A Journey into the Realm of Human Destructiveness in Bret Easton Ellis’s American Psycho

Ahlem CHAIB, Yamina GHaleb
URI: http://dspace.univ-msila.dz:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/7015
Date: 2017-06

Résumé:
This dissertation explores the complexity of human’s psyche and its destructiveness in Bret Easton Ellis's novel American Psycho. The selected novel, which belongs to the serial killer genre, offers the reader an opportunity to enter into the world of psychopathic serial killers through the novel's anti-hero Patrick Bateman; the echo of human destructiveness. The novel reveals numerous realistic facts about American society and culture at the end of the twentieth century which were characterized by the collapse of ethics and values. The novelist aims at criticizing the consumerist culture that resulted in people's preoccupation with superficial matters, loss of identity, and the decay of ethics. Eventually, such conditions drove them to deviant behaviors such as violent crimes. Hence, in addition to the twisted nature of human psyche, we can argue that this kind of culture paved the way for the emergence of the remorseless serial killer Patrick Bateman. The novel of American Psycho is studied both thematically and stylistically. Indeed, literature is one of the best means to deepen our understanding of human psyche and cultures and that takes us beyond our limited personal experiences. Therefore, due to the fact that literary works cannot be fully appreciated without reference to their historical contexts, the first chapter of this study is devoted to the sociohistorical context that frames Ellis’s selected novel. This chapter demonstrates that several facts about the author’s life experiences and the American yuppies have oriented his literary production. Besides, the thematic study is presented in the second chapter of this dissertation; it is split up into two main sections to emphasize that human beings are complex creatures with good and bad aspects; however, when societies encourage the bad aspects, they can be turned into evil monsters. Last, the third chapter captures the complex architecture of violence and brutality that were presented in a narrative production.
Patrick Bateman, the psychopathically unreliable narrator of Bret Easton Ellis’s American Psycho, exists in the banal hollow of popular culture, specifically the height of the Reagan-era, Wall Street, me generation in which everything revolved around money and image; as such, Bateman is an idea and an image, but empty and void of deep identity. As a walking billboard for elite, conspicuous consumption and high-end product placement, he lacks inner resources and glosses over an emotionally sterile existence. An argument with his fiancée poses the same degree of bemused consternation for him. American Psycho begins with the words at the entrance to Dante’s Hell, “scrawled in blood red lettering on the side of the Chemical Bank near the corner of Eleventh and First”. Bateman is the damned creature of a satirist’s place of perdition. He tells us so himself. “My life is a living hell,” I mention off the cuff, while casually moving leeks around on my plate, which by the way is a porcelain triangle.” John Mullan is professor of English at University College London. Join him and Bret Easton Ellis for a discussion at 7pm on 14 July at Hall One, Kin...