

**Tribhuvan University**

**Postmodern Condition in J. G. Ballard's *Crash* and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*: A Study in Psychological Effects**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University,  
Kirtipur, Kathmandu for Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Philosophy in English**

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## Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Postmodern Condition in J. G. Ballard’s *Crash* and Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho: A Study in Psychological Effects*”, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Manorath Bhetwal, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Manorath Bhetwal has completed his thesis entitled “Postmodern Condition in J. G. Ballard’s *Crash* and Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho: A Study in Psychological Effects*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2013-03-23 (A.D) to 2015-06-6 (A.D). I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Prof. Dr. Birendra Pandey  
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## Abstract

This thesis aims at exposing the harsh and harrowing effects of postmodern condition. The harsh psychological effect of postmodern condition is examined in relation to Ballard's *Crash* and Ellis's *American Psycho*. In *Crash* the protagonist Vaughan has fallen into the habit of going to the extreme. This habit ruins him irreparably. He does what he does in excess. This is the root cause of his downfall. Any idea of clinging to the normal, the normative and the moderate is nauseous to him. Vaughan does not see the boundary between the normal and the non-normal. To live a life driven by discipline, virtue and ethical concern is to ruin life. This is the conviction of Vaughan. He is on the lookout for the exploration of new sexuality. This search makes him a unique victim. Vaughan hardly conceives sexuality devoid of violence. Due to his extreme immersion in the doctrine of postmodernism, he is prone to seeking sexuality in relation to violence. Sodomy, homosexuality, masturbatory practice and various other peripheral sexualities can be found in Vaughan's search for new sexuality which ultimately puts his life to a disastrous end. In Ellis's *American Psycho*, the major character Bateman is so handicapped by the tough competition on Wall Street that he begins to simulate that sort of personality which he is incapable of cultivating. Extreme dissatisfaction and inherent inability compel him to dissimulate his innermost foibles and shortcomings. Inwardly he is trapped in the rigid confines of life on Wall Street. To come out of his arid mercantile life, he concocts violent fantasies. Pushed by violent urge to come out of arid materialistic life of Wall Street, he engages in serial killings. Involvement in the serial acts of murder helps him to establish contact with the real world. Ballard meets his disastrous end due to his movement towards extremity and excess. Bateman collapses gradually into schizophrenic disorder and monstrosity. In this way, it can be said that both *American Psycho* and *Crash* foreground the psychological effects of postmodern condition.

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## Chapter I

### Reflection on Postmodern Ethos in J. G. Ballard's *Crash* and Ellis's *American Psycho*

The two novels, *Crash* by Ballard and *American Psycho* by Ellis, explore the psychological effects of postmodern condition. In these two novels the researcher traces the path in which the psychological effects of postmodern condition pervade. Patrick Bateman, the main character of *American Psycho*, develops obsessive bent of mind. The researcher probes into his choices, privileges and murderous activities and their relation to the context of consumer culture and postmodernism. Similarly, the researcher explores several aspects of Vaughan's extreme fondness for scars, bruises, deformities and car crash.

The causes of these two characters' psychic deviations and disintegration are traced within the postmodern context. Vaughan's extreme love for car crash and panic sex are the area which is analytically examined. In the same way, the researcher contextualizes Patrick Bateman's serial killings in the complex relation-numbing life of late capitalist consumer culture and postmodern notion of the loss of the real. The dual pressures exerted by the late capitalist enterprise and consumer culture lead to the degeneration and decadence of Bateman's psychic integrity.

In the same and similar spirit, Vaughan, the main character in *Crash*, puts himself on the quest for alternative sexuality. His search for new sexuality is unconfined by the discursive constraints of sexual fetishism. His unbounded attraction towards crash, scars, bruises and deformities are to be considered as the effects of Vaughan's painful dependence upon technology. By cultivating extreme attraction towards scars, bruises and disastrous events, Vaughan is actually resisting

the pressures imposed on him by pervasive impact of rapid technological advancement and innovation

Judged from the normative viewpoint, both Vaughan and Patrick Bateman are the victims of their unrestrained involvement in the postmodern spree and sporadic cult of imbibing the ethos and spirit of late capitalist consumer culture. The choices of Vaughan and catastrophic deeds of Bateman are the outcomes of their full-fledged exploitation of the trend to go to the excess, waste and disaccumulation. All the normative values fall apart. They have no option other than displaying the pathological symptom of nihilism. They appear to be pathological and nihilistic. Their choices and deeds sporadically run counter to the established normative ideals of the society.

The researcher makes use of the theoretical ideas and insights of leading postmodern theorists. Arthur Kroke and David Kroke propound the notion of panic culture. The concepts like panic sex, panic body and excremental culture are useful while probing the fearful and morbid disposition of both Vaughan and Bateman. David Kroke argues that technological society has set an avenue from which the great mythological primitivism can come out revealing the potentiality of men to experience unspeakable anarchy and terror as well as cruelty.

Baudrillard's concept of simulation is another tool which helps the researcher to proceed ahead in the research. To simulate is to feign what one does not have. The more a person simulates, the more he faces the danger of missing the difference between the real and the imaginary. Due to the postmodern cult of simulating double identity in excess, both Vaughan and Bateman fall victims to the detrimental effects like narcissism, obsession, masochistic and sadistic mentality etc. Lyotard's ideas,



which are expressed in the book *The Postmodern Condition*, are also useful in studying the root causes of the psychic disintegration of both Vaughan and Bateman.

Bateman falls prey to the ongoing process of commodity fetishism. His subjectivity is commodified in the business world of Wall Street. The consumer culture and the commodification of subjectivity put extreme pressures in Bateman. He is, as a consequence, lost between privilege and choice. The more he immerses in the professional world of Wall Street, the more mundane and monotonous he feels. He wants to escape from the numbing experiences of business house and corporate culture. But he is so forced to compete with his colleagues in the corporate hubs that he cannot come out as easily as he assumes. Finally he cherishes violent fantasies like electrocuting his friends, murdering his colleagues and other children. These fantasies are actually the means sought unconsciously by Bateman to come out of the arid and estranged world of Wall Street.

Bateman is exclusively concerned with outfit. While judging people, he directly looks at the outfits of people. Nine times out of ten, he is preoccupied with the appearance and outfit. In the same way Vaughan, the main character in *Crash*, also develops the same level of obsessive proclivity towards the ugly things or disastrous things. He intentionally seeks to cause car crash so that his libidinal conscience makes a sporadic outburst. He has to look at the photo of an actress Elizabeth Taylor in order that he could reach the orgasm while doing sex with his female partner. His sexuality is unbounded by any fixed domain of sexuality.

Homosexual interest, masturbatory practice and deviant passion have governed Vaughan's life. He is involved in the mission of seeking alternative, new sexuality in relation to the technology. The body dominated by technology and technological innovation needs different locus of sexual affinity. There is no

predictable way in which Vaughan's deviant sexuality can unfold. It is utterly unpredictable. What is deviant and decadent for the readers is quiet acceptable to him. It is transparently livid that Vaughan's world is utterly dominated by the norms and values which run counter to the existing normative values and protocol.

Patrick's job in the Wall Street enables him to buy many costly cosmetics. He tends to look glamorous and smart to the extent of extremity. The big problem of Patrick is that he is monotonous. His drab and dreary life has become the big hindrance. He is so mundane and monotonous that he could not help constructing violent fantasies in his minds. At the deepest core of his mind violent fantasies arise. He simply cherishes those fantasies. When these fantasies crossed the limit, he began to embark on the sporadic spree of murdering his close friends.

The trend to immerse in the violent fantasies weakens his mental strength. Bateman develops the morbid habit to develop close acquaintance with his friends and then he brings them to his apartment. In his apartment he kills them mercilessly. By performing serial killings, he wants to come out of the prison of his mundane and monotonous life. Extreme obsession and morbid longing to reach the extreme puts Bateman on the way to becoming a serial killer. Bateman's massive success in the corporate houses opens multiple possibilities. He is trained to reach the extreme possibility of each and every option and possibility.

Bateman wants to be the exclusive and extraordinary holder of business card. In the business world of Wall Street, he wants to be the only one holder of business card. He takes an overwhelming and overweening sense of pride and arrogance in holding a business card. This sort of overweening pride is punctured when he comes to know that there are other holders of business cards also. He feels devastated at knowing that there are other holders of business cards other than him. Bateman's

mentality is destabilized by his chronic habit to take overweening and violent sense of pride at petty things. His narcissism with the glamour of corporate world, his obsessive hankering after the outfit and appearance and his resort to deadly fantasies to come out of the mundane life collectively lead to the degradation of his mental integrity, sanity, and normalcy.

Bateman applies one level of his experience and understanding in the judgment of other people and things belonging to the other spheres. He disdains prostitutes. With the same disdainful attitude, he looks at his friends. Why he disdains his friends is difficult to know. There is a big gap between what Bateman thinks and how he seems to other people. The more this gap widens the more Bateman suffers.

Bateman is a deranged and sick psychopath. He constantly tells his friends that he is a psychopathic murderer. But his friends are so wrapped up in themselves that they hardly hear. The pressures of Wall Street corporate hustle and bustle put him under a serious condition. Neither can he avoid the corporate world of Wall Street nor can he enter into the ordinary world governed by normative values and ethical humanism. Bateman is a repulsive hater of mankind. Disagreement, disliking, misunderstanding, envy and day to day responses are taken by Bateman very seriously. He has to respond to these things in an extreme and retaliatory way. The psychic frame of his mind tends to push him to direction of dread and danger.

The ungoverned passion for corporate glamour and proclivity to rupture the normal and the normative bring Patrick Bateman in the undeterred way of cruelty and inhumanity. He has murdered men and women summarily to establish contact with the day to day world of common people. Violent deeds committed sequentially are supposed by Bateman as the way to get connected to the ordinary world. He appears to

be the serial killer. He hardly remains silent about his murderous deeds. He frequently talks about butchering five men, six women, a child and various animals.

There are some of the factors that are liable to the emotional damage of Patrick Bateman. The hectic and egoistic life in Wall Street is one of the causes of his emotional degradation. The degeneration of Bateman to the fathomless nightmare is caused by the numbing business activities. The domination of human conscience by the technocracy is another cause. The lack of postmodern trend to erase the boundary between the normal and the abnormal is another cause. There are lots of causes that are accountable for the disintegration of Bateman's mind and his tragic fall.

Bateman is formidably sadistic. His sadistic impulse is beyond the compass of human imagination. By no stretch of imagination, readers can imagine the boundlessness of his cruelty, and repulsive temperament. Murders, electrocution and mutilation have become ritual for him. Sadism is the strong mode of action whereby Bateman wants to respond to the crippling and benumbing world of Wall Street. The extreme valorization of success in business and the cult of the extreme including reckless disdain of the normative norms are all responsible to the sharp fall of Bateman from the Wall Street glamour to the bottomless nightmare of serial killing.

In J. G. Ballard's *Crash* consequences of the postmodern fascination with the grotesque, macabre and deformed elements have gained an upper hand. In the wake of the era of postmodernism, the symmetrical and well-wrought object hardly evokes an aesthetical impact. Even if the well-shaped and well-ordered thing carries aesthetical hallmark, it hardly has significance. In J. G. Ballard's novel, *Crash* a character named Vaughan has developed a startling degree of fascination with the formless, grotesque, and deformed objects. His fascination with the extreme sexual option is traceable to the horrendous effects of postmodern condition.

Vaughan can't reach the peak of sexual excitement if he does sex in the usual condition. He has to do sex inside car to reach the level of orgasm. In the moment of car crash he feels comfortable enough to get aroused to the level of orgasm. He carries the photo of the actress Elizabeth Taylor wherever he goes. By looking at her photo, he creates the situation in which cars crash. On the moment of car crash he wants to experience the unique aspects of human sexuality. For Vaughan, not only the erotic zone but other non-erotic zone is also sexually discharged. It is a matter of surprise how and why Vaughan happens to develop unique sense of attraction towards the grotesque.

Beautiful face, smooth appearance, symmetrical form and shapely body of the opposite sex don't tempt Vaughan. Vaughan is simply averse to these things. Wherever there is smooth sense of beauty, form and symmetry, Vaughan feels loath to feel attached to it. On the contrary, he is simply besotted to the glamour of the ugly and the deformed. He detects beauty in ugliness, order in the disorder, elegance in anarchy and gait in grotesque.

Vaughan's deviant taste has problematized the standard of the traditional taste. His taste for the grotesque and gaucherie runs counter to the standard of existing normative conception. Upon the surface reflection, it appears that Vaughan's obsessive and morbid passion for the damage, destruction and grotesque is far removed from the reality of normal aesthetical experience. Vaughan's mode of seeking alternative sexuality is deviant. But what is deviant for the readers is acceptable to Vaughan.

Vaughan wants to cultivate a new kind of sexuality. He is on the quest for the cultivation of a new sexuality in the light of technology. In the world dominated and invaded by the spirit of science and technology, all the normal and traditional functioning of human emotions, organs and understanding have cast off their usual

roles. On the contrary, they have begun to adopt new roles and functions. In this context the loss and longing of Vaughan must be understood. Vaughan can't feel sexually erected until he sits in car and fantasizes about doing sex with a famous heroine in a car. In any place outside the car, he feels impotent. When he sits in his car and begins to visualize the moment of doing sex with the famous Hollywood actress of his time, he feels sexually virile and potent.

Vaughan's fascination with facial scars and bruises is the strong indication of the fact that postmodern love is the love for the grotesque. Instead of being enticed and enchanted by the tender and modest quality on the part of a girl, Vaughan feels deeply attracted by the deformed and deviant things.

To notice the elements of beauty and normalcy in deviant and deformed thing is the distinguishing feature of the postmodern mind. A profound question arises about Vaughan's growing attachment with the deformed and disordered form. If his love and longing for the deviant thing is to be viewed with the modernist bias, it turns out to be a kind of catastrophic condition of the postmodern mind. If the fresh perspective of post-modernity is to be used, all of the so-called malaises of Vaughan seem to be the effects of reality.

