with the self, by projecting its substance into the outside world” .... “The grande nation cannot face the idea that it could be defeated in war. Ergo it was not defeated; the victory does not count. It provides an example of mass paranoia and invents the delusion of betrayal” (Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, 1895).

Sigmund Freud was the first who talk about the narcissistic theory in 1910 when he tends to study about homosexuality, people who became in love with other people from the same sex simply because they are fond of themselves .According to Freud's view the primitive narcissism starts with children as an important step in their psychological development; However, duplicate narcissism developed in adolescent age because they failed in focusing on themselves in order to deal with the outside world.

According to N, N Charettji, in his article “Theories\_of\_Paranoia”, has tackled Freud's theory of paranoia in details he has pointed out, Freud advocated the same view in his paper, "The role of Homosexuality" in the genesis of paranoia'. He stated that paranoia is nothing but slanted homosexuality. Freud From the analysis of Dr. Sherbet's delusion of persecution presented that the oppressor is usually a person who had a great effect in the emotional life of the patient or a simply identifiable Substitute of that person. In fact a person who had been Love and respected previously by the patient would appear to Persecutor when the disease would break out. (Charettji 112 -13) Through Freud's view of paranoia, we can reveal that paranoia is related to homosexual desires as those of Patrick Bateman who is compelled by paranoia because of his homosexual ambitions, and drives.

## I.5. American Counterculture

A "counterculture" refers to a drive that is in disapproval to ordinary (or popular) culture. Counterculture is voiced through protests, the refusal of an ancient way of doing things preferring new methods, in exciting pictures, the making of a different culture from the culture in place. Subjects identical with counterculture of the 1960s: colored rock music, anti-war feeling, San Francisco's Ashbury neighborhood, (Chepkemioi 1).

The American counterculture refers to the period between (1964-1972), in that epoch American culture became so great, and homogenous .It was described as a youth culture its members are usually refers to the most studied generation or as called the baby boomers as the writer Bret Easton Ellis who was born in 1964. Like any eminent culture the American counterculture have faced many labeled clichés such, the hippy lifestyle, mind –altering drug use , open sexuality , in addition to constant buzz of rock and roll. All that cants can be seen through the novel of *American Psycho* (Standish 8).

To conclude, paranoia plays a very significant role in the novel, so the first chapter has tackled in details the theoretical dimensions of paranoia, its causes, symptoms, and its psychological theories. We have been gone through fruitful information about the novel of *American psycho* which is standard as an eminent tremendous work used in academic studies, in addition to the writer Bret Easton Ellis as the most renowned writer of the twentieth century.

## Chapter Two: The Depiction of Paranoia in *American Psycho*

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will tackle the narrative structure of *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. Then discussing the Significance of paranoia in the novel. Trauma, and fear as vicious effects of paranoia, and their influence on the protagonist. Furthermore, the second section will discuss the impact of paranoia on Patrick Bateman, mainly enhancing the idea of how this psychiatric phenomenon to be exact, paranoia plays a substantial role in fluctuating the identity of Patrick Bateman from an ordinary person to a fully psychopathic character full of gluttony, and thirsty to blood.

### II.1. Narrative Structure of *American Psycho*

The novel of *American Psycho* written by Bret Easton Ellis, and published in 1991. As Manila argues, “His third novel *American Psycho* that established Ellis as a central figure in contemporary US literature and culture” (qtd in “*The Unreliable Narrator in American Psycho*” by Manila 1) Nowadays the novel is regarded as a controversial novel used in academia and mainly in further literature studies. *American Psycho* in its golden lines told the story of an American self-made man called Patrick Bateman aged of 27 years old, an investment banker in his family own company in New York. At the beginning of the novel Bateman starts by describing his apartment in Wall Street, and describing his material accoutrement including: his lotions, shampoos, and body creams which are really precious, a scene from which Patrick describes his shower creams and lotions:

The shower has a universal all-directional shower head that adjusts within a thirty-inch vertical range. It's made from Australian gold-black brass and covered with a white enamel finish. In the shower I use first a water-activated gel cleanser, then a honey-almond body scrub, and on the face an exfoliating gel scrub. Vidal Sassoon shampoo is especially good at getting



rid of the coating of dried perspiration, salts, oils, airborne pollutants and dirt that can weigh down hair and flatten it to the scalp which can make you look older. (Ellis16)

Through these lines we can notice that Patrick is a materialist, and he does really care about his appearance; especially his beautification. Bateman was engaged to Evelyn, whom he called her my supposed fiancée because they were betraying each other. Also, they did not love or care about each other, and the only thing that relates them together is greed. Bateman has a circle of wealthy friends whose most of them he disliked; Patrick was a total psychopathic and paranoid character to the point that he killed a man because of his business card which was luxurious.