The postmodern condition is characterized with the loss of the real. The question of real does not arise in the spectrum of thinking dominated by tenets of post-modernity. The difference between the normal and abnormal ceases to exist. The real and the illusion simply evaporate. The distinction between the right and wrong has no relevance in the structure of thinking marked by postmodernism. When the distinction between the normal and the abnormal, ideal and the real, symmetrical and the grotesque no longer exists, the grotesque increasingly looms as the resemblance of the symmetrical and shapely.

Postmodernism does not bear grudge against any pattern of human experiences and activities. It hardly keeps any restraints against the life overpowered by the extreme and rash passion. Passion knows no bound. It tends to dominate the debacle of morality. Moral scruple and ethical grudge carry no conviction in postmodern practice. Even the distorted and deviant thing turns out to be fiercely fascinating. This is exactly what happens in *Crash*. Vaughan likes to hear the noises arising from the car accidents. This noise of disastrous accidents of cars brings both solace and anguish in the deepest corner of Vaughan's heart.

In J. G. Ballard's *Crash* the main character Vaughan is addicted to the habit of taking mischievous delight in deformed and ugly things. He looks at the photos of girls having ugly appearances smeared with bruises, scars and besmirches. Without looking at the deformed and shapeless things he hardly feels erected passionately. The normal, normative and standard thing hardly arouse him. He is in a quest of new sort of aesthetics and sexuality aroused by ugly and odd things in relation to technology. The postmodern loss of the real and the normal has completely paralyzed Vaughan. The grotesque, crash, accident, death and disastrous end are the motivating factors that gratify his postmodern longing for the deviant and disordered.

Vaughan takes morbid pleasure in the dead bodies of people chewed by vulture and mongrel dogs. The images of death, destruction and disaster electrify his mind to revel in the macabre and grotesque objects. In his deranged and deviant interest the impact of postmodern thinking is clearly noticeable. Death-wish is prominent in Vaughan. His sexuality has crossed the boundary of heterosexual normativity. In his fierce fondness for sexuality, the elements of autoeroticism, onanism, homosexuality and masochistic instinct are found explicitly. If Patrick Bateman is sadistic to the extent of unspeakable cruelty, Vaughan is masochistic in an

unimaginable way. Patrick Bateman's resort to serial killing and Vaughan's fascination for crash are both ways to relate themselves to the outer world that is totally governed by the numbing norms of technology and business.

In the world of technological innovation and business activities, the postmodern mentality has governed the basic strength of human beings. Ballard centers this novel on the sinister figure of Dr. Robert Vaughan, a former TV-scientist, turned nightmare angel of the expressways. Ballard meets Vaughan after being involved in a car accident himself near London Airport. Gathering around Vaughan is a group of alienated people, all of them former crash-victims, who follow him in his pursuit to re-enact the crashes of celebrities, and experience what the narrator calls "a new sexuality, born from a perverse technology" (35). Vaughan's ultimate fantasy is to die in a head-on collision with a movie star Elizabeth Taylor. The bruises, scars, deformities, injury, wound and agony ignite his sexuality. Technology carries within itself the imminent and inherent possibility of accident.

In relation with technology and accident, Vaughan feels sexually erected. He practices sodomy with the narrator of *Crash*. This deviant and dreadful sexual intercourse is divorced from feeling. Vaughan's quest for the fulfillment of sexuality is destabilized by his fervent passion for the aesthetics of the ugly and the grotesque. How can his quest for new sexuality be approved and justified by applying the existing standard of the heterosexual normativity and the normal pattern of healthy sexuality? Without getting through crash, disaster, accident and mechanical cataclysm, he cannot experience and enjoy sexuality. He needs the support of obsessive image of a film actress for the sporadic erection and arousal.

Sexual frenzy and passionate fanaticism seem in conformity with the aesthetics of the normal and the natural. Vaughan's quest for sexuality in relation with



technological innovation is abnormal and anomalous, since it does not match the criterion of the existing heterosexual normativity. His extreme fondness of ugliness, deformity and technological perversion offers unique glimpse of transformed sexuality in the age of postmodernism. The grotesque and macabre is capable of evoking unique postmodern aesthetic which, for example, gets crystallized in Ballard's *Crash*.

### **Literature Review:**

James Graham Ballard is a British writer famous for writing sci-fi. His best known books are *Crash*, and the autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun*, both of which have been adapted to film. The adjective Ballardian is defined as resembling or suggestive of the conditions described in J.G. Ballard's novels and stories. Especially dystopian modernity, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments have been taken as the hallmark of his writings. J.G. Ballard is the widely recognized writer of the late twentieth century Britain. In terms of the themes of his novels, he is the postmodernist par excellence. *Crash* is one of the widely popular works of J.G. Ballard. Ballard tends to explore the psychological effects of postmodern conditions. Despite thematic innovations, *Crash* is written in different style. Examining the historio-cultural circumstances in which *Crash* was written, Leigh Claire La Berge passes the following judgment concerning this novel:

*Crash* pushes the lifeless world of the brat-pack commodity aesthetic to its limit with rambling descriptions of branded commodities newly rendered in deadening prose and broken by the representation of lethal violence. The novel is structured through short, interchangeable chapters that detail the habits and banalities of upper-middle class,

urban consumerism, the contents of which are reflected in the titles, such as *Shopping, Lunch and At another New Restaurant*. (273)

Leigh Claire La Berge maintains that *Crash* incorporates some of the historical issues and elements which are hidden beneath the plethora of abstract postmodern thinking. It is less concerned with its abstract postmodern cult of going to the excess and heedlessness of normative values. It is increasingly related with the 1980s financial narratives in fiction, autobiography, and economic journalism. *Crash* renders legible the logic of 1980s financial writing through its inter-textual connections to other significant texts of the contemporary time. J.G. Ballard's *Crash* does have both the literal and symbolic implication. *Crash* means the crash in heart.

Another book under discussion here is Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* which has drawn the attention of a large number of critics. Different critics have given different sorts of views regarding the shocking content of this novel. Seltzer Schoene has made the following observations about the novel:

What is so shocking about Ellis's novel is not so much Patrick's attempt to inhabit the ultimate subject position of Death, or his warped interpretation of the Cartesian cogito as "I kill therefore I am" simply because these impulses, albeit psychotic, still remain within the realm of the relatable. The most shocking aspect of *American Psycho* is the superlative, entirely redundant vehemence of Patrick's violence, its boundless and unremitting atrocity. (45)

Through the organized and wholesale killing of his friends, women and children, Patrick wants to project his selfhood. Murder is a way of escape from the numbing pressures put on him by the stormy events that occur in the corporate hubs at Wall Street and the development in consumer culture. Judged from the normative criteria,

Patrick's serial killings seem to be the collapse of Patrick's sanity and mental integrity. But what he does seems to be compatible with what sorts of fantasies take room in his mind.

Juliet Flower traces the relationship between human being and machine. She does not think that Ballard is against the unrestrained use of machine in handling the discomforts and troubles of life. The following lines show her view regarding Ballard's

*Crash:*

J.G. Ballard was a gentle, courteous man with a soft southern English accent. Yet he had a vision of startling originality. His fiction, which explored our hidden obsessions with media, technologies, landscapes, gained him a solid international readership. Perhaps more than any other, Ballard drew attention to the new - often powerfully subversive - ways that mainstream cultures appear to be undermined by the very tools and innovations that sustain them. This ambiguity is one of the driving forces of the mythologies that emerged in his work. (78)

Ballard gained his reputation by treading new ground. While his early novels were located in or near climactic upheavals, even there the dominant landscapes are internal. He appeared more interested in dreams, myths, psychology, the personal and social constructions of reality, than in technology *per se*. In his universe such elements are all inextricably intertwined; fiction and reality are not separate.

Jennifer Philips is the controversial critic of Bret Easton Ellis. Jennifer Philips explores lots of incompatibilities in the novel *American Psycho*. She laments that Ellis does not deliver any kind of commentary on the serial killings of Patrick Bateman. Philips describes how Patrick happens to commit such dreadful acts of annihilation. Philips's views are presented in the following lines:

*American Psycho* is structured to be read on the explicit narrative level as the personal confession of the narrator Patrick Bateman, a young, attractive psychopath. The novel traces numerous acts of violence which are narrated in the same cool and detached tone in which Bateman catalogues the objects he owns and the designer labels his companions are wearing. What ties these random acts of violence together is the fact that all of Bateman's victims are "othered" by him either because of their financial status, their ethnic background, sexual preference, age or gender. (4)

Bateman is infuriated by the traces of anti-Semitism, other businessmen's show of business card, vanity of women and sexual preferences of his friends. Even the normal reaction and responses of his friends create uncontrollable and stormy feelings in Bateman. He is bent upon avenging them. He seeks to other them. The only way of 'othering' them is by murdering them mercilessly and summarily. This literal interpretation of the novel as the story of an unrepentant, unpunished and unexplained serial killer created a furor upon the novel's original publication. Many believed that the narrative simply catalogued Bateman's crimes without any commentary or critique from the author.

Richard Slaughter is the eminent critic of J. G. Ballard. He is of the opinion that Ballard's *Crash* is characterized by the theme of the loss of optimism. The catastrophic effects of postmodern conditions have invaded the orbit of human consciousness. He argues:

The last secrets of human consciousness may emerge from that kind of work. The emergence of a different consciousness is projected in *Crash*. There's no reason why not - after all the brain is a mass of

circuitry - there's no mystery about the units that make up the brain - it's a mass of neural networks. There's absolutely no reason why the operation of this complex system of neural networks shouldn't be understood in its entirety. Now I think this will lead to manipulation of the brain in any way - so that everything from transcendental experiences to the creation of sort of ad hoc religions will be possible. I mean you will be able to run up a new religion for yourself and be completely convinced by it at the press of a switch. (53)

The manipulation of molecular biology will uncover all that needs to be known about the genetic structures in the chromosome, allowing us to manipulate the human organism in any way we wish. If they come on stream (as they seem likely to), people are on the threshold of devising systems in which the computer-simulated reality will contain more units of information than is currently provided by the optical systems of the brain. Postmodernism has its own pros and cons. The negative effects of postmodern condition are to be corrected through plenty of useful measures. Even the degree of celebration of the anarchic condition has its own darker side. This is the fatal sin of postmodern condition.

Tarja Laine is an eminent postmodern critic. He examines every postmodern text in the light of characters' encounter with the panic attack. Panic body, panic mind, panic jealousy, panic sexuality and the panic sense of I are some of the chronic fates that have happened to the postmodernist characters. Laine puts Bateman in the same category. Laine discloses the following view concerning the hallucinatory identity of Patrick Bateman:

Patrick Bateman is constantly confronted with the possibility of his hallucinatory identity as every yuppie fading away. When his

colleagues seem to have more elegant and stylish visiting card than he has, he suffers a panic attack. His corporeal body is brought into asynchrony with its environment as it collapses under the fancy suit: we can see sweat drops appearing on his well-groomed skin and we can hear his heartbeat speeding up. In order to hold on to his hallucination, Bateman kills the ones--like his colleague Paul Allen--that present a threat to his hallucinatory identity. Yet his attempt to murder another colleague in real life fails, and this results in another threat to his serial killer identity. (5)

Bateman suffers from panic attack. He can't see other businessmen carrying business cards which are more stylish than his card. When he learns that other business agents have been carrying business cards that are smarter than his card, he comes under the fit of panic attack. He overreacts to the common moment and event in a more frightening way. Being a normal being he does not know how to react to the normal thing in a normal way. Panic body and panic attack are recurrent things that have happened to him. His identity is tainted with the hallucinatory elements. Hallucination is what affects him constantly.

Perhaps the most profound contradiction in his work relates to time. In flight from his memories for much of his life, he used his fiction to envision a moment in which the passage of time was stilled. According to John Baxter, it amounts to a kind of secular mysticism, only to conclude that Ballard deployed the psychopath's reverence for the instant present. John Baxter delivers the following remarks:

Yet what he was struggling to achieve in the several genres of fiction he deployed was a reconciliation between conflicting impulses that were not his alone. From the dream-haunted landscape of *The*

*Drowned World* to the deadpan surrealist comedy of *Hello America*, from the experimental novels to the thrillers of his later years, it was the universally human conflict between seeking to preserve meaning in memory and the need to shake off the burden of the past that Ballard explored. (27)

The works of Ballard, including *Crash* are summarized but not quoted, and it is clear that Baxter did not talk to Ballard's family, or to his partner, or to hardly anyone who met him in recent years. His own contact with his subject seems to have been tenuous and sporadic. Demystifying literary biography can be illuminating but what Baxter gives us is something quite different. It is like a fictitious ogre constructed from irrelevant facts, scraps of gossip and random inferences. Return to the universal appeal of human relationship is subtly hinted in the novel *Crash*.

Carroll Noel detects the elements of nothingness which underlies Bateman's violent hankering after the chilling sense of sadistic joy. At the cost of his usual identity, Bateman comes out on the lookout for a new kind of identity based on terror, nightmare and serial killing. Noel says that this sort of search led by Bateman is doomed to end in illusion. Noel throws spotlight on the following aspect of Bateman's search:

The image of Patrick Bateman is merely an imaginary double construction. While his character in the novel already symbolized the emptiness and the nothingness of yuppie identity, author brings Bateman's nothingness to yet another level. The chase scene, where Bateman runs aimlessly and in a hysterical state along the empty streets of New York, resembles a nightmare. It suggests that Bateman's double identity simulacrum is finally falling apart. Bateman entered a

movie in which he stars, and where he is able to attach meaning to his life as a movie killer, yuppie, and porn star, but now he cannot find his way back anymore, because there really is nothing beyond the movie.(9)

Bateman's acquired double appearances have irrevocably replaced the substance of his self--if it ever was there in the first place. Bateman's attempt to achieve an identity of a yuppie is thus no more than an illusion, a set-up, and an alter ego. *American Psycho* is a double portrait of a yuppie monster, but what this double portrait reflects is nothingness, and that is what is terrifying in the portrait. Indeed, it is self-evident from Bateman's voiceover.

Ted Gioia argues that this disturbing novel, *Crash*, is often classified as science fiction, though at first glance the label may seem unjustified. The most advanced technologies described in this book are cars and airplanes—and very conventional ones at that. Ted Gioia makes the following observation about *Crash* and his literary commitment:

Unlike other Ballard books, such as *The Crystal World* or *The Drowned World* with their apocalyptic sci-fi scenarios, *Crash* describes a world that apparently is just like our own. Well, on second thought, maybe not. The technology in *Crash* may be familiar, but the people can hardly be from this planet. At the opening of the book, the narrator (named Ballard in the novel) describes his recently deceased friend Vaughan, who had a bizarre erotic obsession with car crashes, automobile injuries and motorway mishaps of the most violent sort. This might be plausible, but when we find that the narrator



Ballard is also fixated on the sexual potential of car crashes, the reader is doubtful. (76)

But then we are introduced to Ballard's girlfriend Catherine, who also finds auto collisions to be an oh-so-heavy-metal aphrodisiac. This is the question which Ted raises frequently in the above-mentioned citation. The survey of all the major works of Ballard is likely to yield the fruitful message that human emotions and feelings should change in parallel to the shifting context of technology and scientific innovation. In the new world characterized by the constant search for newness, violent forms of the real and constructed are the effects of the conflict.

Vartan P. Messier's in-depth analysis of *American Psycho* is startling. He concentrates upon the core content of the novel. Vartan's analysis yields several clues as to the many hidden essences of the novel. Vartan expresses the following view:

The blurred lines between the conscious reality and the unconscious projections of acts of sexual violence are a perfect illustration of a continuous internal discourse between the expressed and the repressed. In one of typical passages where Bateman describes his work-out routine at the gym, for instance, the internal monologue abruptly jumps-cuts to his thoughts about masturbating while watching a scene where a woman gets tortured to death in a movie before going on date. Bateman's socially accepted but real desires, a juxtaposition that becomes representative of thought vs. instinct, culture vs. nature, and humanity vs. animality. (76)

Messier comes to the conclusion that the real is important to Bateman only so long as lays the ground work for the imaginary which contains disasters. The way Bateman's repressed psyche comes out is beyond comprehension. Judged from the professional sobriety and

commitment to the Wall Street world, Bateman does not have a chance to be deviated. His activities and intentions can be put strictly into the procrustean bed of accepted social framework. Yet, he continues to remain as a fascinating character.

Evan Chris is of the opinion that from the vantage point of postmodern search of sexuality, Ballard tries to dramatize the tension between the human impulse for perfection and the postmodern challenges to such quest. Evan maintains that search for sexuality has to take a new direction in the light of shifting technology. The following lines signify how the novel is committed to the exploration of human vulnerability:

The relationship between car crashes and the technology of the body is so fascinating that there's just so much Ballard does with sexuality. His prose achieves a beautiful elegance that really makes reading a seemingly gruesome and pathological story incredibly enjoyable. A part of me can't help feeling liberated after reading certain passages. *Crash* is easily the most daring and revolutionary works of body literature/science fiction. In some ways the novel *Crash* takes away from the book because it's poorly made and lacks subtlety. (27)

*Crash* is about a man named James who gets into a car crash, then meets a man named Vaughan who introduces him to the underworld of people who are turned on by car crashes. James, his wife, the woman whose car James crashed into, and Vaughan all get involved together with disturbing results. It reminds readers of *Fight Club* in some ways because the relationship between Vaughan and James is like the one between *Fight Club's* narrator and Tyler Durden.

Dominic Pittman is popular critic of postmodern fictions. He detects a new trait in the fictions of Ballard. He makes the following observation regarding Ellis's *American Psycho*:

Ellis's *American Psycho* gives us two perspectives on the inevitable sense of doom and deviation often entailed by the perverse use of technological innovation and breakthrough. The *Crash* is seen by the media, the government, and the medical profession - and therefore by most of us - an aberration. We have car accidents, the name itself avoiding any notion of purpose or responsibility. But what if the crash could be separated from the notion of an accident and considered as something more deliberate than just a fatal by-product. Something more than simply the part subordinate to fate by the system itself and calculated into its general reckoning. (70)

Pitman is of the view that if human beings do not obey the ethics of handling technological devices and gadgets, it can incur adverse impact. Pitman is not saying that Ellis is predicting the apocalyptic sense of impending doom which can originate from human beings' perverted use of technical know-how and device.

Leslie Wayne examines that *Crash* fights for financial print culture. She makes the following disclosure as to this novel:

*Crash* takes the most overrated metaphor of financial print culture. The novel attempts the final killing by substituting the quality to which the metaphor referred for an action and then, finally, having its own action refer metaphorically to the quality assumed by financial print culture. Whether *American Psycho* ultimately succeeds in this operation is a question to be answered within our own contemporary financial moment. (293)

Leslie Wayne wants to view *Crash* as a satire of financial text. Wayne is the first to treat it as a financial text. This is a historical intervention, and one that goes on to

structure and define the novel. To some extent, it enumerates the optimistic moods of the then time in a jubilant tone.

Blazer is cautious as to the manifestation of the symptoms of intellectual anarchy in the contemporary American scene. Regarding the straight forward presentation of intellectual anarchy Alex Blazer makes the following revelation and remarks:

Ballard's *Crash* and Ellis's *American Psycho* dwell upon the almost same subject each. Each of these is increasingly divorced from the real as a result of the pervasive power of technology and systems of representation which dominate our culture: television, the media, advertising, and marketing. The consequence for the individual is that the self is experienced as emptied of substance, lacking coherence and consistency. (184)

According to Alex Bazer, external social patterns, such as the logic of the surface and the image, are replicated on the inside of the self while, conversely, private individual desires, fantasies and anxieties seem to shape wider social and cultural dynamics.

Although all these critics have examined *American Psycho* and *Crash* from different perspectives, none of them have concentrated upon the psychological effects of postmodern condition and cults like simulation and search for alternative sexuality in relation to the oppression of human beings by technology. In the postmodern scenario, the so-called modernist sense of the loss of normal, and the beautiful is celebrated as the new and renewed form of human experiences. What is the loss of the beautiful, symmetrical and the normal is a new kind of anarchic awakening. In the postmodern condition, even the grotesque and disordered entity can generate a new

aesthetical sense. The postmodern aesthetic perception brings closer to its domain the grotesque and the horrible. As a consequence characters have to pay the heavy prices. Their mental integrity, normal psychic makeup, commitment to normative ideals of life gradually shatter due to the exploitation of postmodern cult and convention in excess.

The major goal of this research is to reveal features of excessive and deviant reliance on the postmodern conditions and cults that generate detrimental psychic effects like sado-masochistic urge, murderous will, obsessive yearning, morbid habit and pathology of nihilism. In the novel *Crash*, the major protagonist Vaughan cultivates the habit to see beauty, order and symmetry in the grotesque and macabre things. He can't feel sexually erected without seeing the car accident or causing car accident. In the postmodern world where the boundary between the normal and the deviant has eroded, the notion of aesthetics has also undergone sweeping change. The postmodern aesthetics keeps the deformed and asymmetrical at the center of aesthetic contemplation. The mundane and monotonous life of Bateman makes his conscience volatile, hypersensitive and unpredictable to the extent of anarchy and animality. He cherishes violent and brutal fantasies. These fantasies are the key to link him to the actual world from which he is already detached.

The present research work focuses upon exploring the underlying causes and factors which constitute postmodern mentality. The deviant and distorted sexual affinity of Vaughan and the narrator is brought to the sphere of this research work. The emerging interest and aesthetical taste of Vaughan and the narrator will be discussed in the context of socio-cultural events and occurrences. The notion of aesthetics has undergone change with a passage of time. In the age of postmodern era, new paradigm of aesthetics has evoked which needs rigorous scrutiny and

investigation. Beyond the connection between characters' taste for the grotesque and the then time, this research does not go ahead.

To conduct the research, several characteristics of the postmodern studies, ranging from Baudrillard's simulation to Foucauldian sexuality, will be taken into account. The conceptions like the loss of the real and ambivalence towards realism are the key ideas related to the postmodern condition. These ideas will help to identify the postmodern condition. Lyotard's concept of postmodern condition forms the basis for the methodological framework. Jencks's ideas of self-reflexivity and double-coding contribute to theoretical perspective. Baudrillard's notion of simulation or relation as reflected on digital technology can be of some help. Jameson puts forward the term cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping is the technique of identifying and analyzing the obsessive effects of the postmodern condition. Depravity, radical undesirability, obsessive and sadistic thirst are the crucial components of psychic disorder and deviation provoked by character immersion in the postmodern condition.

## **Chapter II**

### **The Postmodern Condition: An Insight into Its Psychological Effects**

This research is conducted from the viewpoint of postmodernism. There are plenty of postmodern concepts and insights which exemplify and justify that the doctrine of postmodernism produces the adverse effects in the thoughts and behavioral pattern of people. Of course postmodernism has brighter sides. It has liberated human beings from the bondage of absolute dogma, restrictive pretension of universal notions and the killing sense of complacency. The postmodern conception has facilitated the wider and broader angle of observing the thoughts and activities of people.

Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different speakers. Speakers invoking postmodernism are committed to exploring the complex relationships of power, knowledge, and discourse created in the struggle between social groups. Additionally, it is mixed with several other perspectives that challenge the normative and socially approved conduct. Postmodernism is an object of celebration and scorn, both in intellectual discourse and in cultural vernacular. Through repeated use and enduring controversy, it has assumed several forms, including a powerful theoretical resource, a political lightning rod and a cultural cliché. The ambiguity of this term stems partly from the enormous work that readers normally try to understand. That work involves adequately conceptualizing and engaging the phenomena of post-modernity.

In one sense it is quite sagacious to claim that the theoretical doctrine of postmodernism brought a local sense of salvation from the terror of absolutism and universalistic pretension. Yet it has darker side too. It has its own Achilles heels. The disastrous effects of postmodern thinking are unimaginable and unthinkable. The

dread and danger of clinging to the tenet of postmodernism is generative of the detrimental consequences. The fundamental feature of postmodernism is that there is no dividing line between the real and its representation. What is represented is not substantially different from what exists. Moreover, the disciples of postmodernism tend to believe in the constructed or simulated reality. What comes to the domain of screen, digital screen or the sphere of representation is true. People are so inclined to believe in the nature of constructed or fabricated reality that they are almost ignorant about the fact that the real or the transcendently crucial essence exists.

Fredrich Jameson is the leading Marxist theorist who modifies and adapts the classical concept of Marxism to the new circumstance of inequalities created by late capitalist system. He points out new ways in which the dynamics of late capitalism penetrate existing socio-political spheres. The striking aspect of his theory is that ideology has chosen both coercive and cogent ways to manipulate and maneuver consciousness of people. He views postmodernism as the stratification of capitalist system. It is not according to Jameson the dominant cultural force. It is just the alteration of the extant system so that it could pave the way for the birth of new awakening and excitement. It does hardly mark the return of history. Jameson tends to understand and explain the logic of postmodernism within the shifting framework of late capitalist enterprise. Jameson's view is explicitly mentioned in the following citation:

Despite the delirium of some of its celebrants and apologists, a truly new culture could only emerge through the collective struggle to create a new social system. The constitutive impurity of all Postmodernism theory, then confirms the insight of a periodization that must be insisted on over and over again, namely, that Postmodernism is not the



cultural dominant of a wholly new social order, but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself. This return of history in the midst of the prognosis of the demise of historical telos, suggests a second feature of Postmodernism theory which requires attention. (4)

To some extent, Jameson comes to terms with Raymond Williams's notion of structure of feeling or cultural category. The postmodern exuberance is, in a sense, a kind of cultural category the formation of which is viable through the arduous process of rewriting and reworking the entire system. The newness of the postmodern trend is disbelieved by Jameson. If postmodernism corresponds to what Raymond Williams meant by his fundamental cultural category or a structure of feeling, then it can only enjoy that status by dint of profound collective self-transformation, a reworking and rewriting of an older system. That ensures novelty and gives intellectuals and ideologues fresh and socially useful tasks.

The loss of the real creates many hazards. The loss of the real and the normal puts the followers of postmodernism creed in jeopardy. Once the idea that the real no longer exists is firmly entrenched in the mind, people begin to act out of whim, impulse, urge, rash and reckless emotion. As a consequence, the existing normative and established boundaries are likely to be violated. The tendency towards anarchy and extremity takes an upper hand, rendering lives entirely messy and meandering. The postmodern thinking gives birth to the tendency towards extremity, anomaly and obsessive morbidity. The loss of the normal and the normative paves the way for the anarchic indulgence. Obsessive inclination, morbid proclivity and deviant habit flourish when the postmodern thinking invades the normative spheres of life. The idea of maintaining balance and moderation in one's impulses hardly exist since the

dividing line between the normative and the anomalous ceases to demarcate. One resembles the other. Clear cut boundaries fade, paving the way for the emergence of anarchic irruption, as well as obsessive and morbid longings.

Extreme self-reflexivity is the fatal effect of unrestrained exposure to postmodern thinking. The more an individual is exposed to postmodern practices, the more he or she is tempted to ponder upon oneself. Much more preoccupation with one's self leads to nowhere. Self-reflexivity is no less than isolationist and self-erasing practice which ultimately puts one's life in further unprecedented conditions. Unrestrained reflection on one's self begets narcissism, delusions, megalomania and manic depression. Total disconnection from the external world and the subsequent onrush of malaises like split mentality are doubtless the effects of overt exposure to the dreadful doctrine of postmodernism.