Furthermore we can grasp that Patrick was really single-minded by a paranoid delusional disorder; that makes him kill without any reason, thence, he finds a refuge to practice his fantasies in killing people. The high point or the climax of the events reached when Patrick have noticed that Paul Owen was not really dead or simply, he did not kill him. At the end of the story we poster that all of his crimes are not true Because all these unreal criminal activities happened in his mind .So ,finally we find ourselves questioning whether he is a real serial killer or all that has happened in his paranoid mind ? Bret Easton Ellis ends up the novel “THIS IS NOT AN EXIT” (Ellis 212).

The novel of *American Psycho* is written in a first point of view, by the protagonist Patrick Bateman who narrates the story of his life as if he is writing a journal. The plots of the story are written in a fragmented way, the chapters are totally broken from each other. one chapter includes or talk about the criminal episodes, the other chapter will definitely dedicated to the music collection like Whitney Huston or the song of “hip to be square”. According to Christina Githa in her article “Abjection and Pastiche in *American*

*Psycho* “she finds that fragmentation does not only happen at the level of language, but also at the level of plots:

Fragmentation is best exemplified in the way the novel includes chapter’s that completely “break” from the style of the previous ones. For example, if one chapter contains the gruesome episode when Bateman is killing a woman, the next chapter is dedicated completely to the artist Whitney Huston and written in the non-literary form of a review. Fragmentation does not only happen at the level of language in the novel, but also at the level of plot, for example after the detective’s first appearance in the novel, that builds expectations that Bateman will be suspected of the murder of Paul Owen and imprisoned; however, the detective never appears again and Bateman never faces trial. (Githa 9)

Despite the fact that, the story was narrated in a fragmented manner, however, the aesthetic style of Bret Easton Ellis and his imagination makes the reader exited to the end of the story, letting them questioning whether Bateman is a real serial killer or not. To illustrate, Javier Martin Parraga in his book *Fear, trauma and Paranoia in Bret Easton Ellis’s Oeuvre* has stated that:

The brave readers that ignore the ominous warnings and let Ellis guide them through a physical, psychological, emotional, literary, and metaphorical hell discover that their cicerone welcomes them to the fictional universe of American psycho. (Parraga 49)

According to Sini Manila in her study” The Unreliable narrator in *American psycho* “, finds that the unreliable narrator in the novel has affected the reader: Bateman’s

unreliability has an influence on interpretation of *American Psycho*. If one recites the novel deprived of searching Bateman's reliability, the reader's interpretation of the text are unlike from when one concerns him as unreliable. In other words, once the reader has an indirect dramatic irony, the thematic content of the novel changes, and it has an effect on the reading of *American Psycho* (Manila 70).

### **II.3. The Significance of Paranoia in *American Psycho***

*American psycho* was the third novel written by Bret Easton Ellis in 1991, it is recognized as an important novel hence it established an enormous notice and became as the most debated work in the twentieth century. In addition to the aesthetic differences such as the use of various postmodern techniques like: pastiche, fragmentation, and paranoia. This novel tackles the luxurious life of the investment banker Patrick Bateman, a symbol of an American self-made man. When we go through the lines of the novel we can notice that Patrick seems as normal American men, practicing his daily life routine; he looks as an organized Person, his apartment was clean, and well furnished.

He even describes the material accoutrement of his life style, including his beautification, clothes, his shampoos, lotions, creams, and masks. Although, all this wealthiest and richness, but this success is juxtaposed with incredible superficiality (Githa 1). With details in his routine, when he describes his life style, we can notice that he was driven by obsession. As he expresses: « there is an idea of Patrick Bateman; some kind of abstraction. But there is no real me: only an entity ... simply I am not there » (Ellis, 377). This shows that Patrick is a normal guy practicing his daily life activities, so he is rich, handsome, and gain a good job, though he was determined by paranoia, mania, greed, and psychosis. Paranoia in the novel shows a very important role, especially on the protagonist Patrick, despite the fact that he was rich, and handsome; however, he was driven by obsession, greed, jalousie, and paranoia.

## II.4. Fear and Trauma as Vicious Effects of Paranoia

The novel of *American psycho* is characterized by using different notable themes. Fear and trauma. Fear plays a major role in the novel, especially through the horrific events, the torture of women, and the killings of homeless people on the streets. At the beginning of the novel, the writer tries to introduce the protagonist to the readers, and his circle of wealthy friends whom most of them he disliked. Patrick's life is revolved around dining in trendy and luxurious restaurants as Dorssia, the reasons behind this fear and trauma on Patrick Bateman is because of his fascinating, and exaggerated care about his reputation among his friends, he just needs to prove that he is an ideal self-made man, even his business card he wants to get the most luxurious one with a water mark. Patrick fears even when he cannot reserve a table at Dorssia that his friends will make fun of him.

The protagonist of the novel Patrick Bateman is like a monster, he was capable to practice the most horrifying, and the utmost acts of depravity without even blinking, he was totally far from being free of fear, but he lived in a constant climate of panic, and paranoia. There is a scene from a novel which shows Patrick's sense of fear when he went with his pals to Dorssia restaurant without reservation, he stated, <<My panic so great I almost ripped Zagat in two << (38). Then, later in the restaurant, he was so worried, unable to relax. Hence, he was overwhelmed with panic, stress, and fear: "I feel paralyzed but manage to turn away from Owen and look at my place ... and then I gaze at the waiting crowd. They seem hostile, drunk on complimentary Bellinis perhaps, tired of waiting hours for a shitty table near the open kitchen ..." (Ellis 48)

Moreover, in another special scene in which Patrick Bateman meets his brother Sean, in which he experienced the state of fear, anxiety, and also paranoia. Patrick Bateman meets his brother Sean, in which he experienced the state of fear, anxiety, and

also paranoia. Bateman feels frightened and terrified when he meets his brother. (qtd .in P.rraga 59).

## II.5. The Impact of Paranoia in Shifting the Identity of Bateman

The main aim of this study is exploring the impact of paranoia, on shifting the identity of the protagonist Patrick Bateman. At the beginning of this novel *American Psycho*, the protagonist seemed to be as a normal guy practicing his daily life activities, and used to describe every eminent detail in his life routine, he was found of luxurious life, and extravagant lifestyle like: trending at famous restaurants like dorsia:

“It’s called Dorsia,” she says, then, “Patrick, are you okay?”

Yes, my brain does explode and my stomach bursts open inwardly—a spastic, acidic, gastric reaction; stars and planets, whole galaxies mad entirely of little white chef hats, race over the film of my vision. I choke out another question (Ellis 239).

Also, he tends to wear high quality suites of Valentino and Armani, In addition to modern sun glasses, and stylish haircuts. Bateman has a music collection and he was found of horror movies such as: *Texas chainsaw massacre*. Here is a quotation from which readers became familiar with his preferred movies, and the reason why he favors specific films:

I take a quick hot shower and then hit to the video store where I return two tapes I rented on Monday, *she \_ male Reformatory and Body Double*, but I rerent *Body Double* because I want to watch it again tonight even though I Know I won’t have time to masturbate over the scene where the woman is getting

drilled to death by a power drill since I have a date with  
Courtney at seven \_ thirty at Café Luxembourg. (Ellis 114)

Despite the fact that, Patrick Bateman looks like a symbol of an ideal American man, he is handsome, rich, and has a good job as an investment banker in New York Company.; However at night he transformed to a monster who is thirsty to blood . He likes to murder and torture women such as: killing Paul Owen with an axe, and killing a girl called christin with a chainsaw. Patrick has suffered from a severe paranoid delusion, he is a total psychopath, Cristina Ghitha in her article” *Abjection\_and\_pastiche\_in\_American Psycho* “, she mentioned in her writings:

*American Psycho* is narrated through a first person point of view by its main character, the serial killer Patrick Bateman, who is a young, rich, business man working at his family-owned company. The novel follows Bateman’s everyday life in New York, where he leads an extravagant lifestyle filled almost exclusively with eating at luxurious restaurants, making expensive purchases, having several loveless relationships, and torturing and killing people.( Githa 1)

This passage shows that Patrick Bateman is really determined by paranoia that contributes in flowing his identity, from a normal person to a monster. Through the lines of the story we can noticed that he liked to kill without any reason behind, but just he loved to satisfy his self-actualization or showing to the people that he is proud of his fantasies, to the point that he even talk to himself saying that he is a real paranoid psychopathic character :

and I’m shaking my head, talking in a high-pitched baby voice,  
squeezing her chin, waving the card in front of her face,

cooing, “Yes I’m a total psychopathic murderer, oh yes I am, I like to kill people, oh yes I do, honey, little sweetie pie, yes I do. (Ellis 121)

In that passage Bateman assumed that he likes to kill people, and mistreat them, to the point he told his confessions to a little baby, from that we can confirmed that he suffered from a severe paranoid delusional identity.