As a consequence of implementing postmodern assumptions in practices, people would lose the normal framework to evaluate what they are doing and where they are heading. The followers of postmodern mentality are ignorant about the fact that there is an ironic disparity between their thoughts and deeds. The growing ironic characteristics of postmodern existence render the life entirely parodic. Parodic and ironic sense of life is doubtless the effects of postmodern practices. The breakdown between high and low cultural forms is facilitated by the pervasive influence of postmodernism. When people give follow on the footsteps of postmodernism, what they encounter is the culture of pandering to their violent spree and fervent passions that are invincible. The socio-cultural trend to cater to one's ego, impulse and fervent longing at the cost of normative ethics takes momentum. The more people plunge into the morass of postmodern pride and prejudice, the more they lose freedom and finally become trapped in the maelstrom of chaos and confusion.

Jean Baudrillard is the major proponent of postmodernism. His notion of simulation is key to describing the psychological effects of undue alliance with the postmodern passion. The postmodern trend sets the stage for simulation. To simulate is more than to pretend to have what one does not have. Of course, pretension is also one of the core components of postmodern simulation. But simulation is more than pretending to have what one does not have.

In the simulated state there is the danger of the loss of the real. The difference between the real object and imaginary object snaps. The growing resemblance between the real and the imaginary puts the simulator in jeopardy. The simulator begins to mistake the imaginary as the real. He or she is totally detached from the real. The imaginary begins to perform as the real. The imaginary no longer serves as the substitute of the real but it works as the real. When the object concocted by the mind, by the fantasy and delusion work as the real, the simulator falls into the unthinkable and unimaginable situation. When the place of the real is taken by the imaginary, the postmodern dreamer is lost in the fictitious world of his fantasy. He or she begins to judge each and every thing from his or her simulated world that is quite detached from the real world. Moreover, they become so detached from the real and normal that they are simply under the illusion whether the real exists or not.

There are several factors which compel and tempt citizens to simulate. In the late capitalist-consumer society, the excessive domination of technology and massive dependence on technology make daily lives of people entirely drab and dreary. Fed up with the mundane and monotonous lives, the postmodern consumers isolate themselves from the drab and arid world. They prefer to remain in the world of simulated reality. Confined nostalgically in the simulated world, consumers sometimes try to involve in the murderous acts, dreadful fantasies and formidable

delusions. The moment the connection between the real and the imaginary snaps, the simulator's sufferings start.

Baudrillard is of the view that the identifying feature of postmodern world is its dependence on technology. Technology has largely structured the postmodern world. The postmodern world is defined in terms of its heavy reliance upon technology. The narrative of technological progress contains elements which eulogize the possibility of the collective liberation of mankind from their discomforts through the medium of technological advancement. As a postmodern theorist, Baudrillard dwells upon the darker sides of technological dependence. Baudrillard shows the contexts in which total dependence upon technology turns out to be counterproductive. By manufacturing and distributing consumer objects in abundance, the late capitalist industries try to glut the market and compel consumers to buy goods and commodities.

In the name of innovation and technological breakthrough, the outmoded medicines and military technology are sent by the developed countries to the developing countries. Postmodern subject experiences technology as a part of life. Lyotard highlights postmodern narrative of technology as the redeemer of mankind from their discomforts and hardships. On the contrary, there are some eco-protesters who simply take the aggressive march of technological innovation as the foreboding of apocalypse. As the postmodern theorist, Baudrillard explores the impact of technology in lives of postmodern subjects. The pervasive impact of technology is found in the trend towards simulation. Baudrillard talks about three levels of simulation. Richard J. Lane illustrates Baudrillard's notion of simulation which takes place at three levels. Lane's clarification runs as follows:

Baudrillard argues that there are three levels of simulation, where the first level is an obvious copy of reality and the second level is a copy so good that it blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. The third level is one which produces a reality of its own without being based upon any particular bit of the real world. The best example is probably virtual reality, which is a world generated by computer languages or code. Virtual reality is thus a world generated by mathematical models which are abstract entities. It is this third level of simulation, where the model comes before the constructed, that Baudrillard calls the hyper-real. (30)

Simulation around which the modern digital technology moves undergoes three successive stages. In the first stage, the simulated object is just a copy only. The second phase is that level of copy which blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. The second stage of simulation too is productive of detrimental consequences. If the distinction between reality and representation does not exist, how can healthy and creative acts become transparently different from neurotic and obsessive one? In the third phase of simulation, the simulated object begins to serve itself as the real. It leaves no space for the real. In the third stage of simulation, the simulated object appears to be the powerful reminder of the real. It tends to be as sovereign as the real. The power of simulation has had the detrimental effect in the psyche of people at large. The propensity towards extremity and obsessive yearning takes root when the third stage of simulation arrives at the mature state.

Lyotard defines postmodernism in a somewhat different way. His version of postmodernism differs substantially from other postmodernists. To Lyotard, postmodernism is the collapse of grand narrative. Science as a grand narrative

appeared to be the means of domination. In his famous book *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard presents postmodernism as the stepping stone for modernism. Lyotard portrays scientific and technological innovation as a form of domination. Consumers are simply cheated and exploited by the ongoing advancement and innovation in science and technology. This idea of Lyotard is further explained by Andrew Benjamin. Benjamin makes the following observation:

*The Postmodern Condition* resembles the bulk of postmodernist writing. One could say that, often in spite of itself, much postmodernism remains pre-political. Its political credentials –its implication for the existing distribution and legitimacy of power crystallized in state and non-state institutions-remain wholly ambiguous. Postmodernism is said to involve the practice of resistance; challenging master narratives with the discourse of others; questioning rather than exploiting cultural codes; opening closed systems to the heterogeneity of texts; becoming more sensitive to difference; emphasizing discontinuity , incompleteness and paradoxes-and yet phrases such as these remain highly amorphous, thereby marginalizing or repressing outright further consideration of socio-political questions.

(89)

In the era of postmodernism, science has sought to seek legitimacy via narrative. To Lyotard, science appears as a separate sphere that is no less than grand narrative. On the one hand, science achieves power and legitimacy through narrative. When scientific discourses and claims tend to take the form of grand narrative, those who pursue science begin to feel adversely affected by it. Rather than valorizing science as another grand narrative, it would be better to let it function as language game. The

concept of language game is crucial in understanding Lyotard's notion of postmodernism.

Lyotard defines postmodernism, in the crudest sense, as incredulity toward meta-narratives and reveals how knowledge has been legitimated by the metanarratives of science. He examines developments in the nature and circulation of knowledge since the end of World War II. He insists that this has led to the interrogation of the Enlightenment narrative of emancipation and progress. He sees a distinction between scientific knowledge and non-scientific narrative. Furthermore he holds that because science has no 'metalegitimation' it must resort to narrative for that legitimation, i.e. a non-scientific legitimation. Since both narrative and scientific knowledge have a common foundation of legitimation in narrative, they are equally valid.

As Smith writes, "Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such." (Smith, 2005 cited in Robinson, 2005, Web Blog). Lyotard goes on to make clear that "what legitimates knowledge in the postmodern condition is how well it performs, or enables a person to perform, in particular roles" (*The Postmodern Condition* 14). The writings of Lyotard were strongly influenced by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. This short quote bears out Nietzsche's own incredulity toward an understanding of truth as universal- "What is truth? It is a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms. Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" (Felicilda 198). Lyotard sees reason not as a universal and immutable human faculty or principle but as a specific and variable human production. Reason, it is believed, is a product of human intelligence and not as something that inevitably leads to an apprehension of the truth. It is preferable to view ultimate legitimation of

all actions, scientific or otherwise, as understood through a variety of faculties, including reason.

The shifting notion of knowledge is key to understanding some of the important tenets of postmodernism. Knowledge has become informational commodity in the wake of postmodern scenario. Manufacturing commodities are replaced by the digitalized or computerized form of knowledge. Hans Bertens has exemplified this kind of postmodernist conception. Bertens elaborates thus;

The scenario in which information replaces the manufacture of material goods is the central concern in the most advanced economies.

This computerization of society will affect the nature of our knowledge. It is not very clear how exactly our knowledge will change, but Lyotard offers the prediction that the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. Knowledge has become an informational commodity. Science has been forced to abandon its original integrity and has become an instrument in the hands of power.

(119)

Bertens subscribes to the conviction that metanarratives have been replaced by a great number of language games. These language games range from models of discourse, various forms of utterance--denotative, performative, and prescriptive. Narrative language games can accommodate elements such as deontic statements prescribing what should be done with respect to kinship, the difference between the sexes, children, neighbors, and foreigners. Narrative language games have only limited social and historical validity.



Arthur Crooker and David Crooker concentrate on how the postmodern tendency gives birth to the thrill of catastrophe and the ecstatic implosion of postmodern culture into excess, waste and disaccumulation. The trend to excess, waste and sense of anarchic jubilation receives momentum in the high days of postmodernism. The following lines cited from Arthur Crooker and David Crooker throw further spotlight on this aspect:

For who can now speak with confidence of the future of a postmodern scene when what is truly fascinating is the thrill of catastrophe, and where what drives onward economy, politics, culture, sex and even eating is not the will to accumulation or the search for lost coherences, but just the opposite – the postmodern culture into excess, waste, and accumulation. When technology of the quantum order produces human beings who are part-metal and part-flesh; when robo-beings constitute the growing majority of a western culture which fulfills, then excess, Weber’s grim prophecy of the coming age of specialists without spirit.

(30)

The postmodern trend opens a new avenue for the pathological symptoms of nihilism. The gradual loss of established norms and the much hallowed cult of hyper-aesthetics as well as excremental culture jointly generate nihilistic impact. To a certain time span, the nihilistic cult gives the unique dose of freedom from the restrictive measures of universalistic pretensions and absolutist claims. But in the long run, its adverse impact appears in the prospect of humanity. Viewed from the normative perspective, this impact seems to be normative. But it is the constant source of jubilation approved within the framework of postmodern context.

The postmodern ethos is the ethos of transgression. It is the 'lightning-flash' which illuminates the sky for an instant only to reveal the immensity of the darkness within. Postmodernism is not a gesture of the cut. Whatever transgression takes place, it would further reveal latent primitive instinct in its crude and raw form. David Crooker makes the further disclosure:

Transgression is not limited to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather their relationship takes the form of spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night which it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity; the flash loses itself in this space it marks with its sovereignty and becomes silent now that it has given a name to obscurity. (8)

When the surface of normative and the rationally approved conception are torn asunder, what arises outside is the dark forces which, if irrupt sporadically, can render entire human life vulnerable and enervated. The dark forces and instinctive urges put life on the path of anomaly, incompatibility and gruesome track. At the postmodern moment of the eruption of latent primitive and dark forces, people can hover between ecstasy and decay. When the primitive instinct and passion come out in an irresistible way, people will have to live on the violent edge between the body as a torture chamber and pleasure palace. They will have no option other than getting lost

between fascination and lament. The calm and tranquil psyche can be rendered violent, restless and hallucinogenic.

Michel Foucault is widely known as the architect of discursive analysis. He is disdainful of normative notions and power-free ethics. To Michel Foucault, any category of concept or truth-claim is constructed. Relation of forces, subtle ways of the diffusion of power and institutional pressures affect jointly the process of producing truth-claims. Truth-claims are not independent and efficient in themselves. On the contrary, they are buttressed by power and the complex network of institutional and other pragmatic consideration. In his famous book *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault points out how sexuality appears to be the category of concept created by power and power relations. By rejecting repressive hypothesis, Foucault goes on to assert that power not only represses sexuality; it produces new notions of sexuality. Shifting notions of sexuality are actually the effects of complicated circulation of forces, interest of those who are in the position of power and the trend in which institutions have been taking the dominant thought of people. In the ancient Greek society, pederasty, same sex relation and homosexuality arose as the part and parcel of Hellenic life. Sufficient attention falls on those seemingly deviant sexuality. But it was not as deviant as readers are trained to believe. In the Christian era, sexuality was probed in the light of rigid morality. Throughout the early eighteenth and nineteenth century, sexuality was repressed as well as recognized in a new way. Sexuality repression as well as the expression of sexuality in a new way occurred.

No matter how productive power might be in redefining prevailing outlook on sexuality, it hardly paves the way for the true sexual freedom. Sexualities of gays, abnormal and hysterical women were transformed into discourse not with the

intention to provide sexual freedom to the excluded and the ostracized but with the intention to manage them, to control them and then to put them under surveillance.

The following lines describe how sex was put into discourse:

For was this transformation of sex into discourse not governed by the endeavor to expel from reality the forms of sexuality that were not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction: to say no unproductive activities, to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practice whose object not procreation? Through the various discourses legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness; from childhood to old age, a harm of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described. Pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized. (36)

To the believers in the repressive hypothesis, singular sexuality is repressed. But Foucault puts forward a different claim. He argues that various mechanisms of power generated manifold sexualities such as infantile sexualities, homosexuality, sodomy, masturbation and hysteria. The production of manifold sexualities is evidence forwarded by Foucault to show that power is not always repressive but productive too. Furthermore, Foucault argues that “homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul” (43). Only the sovereign power is starkly repressive. In the disciplinary power and bio-power, power seldom exerts its repressive impact. In an indirect and subtle way, the bio-political mechanism puts everything under control

Bryan C. Taylor views the effects of postmodern contemplation in the light of the role of media in shaping objects, understanding and strategies of survival. Taylor is of the opinion that the burgeoning media industries are largely responsible for putting people's power of perception in hazard. Taylor is closer to Baudrillard in dramatizing the effects of how the productions of objects or simulated objects without reference make people getting drowned in the hyper-reality. Taylor's view is reflected in the following citation:

The rise of global media systems whose continuous operations break traditional boundaries of space and time exerts powerful influence in the psyche of people. In their cumulative effects, the programs circulated by these systems collapse important distinctions that traditionally have shaped modern cultural identities. These systems create a rapidly shifting phantasm of fragmented, decontextualized information, in which people are encouraged to view themselves as the audience of a flickering spectacle that relentlessly stimulates their impulses. (4)

According to Taylor, this simulation does not, however, necessarily produce knowledge or wisdom, but rather hyper-realities with no real referents. These environments are populated by simulations, models, and copies of something else that has no single, original, real source. Postmodernists argue that organizations are marked by irony, ambiguity, contradiction, and paradoxes that oppress their members by prematurely foreclosing options for understanding and action. As a result, postmodernists adopt the image of fragmentation to characterize some organizational cultures and identities. This condition is presumed to result from several factors.