According to Javier Martin Parraga in his book” *Fear, trauma and Paranoia in Bret Easton Ellis’s oeuvre*, has mentioned that the novel of *American Psycho* is a story which lead us to discover the deepest and the darkest eerie character of Patrick Bateman who is considered as one of the most shocking, exciting, and eerie characters in the history of American literature. (Parraga 54)

Another important fact which made us as readers are sure that Bateman is a completely distrustful character is that throughout the novel Bateman confesses to himself that he is unable to distinguish between reality, hallucination, or dreams: “Lunch at Hubert’s becomes a permanent hallucination in which I find myself dreaming while I still awake (Ellis 83). Another hint which could show that Patrick’s actions are not involved in the moments in which he gets confused with other characters, for instance: “Owen has mistaken me for Marcus Halberstam “(Ellis 86).

In the following quotation shows that Patrick Bateman is totally a psychopathic paranoid person, to the point he confesses to himself that he does not remember how he got to that particular place or what he did earlier:

I’ve forgotten who I had lunch with earlier and, even more important, where was it Robert Alies at beats? Or was it Todd Hendricks at Ursula’s, the new Philipp Duncan Holmes bistro in Tribeca? Or was it Ricky Worrall and were we at

December? Or would it have been Kevin Webet at contra in NoHo? Did I order the partridge sandwich on brioche with green tomatoes, or a big plate of endive with calm sauce? “Oh god , I can’t remember , (Ellis 143)

The first horrible murders of the suspicious character Bateman happened when he meets a black homeless man on the street, in that scene readers have realized that Bateman is simply an evil character. He starts by abusing the black man in a verbal and physical manner: “Listen. Do you think it’s fair to take money from people who do have jobs? Who do work? “(126), Regardless of this humiliation; however, he maintains other dreadful methods: I pull out a long, thin knife with serrated edge and, being very careful not to kill him, punch maybe half an inch of the blade in his right eye, flicking the handle up, instantly popping the retina ... I yank his pants down and in the passing headlights of a taxi can make out his flabby black tights, rushed because of his constantly urinating in the pantsuit. Muscle above his cheeks (Ellis ,57).

Through this quotation we can make out that Patrick does not only kill the man; however, he destroys his body. This scene serves as a perfect beginning of the horrific utmost killing actions of Patrick. According to Javier Martin Parraga has stated in his fruitful book describing the act of killing, and the paranoid activities of Bateman, surprising that a person like Bateman, who is able to rape disembowel, and even cook and eat parts of his victims’ bodies, feels such anxiety because he wants to share few hours with his brother at a chic restaurant. At the end of his book, the writer Javier Martin P.rraga, asserts by saying these perfect, golden lines about the novel of *American Psycho*:

While American psycho opens with the warning “ABONDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE “, it closes with “THIS IS NOT AN EXIT “leaving both Bateman and the reader in a state



of confusion and possessed by an uncanny feeling. After all this is a novel about fear, paranoia, and by the impossibility of knowing anything for real. In this sense, the book is not only reminiscent of *Palahniuk's Fight Club* (1996) but also Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (Parraga 67)

To conclude, from a psychoanalytical view, paranoia plays a very important role in shifting the identity of Bateman. Thus, he becomes a totally different person when it comes to killing and torturing people, so he is a real psychopathic character and is absolutely driven by paranoia, gluttony, and fascination. Patrick is a serial killer for the way in which he tortures woman, and sexually abused them, he shows his extremely paranoid disorder, in addition to an extreme misogyny, that means hatred, and abjection against women through killing, as well as maintaining violent acts on them. To sum up this paranoia has influenced Bateman to the point, he killed his victims, and then he cooked their bodies and eats them. The most mundane places Bateman visits and the things he does seem to be subtly contaminated by a strain of fear, paranoia, and uncertain horror. Thus Freud's concept of *unheimliche* (the uncanny) is much invoked and explores the state of Bateman

### **Chapter Three: Materialism and Abjection in *American Psycho***

This chapter is entitled the exploration of materialism, and Abjection in *American Psycho*, the first section is entitled: The inclusion of madness of materialism in the novel; which will discuss madness of materialism in the novel, and exploring how this madness of materialism has affected Patrick and contributes in his shifting identity. Moreover the second section will emphasize the idea of Abjection as a vicious effect of paranoia which leads to an alteration in identity of the protagonist.

### III.1. What is Materialism

Usually when we hear the term materialism, the first thing that comes to our mind is the desire for possession. Thus, according to Oxford Dictionary materialism is described as considering material and physical desire as more important than spiritual values. Also, according to Britannica dictionary, in an article written by John Jamieson Carswell Smart entitled "Materialism in Philosophy", he defines materialism as follows: “**Materialism**, also called **physicalism**, in philosophy, the view that all facts (including facts about the human mind and will and the course of human history) are causally dependent upon physical processes, or even reducible to them (Carswell 1) .

Dictionary of social science (2002:299) defines “materialism is the philosophical position that states everything is material or a state of matter”. In addition, Damono (2003:27) said that money is a magic power which controls human and creates the essential social status (qtd. In Fahrizal 2). In addition, Miller (1984:144) states “More generally, what this means is that everything in the universe –from subatomic particles, to tables, chairs, dogs, and cats, to thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and ideas-everything is reducible to matter which it’s, to physical states, to a position in space and time, to what can be quantified (qtd.in Fahrizal 3 ).

In the novel *American Psycho*, materialism is well-thought-out as foremost theme which looks amongst almost all the characters. Patrick Bateman and his circle of wealthy

friends are always showing the sense of caring a lot about a material possession. They were juxtaposed by a madness of materialism, and hence, keeping care about their cloths, shirts, shoes, suits, haircuts, glasses, and mainly their business cards. According to Fahrizal, in her study entitled “The Influence of Materialism on the Main Characters in Ellis’ American Psycho” she holds the view that:

American Psycho comes as a novel with a Materialism theme inside of it. American Psycho is a novel that makes a statement about modern society. Patrick Bateman is a rich kid who works on Wall Street. Bateman spends his mornings at the gym and his nights clubbing with his friends. Everyone believes Bateman is a nice guy, the shy boy next door. What his friends do not know is that Bateman is a sociopathic killer who has confessed to his crimes repeatedly.. (Fahrizal 4)

Patrick starts the novel by describing his apartment, it was very clean, well furnished, and he also labeled his material products including: his shampoos, lotions, creams, even his music collection, and favorite movies. Through his description we can realize that he was obsessed by the material desire, he thinks that he is an asset, in other words he thinks that he is a blessing, and a treasured. In the following passage he stated: “I’m resourceful,” Price is saying. «I’m creative; I’m young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, and highly skilled. In essence what I’m saying is that society *cannot* afford to lose me. I’m an *asset* (Ellis 4).

Through these lines one can notice that Patrick is a real superficial, materialistic, and narcissistic. In the business cards is written (vice president), all the male characters in *American psycho* are vice presidents of the same secure , dress the same and even have the same haircut . The circle of Patrick and his prosperous friends all appear and act as they

were very important , nonetheless at the same time , not a single one of them stands out from the rest .They even confuse one for another all the time like they were all consumable . They being absolutely drowned and worried about their futile and their lavish lifestyle. These money-oriented friends, all the time showing off with their business cards which demonstrate the insanity of the folks when Patrick sees Paul Owen’s card assumed: « Look at that subtle off white coloring, the tasteful thickness of it. Oh my god; it even has a watermark » (Ellis 477). Fahrizal in her thesis “The Influence of Materialism on the Main Characters in Ellis’ *American Psycho*” has cited,

In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman and his group of extremely wealthy Wall Street coworkers live lives of utter excess, purchasing nothing but the finest things, wearing only the finest clothes, eating at only the chicest restaurants, and looking down on any who fall short of their standard. These characters are exaggerated stereotypes of the 1980s Wall Street “yuppie” class that Ellis means to critique – often to the point of satire – in his novel.. (Fahrizal 32)

Patrick Bateman is absorbed in a world of appearance, lavish lifestyle and materialism. Violence, rape, murder, abuse, and dismemberment of women become his shelter to escape his echoing life. This passage enhances this idea, when Patrick assumed:

My conscience, my pity, my hopes disappeared a long time ago if they ever did exist. There are no more barriers to cross. All I have in common with the uncontrollable and the insane, the vicious and the evil, all the mayhem I have caused and my utter indifference toward it, I have now surpassed. I still, though, hold on to one single bleak truth: no one is safe,

nothing is redeemed. Yet I am blameless.. This confession  
has meant nothing.... (Ellis 377 -78).

According to these passage , we can notice that Patrick confesses to himself saying that he wants his pain to be imposed on others , he is also aware that his morality , optimisms , and disappointment are lost . He is lost in a world of non-sense attitudes, and paranoid thinking.

### **III.2 .The Portrayal of Materialism in Patrick Bateman**

The madness of materialism in the novel is well demonstrated through the prominence of superficiality and obsession in the main characters, mainly through the protagonist of the novel Patrick Bateman who was really obsessed by material desire. Patrick symbolizes such epitomes in his fascination of external appearances, he is just found of high quality suits, modern glasses, and lavish lifestyle such as, trending at wealthy restaurants like Dorssia which stands as a symbol of materialism in the novel; he even cares a lot about his remodeling and beautification. In this passage one can notice that Patrick is a real materialist , he is freaking with material accoutrement, to the point he uses lot of products to protect his face , and shows to people that he is different , unique ,and irreplaceable as he stated ,

...It also helps prevent water from evaporating and reduces friction between your skin and the blade. Always wet the razor with warm water before shaving and shave in the direction the beard grows, pressing gently on the skin. Leave the sideburns and chin for last, since these whiskers are tougher and need more time to soften. Rinse the razor and shake off any excess water before starting. Afterwards I splash cool water on the face to remove any trace of lather.