### Chapter III

#### Psychological Effects of Postmodern Condition in Ballard's *Crash*

J. G. Ballard's novel *Crash* calls into question some of the claims made by the theoreticians of postmodern condition. At the inception of postmodern era, it was widely believed that postmodernism will uplift the consciousness of people. People harbored some of the naive expectations from the architects of postmodern theory. Contrary to the expectation of people, the pervasive impact of postmodern thinking weakened psychological vigor and creative faculty of those who embraced the doctrine of postmodernism. The more influence of postmodernism increased, the more it debilitated people psychologically. To be more specific, the postmodern thinking ruined harmfully the psychological integrity and strength of people. Ballard's *Crash* is a case in this point.

Ballard's *Crash* explores the extent to which postmodern preaching and practice generated detrimental effect. The whole novel is a narrative survey and commentary of the first person narrator on the deviant, psychotic and abnormal longing of the character Vaughan. Vaughan is the most unique oddball, whose taste and impulse know no bound. He acts, behaves and reacts as though it is suffocating for him to live in the world of normal practice and thinking. To live a normal life with moderate expectation is to imprison oneself within the framework of normal pattern of socio-cultural life. Vaughan is exposed to machine culture. His normal pattern of thinking and acting are perfectly under the grip of machine culture. To him, the dividing line between the normal and the abnormal, the normative and the constructed simply does not exist. He is of the opinion that only experience counts and others are just irrelevant.

According to Vaughan, the intensity of experience rather than the categorical nature of experience is of utmost importance. That sort of thinking puts him on the path of extremity. In Vaughan's time, life was driven wholeheartedly by machine. The normal moderate culture dwindled down gradually and it gave way to techno-culture. It is obviously true that technology, and technological innovation exists to upgrade, facilitate and invigorate human beings. Technology seeks to minimize human efforts and maximize the outcome of their efforts. But in the postmodern era, all such naive illusions and expectations fell flat. Contrary to the collective expectations and assumptions of human beings, techno-culture, let's say machine culture, colonized human bodies. In this context, it can be affirmed that Vaughan's body also came under the colonizing grip of machine and technological device. Beset by the impact of machine culture and technological dependence, Vaughan had only one option to assert his individuality. The intensity of experience is instrumental in compelling Vaughan to break all the existing codes and conventions sporadically. Only by going to the extreme, Vaughan had a chance to free his body and bodily passion. That is why Vaughan puts himself on the path of extremity. He acts as though dividing boundaries of morality and normality do not lie.

Vaughan envisions car-crash. Due to his excessive exposure to postmodern frenzy and fantasy, he builds up a fervent passion to create a situation in which his car crashes with a car of another man. He intentionally causes car-crash. Day and night he fantasizes about getting entangled in a car-crash with other. Often he imagines getting his car dented with the car of a famous Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor. The dreadful fact is that he does not feel sexually erected without getting through car accident. When his car crashes with others' car, he feels that he has reached orgasm. To reach the height of orgasm, it is compulsory for Vaughan to let his car crash with

the car of other people. The more he gave free rein to his passion for car-crash, the more suffering and seclusion he faced. While getting enmeshed in car-crash, he envisioned to be fascinated with many wounds, and injury. The following lines cited from the novel *Crash* exemplify this point:

In his vision of a car-crash with the actress, Vaughan was obsessed by many wounds and impacts- by the dying chromium and collapsing bulkheads of their two cars meeting head-on in complex collisions endlessly repeated in slow-motion films, by the identical wounds inflicted on their bodies, by the image of windshield glass frosting around her face as she broke its tinted surface like a death-born Aphrodite, by the compound fractures of their things impacted against their hand brake mountains and above all by the wounds to their genitalia, her uterus pierced by the heraldic beak of manufacturer's medallion, his semen emptying across the luminescent dials that registered for ever the last temperature and fuel levels of the engine.

(7)

Vaughan's passion for car-crash takes extreme deviant form. In addition, he develops fascination for wounds and injury. Several images of deformities and deviations enchant him. Rather he is loathing to the shapely and symmetrical images. His aesthetic taste degenerated to the lowest point. Only the ugly and macabre thing enchants and mystifies him. Violent fantasy of wounds inflicted on his friends' body stuns Vaughan. In the course of time Vaughan's longing for deformed and ugly images becomes his regular obsession. Yet Vaughan is not aware of how detached he is from the standard of the normal and the normative. He is heading towards a dreadful path, a self-destructive path. But he does not care. He simply takes rapturous



delight in the narrow cell of his inner obsession, frenzy and fantasy. Vaughan does not get a chance to think about correcting his choice. For him experience is experience; it needs no evaluation in terms of its normative and ethical criteria. While traditionalists and modernists take the principle of moderation as the saving grace, Vaughan, the arch follower of postmodern cult, takes the principle of moderation as the biggest stumbling block on his way to the gratification of intense impulses and urges.

Dream and fantasy of Vaughan show the eerie and arcane nature of his passion. He cherishes those dreams which sharply run counter to the normal dream which a rational man dreams in the regular course of his life. Sometimes Vaughan cherishes violent fantasy of dying at the moment of the orgasm with a famous Hollywood actress, Elizabeth Taylor. As a result of his limitless exposure to postmodern life which is let loose and fancy-free Vaughan lowers himself. He seems to be perfectly different from other people. Extreme deviation and departure from the normal level of life is found in Vaughan's stylistic choice. He is psychologically deviated. His choices and fantasies are shocking and stunning to those who cling to the track of the normality and moderation. His only one fantasy is enough to know how intense his death-wish is. The following extract illustrates how much sadomasochistic his fantasy is:

The broken postures of his legs and arms, the bloody geometry of his face, seemed to parody the photographs of crash injuries that covered the walls of his apartment. I looked down for the last time at his huge groin, engorged with blood. Twenty yards away illuminated by the revolving lamps, the actress hovered on the arm of her chauffeur. Vaughan had dreamed of dying at the moment of her orgasm. Before his death Vaughan had taken part in many crashes. As I think of

Vaughan I see him in the stolen cars he drove and damaged the surfaces of deformed metal and plastic that forever embraced him. Two months earlier I found him on the lower deck of the airport flyover after the first rehearsal of his own death. (7)

In a car crash Elizabeth Taylor dies. Vaughan too is injured seriously. When his dream of causing car crash ends, another fantasy begins. He also, like Elizabeth Taylor, wants to die at the moment of Taylor's orgasm. One after the other violent and frenzied desire comes and pushes Vaughan to chase the postmodern game full of pitfalls and perils. Vaughan tries to go to any extreme to get his dream and desire fulfilled. Heedless of consequences of his actions, he imagines his own death. Not only this, he wants to give a dramatic rehearsal to his death. Since all the ideals and ethics disintegrated in the solipsistic world of Vaughan, fantasizing a violent event and breaking the boundary of normal life became the ritual of his life. As a result, he had to face the problem of psychological retardation. In addition, he happened to develop the serious challenges, which is sadomasochistic propensity. The tendency to make a rehearsal of his death can be understood as the effect of his immersion in risk society which is another name for a postmodern society.

Vaughan appears to be a sex connoisseur. He is fed up with the normal way through which sexual satisfaction occurs. He embarks on the quest for the new notion of sexuality. Only in the disastrous moment of car accident, he will be thrilled with sexual ecstasy. When two cars crash and create moments of extreme agony, Vaughan feels that he has reached the apex of sexual ecstasy. Vaughan's hunt for a new category of sexuality is an indicator of his degradation. It is an evidence of how far he has gone from the established normative order of society. Only the disintegrated psychology and corrupted self can choose such a path of anomaly. His fascination

with bruises, wounds, scars and postures of uneasy sex act illustrate the deadly path on which Vaughan treads flippantly and rashly without showing any concern. The following extract gives the glimpse of Vaughan's degrading and deviant taste:

For Vaughan the car-crash and his own sexuality had made their final marriage. I remember him at night with nervous young women in the crushed rear compartments of abandoned cars in breakers' yards, and their photographs in the postures of uneasy sex acts. Their tight faces and strained thighs were lit by his Polaroid flash, like startled survivors of a submarine disaster. These aspiring whores, whom Vaughan met in the all night cafes and supermarkets of London Airport, were the first cousins of the patients illustrated in his surgical textbooks. During his studied courtship of injured women, Vaughan was obsessed with the buboes of gas bacillus infections by facial injuries and genital wounds.

(8)

Vaughan develops fascination with injuries and wounds. He sometimes fantasizes paying courtship with women of disabled bodies. Easy sex acts and comfortable sex postures are nauseous to him. A serious question arises here as to how Vaughan happens to develop this kind of morbid erotics. The standard set up by the doctrine of postmodernism and Vaughan's immersion in the postmodern cult and concept jointly pushed him to the hazardous track of pursuing deviant pleasures of life. All these activities of Vaughan are enough evidences to prove his degeneration.

Vaughan's sex-instinct is blunted and stunted by factors which are known and unknown, traceable and elusive. Normal condition of sex-instinct and sexuality-friendly environment hardly stimulates his erotic desire. His style of being sexually thrilled and eroticized differs sharply from normal man's process of being erotic.

Without judging Vaughan's erotic propensity, it can undoubtedly be said that his erotic passion has put on the path of impending doom and disaster. The following extract discloses this fact:

Vaughan unfolded for me all his obsessions with the mysterious eroticism of wounds. The perverse logic of blood-soaked instrument panels, seat-belts smeared with excrement, sun-visors lined with brain tissue. For Vaughan each crashed car set off a tremor of excitement, in the complex geometries of a dented fender, in the unexpected variations of crushed radiator grilles, in the grotesque overhang of an instrument panel forced on to a driver's crotch as if in some calibrated act of machine fellatio. The intimate time and space of a single human being had been fossilized forever in this web of chromium knives and frosted glass. (10)

Vaughan arrived at the state of deriving thrilling sense of sexual ecstasy from car-crash. The more disastrously his car crashes with other man's car, the more orgiastic he feels. The normal shape and symmetrical form hardly evoke sexual titillation. Only wounds and injuries of the victims of car-crash tempt him. This sort of fascination enables the present researcher to contend that Vaughan's psychological make-up is hovering on the verge of virtual disintegration. In the absence of underlying thread of normative ideals and saving graces, he is fully unable to bridle his deviant hyper-aesthetics and distorted search for sexual virility.

In the postmodern era, excessive dependence on sexuality creates perversity. Vaughan comes to perceive this sort of reality. That is what the narrator of this novel says "For Vaughan these wounds were the keys to a new sexuality born from a perverse technology. The images of these wounds hung in the gallery of his mind like

exhibits in the museum of a slaughterhouse” (11). Under the oppressive influence of technology life has begun to cower. The forces of technology and machine are so intimidating that human bodies are completely penetrated by it. Even the postmodern philosophy of extremity has weakened human life. The life of Vaughan conforms to these problems. He is fully subdued and overpowered by the confining and intimidating forces of technology. The only way to come out of the formidable forces of technology is to concoct violent fantasies. Vaughan visualizes violent, grisly and macabre scene. This visualization of macabre and mind-boggling scene is Vaughan’s attempt to free himself from the overpowering and penetrating forces. Viewed from different angle, it is his attempt to maximize the benefit which accrues to him from the exploitation of postmodern cult. Such a mental proclivity to visualize goads him to hallucinate. The following excerpt reveals important facts concerning Vaughan’s hallucinatory proclivity:

He visualized the specialized crashes of escaping criminals, of off-duty hotel receptionists trapped between their lovers whom they were masturbating. He thought of the crashes of honeymoon couples, seated together after their impacts with the rear suspension units of runaway sugar-tankers. He thought of the crashes of automobile stylists, the most abstract of all possible deaths, wounded in their cars with promiscuous laboratory technicians. Vaughan elaborated endless variations on these collisions. (11)

Vaughan visualizes those events and situations which seldom exist in real life. Sometimes he simulates an event which could take him closer to what his perverted and deviant faculty of taste demands. Visualizing the crashes of honeymoon couples

and masturbatory practice of broken lovers is one way to gratify his degraded passion for oddity and deformity. The process of simulation is also engaged in this activity.

Constant visualization and simulation make Vaughan obsessive and schizophrenic. Symptoms of hallucination occur in the entire gamut of his ludicrous activities. The following lines cited from the novel clarify the point:

I think now of the other crashes we visualized, absurd deaths of the wounded, maimed and distraught. I think of the crashes of psychopaths, implausible accidents carried out with venom and self-disgust, vicious multiple collisions contrived in stolen cars on evening freeways among tired office-workers. I think of the absurd crashes of neurasthenic housewives retiring from their VD clinic, hitting parked cars suburban high streets. I think of the crashes of excited schizophrenics colliding head stalled laundry vans in one way streets.

(12)

The above-cited extract is an exterior monologue of the narrator. The narrator is the close friend of Vaughan. He too is involved in the postmodern spree like his friend Vaughan. But he is aware of the pros and cons of choosing a postmodern mode of existence. If Vaughan is the typical victim of postmodern condition, the narrator is the perspective from which Ballard has viewed Vaughan's life. The narrator uses terms like 'psychopaths', 'schizophrenics', and 'manic-depressives' to comment on Vaughan's idiosyncratic style. Vaughan's morbid habit to visualize and simulate different level of activities makes him vulnerable. It enervates and debilitates him psychologically. No perspective and criterion is found to justify Vaughan's simulated existence. To borrow the narrator's viewpoint and terms, it won't be wrong to say that

Vaughan's present life is beset with nascent symptoms of insanity, schizophrenia and depressive silence as well as sporadic reaction.