You should use an aftershave lotion with little or no alcohol..

(Ellis 16)

Through these lines, we confirmed that Patrick is a greedy, shallow, and self-absorbed person. His description of every product is incredible, he cares a lot about his appearance; Bateman worships greed, and he is mad with material need which destroys his personality, as well as loses his identity. This superficiality is driven by paranoia, and leads him to kill people whom he thinks, they are devoid, empty, and have no importance in this society; he also thinks that they are hopeless, their presence threaten the society. Fahrizal in her work enriches this idea; she holds the view that, Patrick Bateman kills people who he believes are lacking of value. The first Murders the reader notices through Bateman's description is the murder of a homeless man named Al and his dog. Bateman spots him sitting on the sidewalk and stops to insult him, calling him insignificant and disgusting and requesting why he doesn't simply "get a job" (Fahrizal 33).

Bateman and his circle of trendy friends wear very expensive clothes, with a high quality tissue; they almost wear the same suits of the same marks like, Armani, and Valention. Susan Bennis Warren Edwards, Polo, Jill Sander, Gucci, Krizia, d'Orsay, etc. Bateman and his partners also wear Oliver Peoples glasses. The main aim behind this appearance is to recover, and to improve his masculinity, he just wants to show that he is unique, and different. But instead it is just a feature of femininity, because that focus does not demonstrate any sense of masculinity (Fahrizal 35). Mauriello Mark has cited in "*American Psycho* Themes: Materialism and Consumption":

In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman and his band of incredibly wealthy Wall Street colleagues live lives of utter excess, purchasing nothing but the finest things, wearing only the finest clothes, eating at only the chicest restaurants, and

looking down on any who fall short of their standard. These characters are exaggerated stereotypes of the 1980s Wall Street “yuppie” class that Ellis means to critique – often to the point of satire – in his novel. (Mauriello, Mark. *"American Psycho Themes: Materialism and Consumption"*).

The lines above indicate that Patrick, and his wealthy friends are mad with superficiality, and materialistic values, they only care about their lavish lifestyle, and luxurious life full of greed, fascination, and paranoia.

### **III.1.3. Effects of Materialism in *American Psycho***

Patrick Bateman is shown as a sociopathic serial killer. In the novel, Bateman confesses about committing violent performances. Bateman was a materialistic person to the point he wants to ascertain to people that he is an ideal individual, and he is successful more than his friends. He tends to kill Paul Owen because of his business card which was luxurious, and has a water mark. All the fantasies acts he committed, besides his murder, torturing, and dismemberment of women is because of his paranoia which altered him to a sociopathic serial killer, as well as his eager to material desire. Another aspect which demonstrates that Bateman is really obsessed by materialism; is possessiveness he wants to take everything to himself, possessiveness of Patrick leads him to feel positively about touchable and intangible targets of ownership. In one scene Batman stated,

### **III. 2. Abjection in *American Psycho***

Patrick Bateman throughout the novel of *American Psycho* shows a great deal of abjection. The first thing that we think of when we heard the term Abjection is abasement; however according to experts like Cristina Ghitha in her work entitled “Abjection and pastiche in American Psycho” she cited that, Julia Kristeva’s work *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* deals with the concept of *abjection*, which she defines as

neither object nor subject, but instead that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (qtd in .Githa 23).

The concept of abjection is mainly seen through the paranoid behaviors of batman, especially, his torturing, abusing, murder, and sexual mutilation of woman. Also abjection exists as a spiteful result of paranoia. Because of his paranoid delusional disorders, Patrick sees that all people are devoid, deserved to be killed and tortured in an incredible, horrible manner. Paranoia contributes and plays an eminent role in changing the identity of Patrick Bateman, from one hand; he became a sociopathic serial killer, worships a material possession and he just wants to gain reputation among his friends as the greatest American self-made man because of his fascination. On the other hand, paranoia transformed Bateman to an absolutely abject person who rejects, and denies poor people, specifically those who do not have money. Bateman as a killer of men and women alike, women's bodies in particular are on sexual display, subjected to a degree of degradation and torture that is unique to them (Diana 1). Diana holds the view in her article entitled "The Abject and *American Psycho*",

Bateman seeks validation that he is the ultimate embodiment of success, which is related to his material rewards, including the fantasy that he is able to possess women, and literally discard those he deems worthless. He relates to his world as abject, telling one victim that he simply doesn't relate to him before brutally killing him. Shots of Bateman are frequently followed by or connected to those of towering buildings in which he does business. (Diana "The Abject and American Psycho")



The lines above indicate that *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis, has displays a classic elements of the abject, mainly through the dismemberment of women, and the representation of female bodies. Bateman has shown a great picture of abject especially through deriving pleasure via maintaining violence, and sexual abasement on woman. Cristina Githa in” Abjection and pastiche in American psycho” have stated that abjection in the novel is seen through the paranoid acts of Batman, and through the gruesome episodes of killing and torturing women:

*American Psycho* has a history of being a controversial novel mainly because of its graphic content. Gruesome scenes where Bateman derives pleasure from torturing and killing women are presented in gory details throughout the novel and build the main critique against the novel: that its violent content is excessive. (Githa 24)

In one scene when the secretary Jean discovered that Bateman draws his fantasies in an agenda. The images she noticed relates closely to abjection in horror as Diana assumed in her work *The Abject and American psycho*:

Some of the most powerful moments of horror include focused shots of female faces that wither in fear, fascination or disgust with the character of Bateman. In one important scene, Jean, Bateman’s secretary is shot from below, her face changing from fearful curiosity as she pours over his date book to profound shock, horror and misery. (Diana 1).

Through these lines we can comprehend that abjection is shown through the gruesome fantasies that Patrick practiced on the women, murdering, and torturing, in addition to cutting their bodies into small pieces. As we have mentioned early in previous

chapters, the novel of *American psycho* has a great influence in contemporary studies, mainly because of its graphic contents, as well as gruesome episodes when Patrick derives pleasure from murdering, and mistreating women which are portrayed in gruesome details. We can therefore grasp that, even before becoming violent, Bateman shows psychological responses when opposed with the fact that he is not the most superior person in a room at any given time. He became a totally different person, or simply to a serial killer when he noticed that others are more fashionable than him, or have money, in other words when he realized that he is not a superior one.

His pursuit to be the good man, the well dressed, the well-spoken, and the perfect looking man; all these aspects endangered, and trigger fierce reactions that lead to graphically portrayed tortures and killings; Paul Owen was killed because of his business card, and is a person who is in charge of the Fisher account, that is to say , one of the most luxurious , and impressive monetary accounts, despite the fact that it is extremely uncommon for only vice presidents ; however, Paul Owen achieved to have one , so Patrick decide to slay him , and get rid of his body .Christine was killed because, at night she tries to run away from Bateman, so he kills her with a chainsaw. The society around Bateman is menaced by the paranoid status, and psychopathic character of Patrick as kristeva called it the symptoms of phobic adults (Githa 26). Phobic adult's symptoms could be seen through paranoid behavior of Bateman such, killing with a horrible manner, and cutting bodies. Mistreating women, and mutilating their bodies. Thinking that he is the most, super model, extreme wealthy character, and no one can be compared with him . the society is threatening Bateman identity; it removed his personality from a normal to a psychopathic and sociopathic killer as Githa argues,

The idea that the society is threatening Bateman's identity has also been brought into discussion by Matula, who states that "it

may be argued that Bateman's acts of violence stem largely from his need to fulfill ambitions the realization of which has been thwarted society— ambitions such as the freedom to decide and any kind of creative expression . (qtd.in Githa 26)

Through this lines , we understand that Bateman's violent , and abject acts are derived from his desire, to achieve ambitions ;the realization of this ambitions have Been frustrated , and menace the society around him . Bateman shows an extreme abjection, paranoia, and great misogyny or the hatred of women to the point he wants to drink female's blood as if it is champagne. In fact, Bateman does not represents himself as a mentally unstable through his paranoid ,and abject acts only , but also when he communicates his thoughts to the readers . protagonist Patrick Bateman shows a great deal of instability in his mind, to the point he hears outside voices in his mind because of paranoia which made him as a foolish person who does not care about the consequences He just need to satisfy his self-actualization via murdering, torturing, in addition to subjecting women bodies.

Abjection is realized among the malicious effects that are caused on account of paranoia, Patrick tends to abject women, and other poor people because, he has an idea in his mind that poor people are without, and need to be killed because they are empty without any value, as well as women, we can notice this idea through his obsessed, violent, abject activities. This psychiatric phenomenon has prejudiced Patrick, and it caused him many cruel diseases such as: materialism, abjection, violence, and backs in his ever-changing, as well as destroyed identity to become an utterly different person. The only things Bateman admires is possession, reputation, perfection, and eminence. He trusts only material, and psychopathic values as he assumed:

I had all the characteristics of human being flesh , blood , skin , hair but my depersonalization was no intense , had gone so deep , that my normal ability to feel compassion had been eradicated , the victim of slow , purposeful erasure . I was simply imitating reality, a rough resemblance of human being, with only a deem corner of my mind functioning (Ellis 377).