Obsession not for the healthy, normal object but for the taboo object or forbidden object is the hallmark of Vaughan's postmodern style. Vaughan's friend Reagan died a stylized death in a car crash. Vaughan saw Reagan's genital organ. Since then his obsession with genital organs increased by leaps and bounds. Such a mounting obsession for others' genital organs is an index to the detrimental consequence of an individual's unbounded exposure to post-modernity. Evidence regarding this condition of Vaughan's is found in the following citation:

His imagination was a target gallery of screen actresses, politicians, business tycoons and television executives. Vaughan followed them everywhere with his camera zoom lens watching from the observation platform of the oceanic terminal at the airport from hotel mezzanine balconies and studio car-parks. For each of them Vaughan devised an optimum auto-death. Onasis and his wife would die in a recreation of Dealey plaza assassination. He saw Reagan in a complex rear-end collision, dying a stylized death that expressed Vaughan's obsession with Reagan's genital organs like his obsession with the exquisite transits of the screen actress's public across the vinyl seat covers of hired limousines. (13)

Vaughan is avid for catching a sight of his dead friend Reagan's genital organ. What enchants him fervidly is the erogenous zone and private parts. In his mad hunt for alternative sexuality in the face of technology's overwhelming influence, Vaughan happens to cultivate homoerotic and homosexual interest. One of the most disintegrating characteristics of Vaughan is that his sexuality knows no boundaries. It

has transgressive qualities. There are symptoms of various forms of sexuality.

Symptoms of homosexuality and heterosexuality coexist. In addition, other peripheral sexualities like sexual attraction to dead body, voyeuristic proclivity, sexual sadism and other decadent sexual desires are found in the collective sexual activities of Vaughan.

There are a few things which provide solace and in-depth fulfillment to Vaughan. He has to reach the delirium of experience. Reaching the delirium of any experience is as normal as any normal experience is acceptable to people at large. Since Vaughan is unable to take cognizance of what is delirium and what is normal, he zestfully gives free reign to what enchants him morbidly. Without reaching the point of erotic delirium, it would be torturous for him. This sort of plight of Vaughan is doubtless the consequence and corollary of his frantic immersion in the fatal ethos and spirit of post-modernity. The line “this pool of vomit with its clots of blood like liquid rubies, as viscous and discreet as everything produced by Catherine, still contains for me the essence of the erotic delirium of the car crash” (13). Erotic and excremental objects tempt him. Vaughan could not resist the temptation. He simply searches for those things which bring ecstatic sense of instantaneous gratification of sizzling urges.

Once, a serious accident occurred. A man died on the spot. Vaughan was also involved in this car-crash. Fortunately, Vaughan was injured but not dead. The narrator, who is the close friend of Vaughan, visits hospital. He calls bizarre the sight which he saw in the hospital. He too is infected with postmodern fever but is not as degraded and dilapidated as Vaughan. The bizarre and eerie scene has started tempting him. He says “an uneasy euphoria carried me towards the hospital. I vomited across the steering wheel, half-conscious of a series of unpleasant fantasies” (19). The



idea of pleasant and unpleasant thing is still ruling over the narrator. In this context, the perspective of the narrator serves as the critical perspective. The narrator then describes posture of a dead man and Vaughan in hospital bed. The description is “if one of them had unbuttoned his coarse serge trousers to reveal his genitalia, and pressed his penis into the bloody crotch of my armpit, even this bizarre act would have been acceptable in terms of the stylization of violence rescue” (19). The scene in which genital is inserted in an armpit is called by the narrator as a bizarre scene.

Alternative sexuality, which Vaughan explores, is bizarre and cannot be accepted by any person with a normal psychological conviction. The deviant disciples of postmodern spree like Vaughan and the dead person are involved in the task of stylizing violence. In no way violence can be stylized. But Vaughan and the dead man were involved in the stylization of violence. The ironical fact is that Vaughan’s friend met catastrophic death in his attempt to stylize death. They intend to stylize violence and ritualize odd sexual experience. The path they have treaded is full of pitfalls and perils. The union of dented and broken cars during fierce accident resembles the union between two copulating partners. The narrator too is aware of it. Excluding Vaughan and his friends, even the narrator is exposed to the deadly haze of postmodern spells and spree. He narrates “Already I was aware that the interlocked radiator grilles of our cars formed the model of an inescapable and perverse union between us” (20).

Longing for the deviant, the different and the excess mark the entire mode of the narrator’s life.

Vaughan has cultivated desire to evaluate things from their inherent sexual possibilities. He has had unbounded obsession with sexual possibilities of things that surround him. Desire arose from his internalized post-modern thought. For its instant and instantaneous gratification, desire seeks unnatural, amoral, anormal and eccentric

ways. The unnatural and unapproved ways entails repeated efforts and endeavor. In these anarchic pursuits, desire takes the form of obsession. In the extreme state of unbounded obsession, Vaughan begins to judge and perceive things in terms of their sexual possibilities. His angle of understanding is sexualized. Vaughan's attempt to create the sexual possibilities of everything is an index to the detrimental effect of post-modern condition. The following lines are illustrative of the probable harm which can accrue to Vaughan from his tendency to look at things in terms of their sexual possibilities:

This obsession with the sexual possibilities of everything around me had been jerked loose from my mind by the crash. I imagined the ward filled with convalescing air-disaster victims, each of their minds a brothel of images. The crash between our two cars was a model of some ultimate and yet undreamt sexual union. The injuries of still-to-be-admitted patients beckoned to me, an immense encyclopedia of accessible dreams. (23)

Obsession is a natural outcome of an individual's intense struggle for accomplishing an intended object. But Vaughan and Catherine including the narrator have come up with peculiar obsession. They are obsessed with exploring the sexual possibilities of everything. It is difficult to know the sexual possibilities of everything. Vaughan's defunct and distorted sex instinct put him on the quest for the sexual possibilities of everything. Vaughan's attempt to explore the sexual possibilities of everything has several implications. It can mean that mainstream heterosexual normativity is suffocating for him. It also can imply that Vaughan is trying to escape from the constraints of the ordinary notion of sexuality.

There is a female character named Dr. Helen Remington. Her husband “had killed another man who might have attempted unwelcomed sexual encounter with his wife” (25). The murder of this man implanted a new impression in Dr. Remington’s husband. This murderous scene gave new dimension to the sex acts between Dr. Remington and her husband. This is an example of how sexual possibilities of everything are explored.

The narrator, Vaughan’s dead friend and Vaughan himself are hospitalized. Dr. Helen Remington’s husband is also present. He has come to take care of his wife who also met the same fate of car crash. Dr. Helen’s husband is observing the situation. He talks to the narrator who is on the same track on which Vaughan is treading. A nurse is removing pus from the dead body and cleaning the wounded spot on body. This act of removing pus erects the narrator. He feels erotically convulsed. This condition of the narrator’s mind is an instance of his search for the sexual potentiality of everything. The following lines reflect on this aspect:

A dark-haired student nurse came into the ward. Smiling at my wife, she pulled back the bedclothes and dug the urine bottle from between my legs. Inspecting its level, she flipped back the sheets. Immediately my penis began to dribble; with an effort I controlled the sphincter, numbed by the long succession of anesthetics. Lying there with a weak bladder, I wondered why, after this tragic accident involving the death of an unknown young man- his identity remained an enigma to me, like an anonymous opponent killed in a pointless duel. (26)

The long succession of anesthetics benumbs the narrator. It is uncertain to which experience he would be exposed. Without his sense of any awareness, he comes to know that his penis is erected. To his utter dismay, he does not know when, how and

why he comes under the assault of fatal sensations. He looks at the dead man. He happens to get a clue about how elusive identity is. In the narrator's own words, identity remained enigma to him. Prior to this realization, he might have clung to the false belief in the existence of core self and identity. Posterior to this realization his approach to identity underwent sweeping change.

Social ideals and normative values shattered giving way to the rampant immorality. The narrator is incapacitated to take any strong action when his wife and Catherine are engaged in lesbian sexual activities. The narrator is entangled in homophobia and homosexuality. How can he dare to take any action when he himself is trapped in the immobility of existence? The substantial philosophical basis of post-modernity has given rise to many peripheral sexualities as well as other deviant forms of passions. The following extract highlights this line of analytical thinking:

Catherine often asked me how she could allow herself to be seduced by Karen. She soon came up with the suggestion that they visit a department store together, where she would ask Karen's help in choosing various kinds of underwear. I waited for them among the racks of nightdresses outside their cubicle. Now and then I glanced through the curtains and watched them together, their bodies and fingers involved in the soft technology of Catherine's breasts and the brassieres designed to show them off to this or that advantage. Karen was touching my wife with peculiar caresses. (27)

The lesbian partners Catherine and Karen have chosen various kinds of underwear. For sexual stimulation, they need various colors of undergarments. The important fact is that nothing has prevented them from coming out of the closet. There is nothing shameful in declaring that Catherine wants to seduce Karen who is supposedly a

reluctant lesbian partner. From pus oozing from dead body's wound to the color of undergarment, various things titillate sexual desires in characters like Vaughan, narrator, Catherine and Karen. Their joint effort to find out the sexual possibilities of things like pus and underwear has put them on the wrong track. In this state, it can safely be said that they are sidetracked from the normal course of action.

Catherine's sexual desire has reached the bottom-line of degeneration. She is sexually drawn towards her secretary. Her secretary is a male. There is heterosexual attraction between Catherine and her secretary. She is blunt in her heterosexual pursuit. The idea of marital loyalty is a figment of fantasy to her. In her sexual relation with her secretary, she is unable to reach orgasm. She needs lesbian fantasy with Karen for reaching orgasm in her heterosexual relation with her secretary. In Catherine's intense and ecstatic sexual experience, there is no boundary amidst heterosexuality, lesbian sexuality, marital loyalty and sexual fantasies and reveries. Catherine's sexual life is an extreme case of perversion and moral disgrace. The following extract discloses truths regarding Catherine's perverted and ignominious life:

Catherine's unrestrained erotic interest in her secretary seemed an interest as much in the idea of making love to her as in the physical pleasures of the sex-act itself. Nonetheless, these pursuits had begun to make all our relationships, both between ourselves and with other people, more and more abstract. She soon became unable to reach an orgasm without an elaborate fantasies of a lesbian sex-act with Karen, of her clitoris being tongued, nipples erected, anus caressed. These descriptions seemed to be a language in search of objects, or even

perhaps, the beginning of a new sexuality divorced from any possible physical expressions. (28)

From the above-cited extract, it won't be difficult to deduce that Catherine is in a hunt for a new sexuality divorced from any physical expression. In this search, she is practicing both lesbian sexuality and heterosexuality. She seeks orgasm not in her sexual relation with her husband, the narrator of this novel. Extramarital relation is the site of sexual relation in which she intends to reach orgasm. She is clearly heading towards the direction of betrayal and marital disloyalty. She is too confused to know how the harboring of lesbian sexual fantasy enables her to reach orgasm. It is troublesome to know whether her search for a new version of sexuality is efficacious. In no way it is wholesome and healthy. Doubtless, it can be and has to be affirmed that she along with other postmodern victims are on the self-destructive path.

In the narrator, empathetic concern is dead. Feelings of commiseration are utterly defunct in the followers of post-modern cult of seeking the alternative of any experience at the cost of established saving graces of life. Having seen the miserable death of a man, the narrator is unable to show genuine humanistic concern. Rather, he talks to himself and concludes that performing moralistic and humanistic gymnastics has no value at all. The sharp disintegration of philanthropic concern is the straightforward consequences of assimilating postmodern view on life. The narrator's indifference to the suffering of man is demonstrative of how cold-hearted he has become due to his frantic exposure to the command and dictation of postmodern life. The following lines exemplify this point:

I stared pointedly at the clock over the door, hoping that she would soon leave. This bogus commiseration over the dead man irritated me, merely an excuse for an exercise in moral gymnastics. The

brusqueness of the young nurses was part of the same pantomime of regret. I had thought for hours about the dead man, visualizing the effects of his death on his wife and family. I had thought of his last moment's alive, frantic milliseconds of pain and violence in which he had been catapulted from a pleasant domestic interlude into a concertina of metalized death. (29)

To feel pity for the victims of unprecedented catastrophe is to make a pantomime of genuine human feeling. It is bogus to display commiseration over the dead man.

Worst of all, the idea of pitying the dead man is irritating to him. He is too sterile to throw pity for others. Since pity does not well up in his heart, he has been living under the spell of machine-like forces. The events like death and disasters produce lingering effect in his mind. Death, disaster and violence are deeply entrenched in his mind.

Moreover, these events and excitement resulting from violence are necessary to reach orgasm. Violence can produce neither sexual excitement nor the genuine humanistic concern and conviction.

The thoughts of the narrator and Vaughan tend to unfold only in line with the proximity between sexuality and violence. The following extract gives a glimpse of the narrator's thinking in line with sexuality-violence proximity:

Scenes of pain and violence illuminated the margins of our lives- television newsreels of wars and student riots, natural disasters and police brutality which we vaguely watched on the color TV set in our bedroom as we masturbated each other. This violence experienced at so many removes had become intimately associated with our sex acts. The beatings and burnings married in our minds with the delicious tremors of our minds with delicious tremors of our erectile tissues, the

split blood of students with the genital fluids that irrigated our fingers and mouths. (30)

News about disasters and deaths which the narrator and Vaughan hear on their television set provokes them to masturbate. Their masturbation and violence bear relational proximity. By yielding to the frantic sources of post-modern temptation, characters like Vaughan, Karen, Helen, and the narrator started consuming the culture of violence. The impact of violence has become so imperative in their lives that without it, they cannot move hopefully in their daily life. They have ritualized the culture of violence. Violence is needed for sexual thrill and gratification. It is compulsory for their mode of existence. By the same token, it is necessary in every aspect of their life. Violence has the same place in their lives as rituals have. This ritualization of death and violence has made their lives devoid of fundamental life-nourishing forces like empathy and ethical sense of responsibility.