Bateman through this passage describes himself as having all the characteristics of human being, but he is not a normal person because of greediness, hunger, and eager to blood. To conclude, through this eminent chapter we have gain fruitful information about how materialism influences Patrick character, and how it donates in his instable identity, besides extinguishing his personality. In addition abjection functions as a sign for Patrick's paranoid behaviors, and activities such, murdering, afflicting, abusing, and dissecting women.

## Conclusion

Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* is considered as one of the most important works in postmodern literature. It tackles the horrific adventures of Patrick Bateman as an investment banker in New York who is an American man practiced his luxurious life in an ordinary manner, and he narrates his activities as if he is writing a journal ; besides , this novel talks about the dark side of Bateman personality as a paranoid character full of greed , and thirsty to blood .This research examines the starring role of paranoia in flowing the identity of Patrick from an usual guy to an entirely suspicious personality , and a sequential murderer . This study also demonstrates the idea of materialism, and abjection that works as spiteful effects of paranoia, and showing their role in changing Bateman's identity loss, and destroyed personality.

As a conclusion, the first chapter Theoretical Reading of Paranoia and postmodernism gives a clear definition of what is postmodern literature, and its characteristics, in addition to discussing *American psycho* as a postmodern master piece, as well as discussing Bret Easton Ellis as one of the most controversial postmodern writer. Furthermore , this chapter investigates the issue of paranoia , and demonstrates the psychological theories of this psychiatric phenomenon , its causes , symptoms , and how these abnormal comporments are portrayed in Patrick's utmost acts , and behaviors .

The second chapter in that study is entitled The Exploration of Paranoia in *American Psycho* , it deals with significance of paranoia in the novel , and discuss the concepts of Fear , and Trauma as vicious effects of paranoia , as well as this chapter shows the impact of paranoia in shifting Bateman's identity . The second chapter discussed many important aspects such fear, and trauma that stand as a mirror which echoes Patrick's paranoia .the chapter indicates the role of paranoia in producing various effects frightening

Patrick identity .Then we have discover the impact of paranoia on Patrick ,as a result , we can consider paranoia as the root , and the main cause of Patrick's shift in identity ; from a an ideal , typical man to an utterly disturbed person , thich with obsession , greediness , and depression .

The third chapter materialism and abjection in *American psycho*, focuses on the concepts of materialism, abjection and how they function in changing Patrick identity, and contribute in destroying his personality from a self-made man, to misogynic, distrustful person who adores the horrific acts. This chapter has gone through determining many aspects , and exploring many results , first , materialism served as an effect caused by paranoia , leads Bateman to became as a totally mad with a material values , he does not care about anything except of being fashionable , wearing high quality suits , having stylish haircuts , without forgetting possessing the most luxurious , financial business card . Materialism also has affected Bateman character, to the point he kills his friend because of his business card .Abjection is another cruel effect caused by paranoia which leads Patrick to maintain the most horrific acts, and subjected women bodies.

This study, that is entitled « Paranoia in *American Psycho* (1991) » has a key role in giving a strong impression about Bret Easton Ellis's use of the Paranoia in his novel of *American Psycho*.This eminent study examines the role of psychiatric phenomenon paranoia in flowing Bateman identity based on a psychoanalytical approach . The term of paranoia has been used by many writers in postmodern era, it becomes as a major theme in their works because it portrays their states of fear, despair, and suspicion. Bret Easton Ellis uses paranoia in his work to affect the reader, and makes them love the character because of his fantasies, and incredible utmost paranoid, direful activities .Patrick is now measured as one of the most shocking protagonists. Other concepts which are discussed in that study

are materialism, and abjection that stand as malicious properties of paranoia, as well as contributes in transforming Patrick identity.

This study is valuable for the future studies and literature in general because it stretches the right meaning of Paranoia in *American psycho*, it brands future academics to comprehend it more and take a pure knowledge about its implication. Furthermore, in a future works, this study can aid the researcher in discovering the lacks and the mistakes in other people's investigation. In addition, scholars can take this study as an orientation to precise those errors, and get accurate information for their future research. It will be also considered as a significant study which explores the impact of paranoia on Patrick and how it shift his identity, as well as discovering the role of paranoia in causing many dangerous effects on Patrick ,and his friends such as , abjection, and materialism.

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