Wild fantasy and sporadic sexuality are the part and parcel of the lives of the narrator and his friends. Wild fantasy changes into hallucination and visualization. The narrator “visualized her as a glamorous but overworked medical student, breaking out of a long adolescence when she qualified as a doctor into a series of uncertain sexual affairs” ( 35). Each lover “ransacking the other’s body like Crusoe stripping his ship” (35). They seek to undergo the hyper-excitement in the consummation of alternative sexuality. In the following extract, their search for hyper-excitement can be seen clearly:

Hoping to soothe away the hyper-excitement which my crash had generated in Catherine -- now ever larger in memory, crueler and more spectacular – began to stroke her clitoris. Distracted, she soon left, kissing me firmly on the mouth as if she barely expected to see me



alive again. She talked on as if she thought that my crash had not yet occurred. (37)

The narrator titillates and stimulates both sexual and non-sexual organs of Catherine to feel the hyper-excitement. To maximize sexual pleasure they can go to any extent. They can perform any stroke of action. All the erected boundaries of normative conceptions and outlooks explode, leaving them in the lurch.

The frequent references to technology, violence and sexual fantasies enable the researcher to stake a claim that violent and wild sexual pursuits are means to break the stasis of life. Motionless and inert life is described with special importance. The narrator himself says “at one time Catherine’s body lying beside me in bed had seemed as inert and motionless as a sexual exercise doll fitted with a neoprene vagina. Those who are on the way to breaking the stasis of existence are far removed from perceiving reality. Reality is an anathema to them. Only fantasies and reveries are enchanting and mystifying to them. They are tortured and tormented with the sinister premonition of danger and disaster. The following extract throws spotlight on this aspect:

These premonitions of disaster remained with me. During my first days at home I spent all my time on the veranda, watching the traffic move along the motorway, determined to spot the first signs of this end of the world by automobile, for which the accident had been my own private rehearsal. (40)

The above-cited extract is descriptive of how much the narrator is enmeshed in the hallucinatory practice. Whether the accident has occurred really on the ground or is this mental projection of his psychotic frenzy and fantasy is utterly unclear. The narrator himself says that the entire scene of accident is his private rehearsal. So it can

be clearly said that the real is lost and the fantasy that is fabricated looms realistic to them. This is an authentic instance of hallucination and insanity. Postmodern spectrum of thought is marked by the loss of the real. So the unreal and anomalous looms as the real to those pathetic acolytes of postmodern thought.

Postmodern conception of life forbids the real. Only the simulated copy exists. Even the characters in this novel hardly seek the real. They always hunt for perspective. Through visualization and tantalization, they try to locate their bodies in sexual perspective. At the time of being surrounded by things, they naturally tend to place their bodies in sexual perspective. Thereby, they try to create sexual possibility of things that surround them. The narrator assumes “My body, which she had placed in a particular sexual perspective within a year or so of our marriage, now aroused her again. She was fascinated by the scars on my chest” (40). At present, exploration of sexual possibilities of everything has become a mode of asserting their freedom. But such an assertive mode has corrupted their moral conscience.

In his choice of the model of car, sexual perspective stands as the decisive factors. Obsession for placing things in sexual perceptible took the messianic form. The narrator himself says “Luckily, my messianic obsessions soon made themselves evident to Paul Waring, my partner. He arranged with Catherine to restrict my visits to the studio offices to an hour a day” (52). Obsession has reached messianic level.

The narrator drives his car. In parallel to the starting of the car, the narrator’s sexual activities begin. The jerking motion of car leads to the forcible outburst of the narrator’s semen. The narrator himself describes this parallel movement in the following excerpt:

Trying to control the car, I pressed the head of my penis against the lower rim of the steering wheel. Semen jolted through my penis. As I

lost control of the car the front wheel struck the kerb of the central reservation, throwing a tornado of dust and cigarette packs on to the windshield. The car swerved from the fast lane and veered towards an airline coach coming out of the roundabout. As the semen oozed from my penis I pulled the car behind the coach. The last tremor of this small orgasm faded. (59)

Outer violence seems to be imperative to stimulate sexual desires. The wildness and violence of sexual activities are demanding violence in the outer activities. It is a dangerous condition. Without going through violent procedures, orgiastic ecstasy remains elusive. Search for orgiastic bliss is an extreme search. It tends to be hazardous. Normal condition is not appropriate for them to reach the height of sexual bliss.

Not only the erogenous zone but the non-erogenous zone is also invaded by the mad search for sexual orgasm. In search for the extreme and heightened level of sexual bliss, each and every part of body, each and every organ is stimulated. Sometimes this process of stimulating and sexualizing the non-sexual organs takes the form of ludicrous act. It sometimes appears as sexual assault. Both the partners engaged in this game loom as machine like robotics responding to the command of violent sexual thirst. The line “Looking into her face, with its urgent mouth gasping as if trying to devour itself, I moved her hand around her breast. She was now talking to herself, rambling away like some demented accident casualty” (62). The sexual activities in which the narrator and Helen are engaged verges on dementia also. In this demented sexual pursuit, humanity of human beings is utterly devoid. It is evident that no trace of affect persists in such frenetic game of violent gratification instinctive urge. The following extract describes the narrator’s attempt to sexualize

the nonsexual organs of Helen and then turn bodies into instinct gratifying robotic machine:

Seizing me with her body in this arbor of glass, metal and vinyl, Helen moved her hand inside my shirt, feeling for my nipples. I took her fingers and placed them around my penis. Through the rear-view mirror I saw a water-board maintenance truck approaching. It moved past in a roar of dust and diesel exhaust that drummed against the doors of my car. This surge of excitement drew the first semen to my penis. Ten minutes later, when the truck returned the vibrating windows brought on my orgasm. Helen knelt across me, elbows pressed into the seat on either side of my head. (63)

The fact that shocks the researcher is how the narrator undergoes the surging and sizzling sexuality. The approaching water-board maintenance truck provokes a surge of sexual excitement. When he is sexually engaged with Helen and was unable to reach orgasm, he looked at the approaching water board maintenance truck through window. Its raucous sound assisted him to reach orgasm. Moreover it drew the first semen to his penis. The vibrating sounds of truck further helped him to prolong the duration of orgasm. While experiencing diverse sexual experiences, they try to look like dead machine. It is only after making oneself machine-like object that they can counter the influences of technology over their bodies.

In a comfortable and well-decorated bedroom, the narrator is unable to feel erected. He feels certain surges of erection only within automobile. His sexual experience cannot be judged and then categorized by using fixed criteria. The narrator records his experience in the following excerpt:

Strangely, our sexual acts took place only within my automobile. In the large bedroom of her rented house I was unable even to mount an erection, and Helen herself would become argumentative and remote, talking endlessly about the more boring aspects of her work. Once together in my car, with the crowded traffic lanes through which we had moved forming an unseen and unseeing audience, we were able to arouse each other. (65)

The narrator and his sex partner Helen are dreadfully inured to crowd, to the violence in traffic lane, cacophonous and noisome vulgarity generated by technology. Decency and individual sense of self-respect are so ruptured that the sex partners are silenced and subdued by their own experience. It appears that they are not experiencing violent varieties of sexuality but experience is subduing them. They are acted upon by the shards and threads of their degenerated experiences. Things that can be traced in a normal rational personality of man are miserably absent in the narrator and in his friends.

Like Helen and Karen, Gabrielle is also infected by postmodernist thought. She too is not free from the fate which befell Helen and Karen. She is prone to morbid depression. Most of the time, she awaits sexual assault. If violence comes in the form of sexual advance, she wholeheartedly welcomes it. The stunning fact is that she hopes for a revelation of moment in which her second personality emerges. Her expressionless face and bizarre fantasies prove that she is a pathetic victim of postmodern schooling and exposure. The following lines throw light on Gabrielle's condition:

Her expressionless face looked up at the fireman as he held his torch, almost as if waiting for some bizarre sexual assault. In the later

photographs the bruises that were to mask her face began to appear, like the outlines of a second personality, a preview of the hidden faces of her psyche which would have emerged only in late middle age. I was struck by the prim lines these bruises formed around her broad mouth. These morbid depressions were like those of a self-centered spinster with a history of unhappy affairs. (76)

Gabrielle's fate is no less than the fate of other characters. Circumstances have subjected her to delusional fantasy and psychosis. In the above-cited extract evidences about being split personality can easily be found. Her relation with her people is mediated by technology. Like other victims, she too is invaded and assaulted by the grotesque experience. The pattern of her life is increasingly grotesque. But to her, only the grotesque is real. It is the ultimate target of her postmodern struggle.

Digital simulation of reality is also a factor which hastened the disintegration of Vaughan's rational conscience and psychological framework. In several digitally animated photos and visual representation, technological landscape and automobiles pervade. In this visual representation, violence and sexuality are represented. Many television programs yoke violence and sexuality together. The following lines describe how Vaughan faces the disintegration of his psyche after his frequent exposure to violence and sexuality ridden television programs:

Vaughan's interest in myself was clearly minimal; what concerned him was not the behavior of a 40-year old producer of television commercials but the interaction between an anonymous individual and his car, the transits of his body across the polished cellulose panels and vinyl seating, his face silhouetted against the instrument dials. The

leitmotiv of this photographic record emerged as I recovered from my injuries: my relationships, mediated by the automobile and its technological landscape, with my wife, Renata and Dr. Helen Remington. (79)

Both general and electronic media are full of stuffs about violence and sexualities. News about violence and sexualities has received top priorities in media coverage. The more individuals are exposed to such media representation, the more their deranged desires get stimulated. Much more preoccupation would result in the gradual disintegration of normal psychology. In addition, frequent exposure to news, discourses and media representations are full of various sexual activities devoid of erotic dimension. It is already mentioned in the previous chapters that characters like Vaughan, the narrator, Karen, Catherine and others are on the voyage to exploring new sexuality or alternative sexuality. In various peripheral sexualities they happened to explore, erotic dimension was absent. The narrator concludes that he tried a carnal act of sodomy with Vaughan. Homo-erotic element was totally absent. Sodomy divested of erotic desire is what the narrator prefers. The glimpse of sodomy divested of erotic desire is noticeable in the following citation:

I looked down at Vaughan's long thighs and hard buttocks. However carnal an act of sodomy with Vaughan would have seemed, the erotic dimension was absent. Yet this absence made a sexual act with Vaughan entirely possible. The placing of my penis in his rectum as we lay together in the rear seat of his car would be an event as stylized and abstracted as those recorded in Vaughan's photographs. (80)

What the dominant sexual practice excludes as immoral and disgusting practices are brought to the surface. Media is playing a big part in exposing the socially forbidden

deviant sexual relations. In their search for different types of sexual satisfaction, the narrator and Vaughan have been acting in an inhuman way. Their carnal act of sodomy appears to be ludicrous. Yet they hardly care for the responses of others. They are madly preoccupied with deviant sex act like sodomy.

Magazines and other printed media goaded Vaughan and the narrator to fantasize about various fatal sexualities like sodomy, homosexuality and others. Printed media opened new threshold for sexual degradation. The narrator records, in the following extract, how he is tantalized by various sexual scenes captured torridly in magazine pages:

I looked through the color photographs in the magazines; in all of them the motor- car in one style or another figured as the centerpiece-pleasant images of young couples in group intercourse around an American convertible parked in a placid meadow; a middle-aged businessman naked with his secretary in the rear seat of his Mercedes; homosexuals undressing each other at a roadside picnic; teenagers in an orgy of motorized sex on a two tier vehicle transporter, moving in and out of the lashed-down cars, and throughout these pages the gleam of instrument panels and window louvers. (82)

This above-cited extract describes transgressive qualities of media representations and digital programs. On some pages of magazine articles, young couples are attempting intercourse freely in park. A middle aged man is loitering naked. Homosexuals are undressing each other at a roadside picnic. Teenagers too are trying to reach extreme level of sexual bliss by doing sex on their automobile. These sexual activities that are represented in different kinds of media have transgressive qualities.



In the face of the transgressive qualities of sexual activities, all normal conceptions regarding healthy and productive sexual relation shatter. As a result, human life hovers on the verge of wretchedness and deplorable plight. The limitless assimilation of the subversive postmodern ethos puts the lives of Vaughan and the narrator in jeopardy.

To cut the entire matter short, it can be implied that Vaughan is compelled to seek alternative sexuality in the face of growing machine culture. The forces that propelled him to engage in the fatal quest of alternative sexuality are out and out postmodernistic. The shifting scenario in machine culture and dependency on technology are the root causes behind the violent path chosen by Vaughan. The sort of path Vaughan treads and the sort of end he meets are none other than the effect of his immersion in the cult and spree of postmodern tendency.

## Chapter IV

### Depiction of Mental Disorder in *American Psycho* by Ellis

Bret Easton Ellis is acutely aware of the diverse effects which can arise from the uncritical assimilation of postmodernism. He has diagnosed the harmful consequences of postmodernism in his controversial novel *American Psycho*. The fundamental tenet of postmodernism is tested and tried in *American Psycho*. It is quite clear that Ellis's *American Psycho* is an exemplary text which dramatizes the vicious psychological effects of postmodern condition. The major character Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* degenerates into terrible insanity. He is so immersed in postmodern fantasy that he declines to see the difference between the real and the unreal. He talks about killing several people in his secret apartment cell. But his colleagues and friends disbelieve in what he says. They take him as a terrible chatterbox who goes on talking about killing people serially. They have realized that he is a psycho tycoon who has fallen into the matrix of insanity, fantasy and cannibalistic hunger.

In the last part of the novel even his legal adviser does not believe in Bateman's claim that he has killed a man. The legal adviser does not believe what Bateman says and claims because he had had lunch with the man in one of the restaurants in London a few days ago. At the end of the novel, it is obscure if Bateman really kills his disgruntled allies and arch enemies or does he concoct the fantasy of killing people serially. Despite the intentionally inserted obscurity in the last part of the novel, the preliminary part and the middle part describe and narrate terribly all the crimes and serial killings committed by Patrick Bateman.

Bateman is an employee on Wall Street. He has had the fervent desire to carve unique identity in the corporate world. He is avid for occupying exceptional stand and position in the field of entrepreneurship and corporate expertise. His

cupidity for dramatic success in the corporate world compels him to simulate a persona. The levels of success in business, which is above his reach, are simulated by him. He takes formidable pride in holding a business card. But when he knows that there are other people who are holding similar business card, his ego and pride falls flat. He felt ashamed and humbled terribly as soon as he sees other corporate colleagues holding business card.

The compulsion to be uniquely successful in the gorgeous world of Wall Street exerts extreme pressures in him. By hook or by crook, he has to come with flying color in the test of business activities on Wall Street. Whenever he achieves one level of success with hard work and maximum efforts, there would be others to overtake him, to outshine him. He finds himself left far behind in the marathon race of success in the corporate world. Thus he is bound to simulate the things that are seemingly out of his reach. He envies those who overcome him in the race of holding business card. His envy degenerates into revenge which subsequently transmutes into the cannibalistic hunger. He undertakes the cannibalistic act of killing his colleagues, friends and sex partners with axes and guns. In the diurnal course of actions, he acts in an affable way. He demonstrates cool and soft manner which charms everyone he befriends. But at night he displays his true color. He engages himself in serial killing. His jealousy-turned-vindictive life falls apart. Consequently, he falls into the matrix of schizophrenic nightmare and gruesome cannibalistic killing. The extreme pressures and constraints exerted by hectic corporate lives on Wall Street drove Bateman to concoct macabre fantasy and perpetrate serial killing.

By fabricating gory fantasies he tries to come out of the benumbing postmodern mercantilism and corporate activities. In real life he cannot compete; so he simulates. He concocts violent fantasy of serial killing to free himself from the

exhaustive and enervating impact of late capitalist mercantilism and do or die entrepreneurship. The Wall Street lives benumb Bateman. Throughout the novel he recounts in a first person subjective tone. He finds life on Wall Street dull and languorous. He experiences no motive and no drive for further creative venture. The following lines describe how dull and unenergetic Bateman felt on Wall Street:

I pick up morning's Wall Street journal and scan the front page-all of it one ink-stained senseless typeset blur. I think I was hallucinating while watching it. I cannot be sure. I do not remember, I murmur, placing the journal back down and then, picking up today's Financial Times, I really do not know. She just stands there waiting for instructions. I sigh and place my hands together, sitting down at the palazzetti glass -top desk, the halogen lamps on both sides already burning. Okay, Jean, I start. I need reservations for three at Camols at twelve - thirty and if not there, try Crayons. All right? (46)

Bateman is at his low spirit. He feels lethargic. His lassitude grows boundlessly. The sight at Wall Street journal and Financial Times makes him bore. The increasing boredom and his inability to occupy exceptional position in the corporate life on Wall Street produce ruinous effect in Bateman. Everything he sees on Wall Street pushes him to the nadir of boredom. In the above-cited extract there is an explicit evidence to assume that Bateman is seeking ways to transform his boredom into certain energetic and promising act.

Bateman calls his girl friend Patricia to his apartment at night. But she tells him that she can come only at nine o'clock at night. Rather she requests him to come to the concert to listen live music. But Bateman flatly denies. He says that he is unable to come. Actually Bateman had not called her for sex on that night. He intends to kill

her. For the delaying of his plan to kill her, he feels desolate and empty. He himself narrates “stunned, feverish, feeling empty, I contemplate the next move, the only sound the dial tone buzzing noisily from the receiver” (53). Bateman is in a rush. The feelings of emptiness make him restless. Within a moment, Bateman changes his plan to kill Patricia tonight. His decision oscillates from murderous plan to affectionate overture. He ruminates on his decisive act. He decides to remain protective towards her. The following extract describes how Bateman shifts his devilish plan to kill Patricia:

While waiting on the couch in the living room, the Wurlitzer jukebox playing ‘cherish’ by the loving spoonful, I come to the conclusion that Patricia 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 have made by cutting her throat or slicing her neck open or gouging her eyes out. She is lucky, even though there is no real reasoning behind the luck. Maybe the glass of Scharffenberger has deadened my impulse. (54)

In this extract, the narrator Bateman is using the term ‘maybe’ to describe his shifting mood. He does not know what he is planning to do and what he is actually going to do. It seems his impulses have controlled him. Before calling Patricia, he had had the plan to kill her by inviting her to his apartment under the pretext of sex. But soon this plan disappears from mind. He says a glass of Scharffenberger has deadened his impulses. Bateman does not bother to know what impulses arise in his mind and what disappears. He simply acts upon impulses.

Bateman visits several restaurants and dance bars. Every night he lives a romantic and frolicsome life. He dates with several girls, exploits them sexually and

sends them away from his life. He himself is unknown as to what brings him closer to a girl and what compels him to break the relationship. Once he encounters a man, whose breathing reeked, throwing belching sound and nauseous stench. The man apologized but Bateman grew more aggressive. At the apologetic tone of offenders, Bateman explodes with anger and aggression. This is the puzzling temperament of Bateman. He pretends to soothe the man with soft words and brings him outside restaurant. At one of the corners of road slightly far from the restaurant, he stabs the man. On several parts of this man's body, Bateman stabs. In a ruthless manner Bateman kills him. It is a ruthless and heart-rending stabs. The psycho sadist continuously stabs. The following extract produces a heart-rending account of Bateman's killing:

The stench of shit rises quickly into face and breathing through my mouth, down on my haunches, I start stabbing him in the stomach lightly, above the dense matted patch of pubic hair. This sobers him somewhat and instinctively he tries to cover himself with his hands and the dog starts yipping really furiously, but it does not attack, and I keep stabbing at the bum now between his fingers, stabbing the backs of his hands. His eye, burst open, hangs out of its socket and runs down his face and he keeps blinking which causes what is left of it inside the wound to pour and like red, vain egg yolk. (92)

Without any strong cause Bateman is engaged in a sadistic spree. He kills the man with a reeking smell without any specific and strong reason. The heart-rending scene in which Bateman frequently stabs the man gives plenty of evidences about how volatile Bateman's consciences are. Just a few moments ago, he was very affectionate and gentle in his acquaintance with the man. A tiny lapse in behavioral decorum

ignites Bateman's murderous frenzy. Then he begins to stab repeatedly till the man crumbles forever. The man whom Bateman killed is black. So it is tempting to guess that Bateman's intense racial hatred is incited by the Black man's lapse in restaurant-decorum. After stabbing the man several times, Bateman calls him "you crazy fucking nigger" (93). But this guess is not credible and convincing because Bateman had perpetrated similar serial killings just for a pointless cause or for a causeless cause.

Bateman is a mystery, a conundrum and a riddle in the history of serial killing. It is utterly vain to try to know when, how and why he reaches the position to murder. Even in the midst of stabbing and killing, he demonstrates mental calmness and composure. After repeatedly stabbing the Black man to death, he calmly looks at the barking dog and laughs mirthfully to his own inner contentment. The puzzling characteristic of the psycho killer is further reflected in the following extract:

Calmly, I whisper, there is a quarter. Go, buy some gum, you crazy fucking nigger. Then I turn to the barking-dog and when I get up, stomp on its front legs while it is crouched down ready to jump at me, its fangs bared, immediately shattering the bones in both its legs and it falls on its side squealing in pain, front paws sticking up in the air at an obscene, satisfying angle. I cannot help but start laughing and I linger at the scene, amused by this tableau. When I spot an approaching taxi, I slowly walk away. (93)

From one mood to another, Bateman oscillates. In the midst of murder he remains mirthful. No big stimulus is needed for him to be aggressive or satisfied. For no reason at all he can be bloodthirsty and affectionate. Throughout the day he flirts with girls, pays occasional visit to Wall Street and takes part in gruesome murder at night.

Bateman is driven by motives which no man can understand. A degenerate enigmatic psycho, Bateman seeks fresh sense of freedom in his nocturnal murderous spree.

Bateman has had massive prosperity. He is rich enough to afford anything. His roaring business and corporate status on Wall Street enabled him to achieve any level of life with fulfillment and fantasy. He has had countless numbers of girls to date and then to enjoy sexually. But his successful and satisfied life is interrupted sporadically by anxiety-attack. Headache, inner sense of alienation, anxiety attack, oscillating mood and uncontrollable outburst of sadistic urge and other factor overpower him. Once he came under the assault of amnesia which badly harmed in professional schedule. The following extract describes how he is infected with anxiety-attack, amnesia, physiological disorder and corroding sense of fear with a very short span of time:

And it is mid-afternoon and I find myself standing at a phone booth on a corner somewhere downtown, I do not know where, but I am sweaty and all I find are three fades Nuprin in a Gucci pillbox, so I pop all three into my mouth and swallow them down with a Diet Pepsi and I could not tell you where it came from if my life depended on it. I have forgotten who I had lunch with earlier and even more important, where. Was it Robert Ails at Beats? Or was it Todd tend ricks at Ursula's the new Philips Duncan Holmes bistro in Tribeca.

(103)

In the midst of hectic schedule, Bateman's memory falls apart. He does not know which course of action he is required to proceed. He finds himself in dilemma. He tries to recollect with whom he is supposed to have lunch. A single line of confusion adds another, which then puzzles him more. He is psychologically torn between



showy dignified corporate life on Wall Street and hectic private life full of romantic passions, intense sexual activities and schizophrenic urge. When he is in the midst of the maelstrom of confusion, anxiety-attack and amnesia, he struggles to know whom he is supposed to lunch with. His phone begins to ring several times. He tries to answer on his phone. But he is too confused to catch a clear track of thought. The following extract gives the glimpse of how he struggles to follow the clear track of his thought out of amnesia:

The phone keeps ringing but I do not know who I have called and I just stand on the corner, Ray-Bans balanced on my forehead at what feels like an odd, crooked angle, and then I hear a faint familiar sound coming through the wires Jean's soft voice competing with the endless gridlock stuck on Broadway. The Patty Winters Show this morning was Aspirin: Can It Save Your Life? "Jean?" I cry out. "Hello? Jean?" Patrick? Is that you? she calls back. Hello? Jean, I need help, I shout. Patrick? What? Jesse Forrest called, Jean says. He has a reservation at Melrose tonight at eight, and Ted Madison and Jamie Conway want to meet you for drinks at Harry's. Patrick? Jean asks. "Where are you?" "Jean?" (103)

Tormented by amnesia, Bateman receives the incoming calls on his phone. Several incoming calls come one after the other and Bateman struggles to fix whose call is coming. It is uncertain if Bateman is facing this sort of troublesome situation or is he creating a mental rehearsal of receiving calls from his friends. There are some evidences in the text that Bateman is creating mental image of a situation in which he is hassled by amnesia and he is unable to fix and finalize who is calling him and with whom he had had a date. Bateman is simply lost into the maelstrom of anxiety

and amnesia. But none of the cogent and convincing causes are given to justify his frequent relapse into the ambit of amnesia, anxiety-attack and schizophrenic fantasy.

In one restaurant Bateman, his friend Louis and Louis's girl friend Courtney were taking dinner. There were several other restaurant goers. All of a sudden, Bateman begins to contemplate on the idea of winning Louis's girl friend Courtney. He leaves the dinner table, goes to a side room where restaurant goers can spend a few minutes without being disturbed by others. He contemplates on the possibility of taking Courtney as his sex-partner. He then finally concludes, in this solitary room, that he can win Courtney by killing Louis. Again he ponders on Courtney's reaction at Louis's death. Several questions come in his mind about the idea of killing Louis. But he is not able to kill Louis instantly in the restaurant because there was a huge crowd of people who visited restaurant. But his insane urge to capture Courtney by killing Louis generates another violent outcome. In a moment of gratifying his blood thirsty urge, he kills the dog of Richard, the man who works on the restaurant counter. After killing the dog, Bateman loses no second to cut Richard's throat. The irresistible passions to win his friend's girl friend and his inability to kill Louis instantly change into the instant and instantaneous act of murdering Richard and his pet dog. A terribly unpredictable deranged killer, Bateman is incapable of any kind of crime. The following lines exemplify the point:

In one swift movement I pick the dog up quickly by the neck and hold it with my left arm, pushing it back against the streetlamp while it nips at me, trying to bite my gloves, its jaws snapping, but since I have got such a tight grip on its throat it cannot and I can actually hear my hand crush its trachea. I push the serrated blade into its stomach and quickly slice open its hairless belly in a squirt of brown

blood. Then I whirl around on its owner and I push him back, hard, with a bloodied glove and start randomly stabbing him. In the face and head, finally slashing his throat open in two brief chopping motions.

(113)

Bateman's violent and blood-thirsty nature is utterly unpredictable. He acts on the spur of moment. He nurtures motiveless malignity. Of course, certain cause is traceable to his act of murder. But his cause is not compatible with the bulk of violence and crime he commits. He is seldom in rush after committing murder. During the time of his serial killings, he demonstrates a great deal of calmness and patience. He is of the opinion that committing a murder and doing a normal schedule-based activity is not substantially different. This opinion puts Bateman on the way to committing serial killings.

After Bateman departs from the place from where he commits murder he gets thrilled. He then runs to Broadway screaming like a banshee. He is no less than a blood-thirsty elf. He narrates "I get a small but incendiary thrill when I walk out of the store, trying to whistle, hip to be square, running down Broadway, screaming like a banshee" (113). Bateman's psyche degenerated into cannibalistic hunger. His desire knows no bound. No normal and rational barrier restricts his hunger for the instant gratification of his violent impulses. Killing brings solace and thrill to him. He appears as the sadistic blood-thirsty hound.

Apart from murdering people who are somehow acquainted with him, Bateman has fallen into the shocking and decadent habit of luring two girls to his apartment and performing that sort of sexual activity which is normally unthinkable and unimaginable. He tempted two girls Sabrina and Christie to his apartment. He encouraged both the girls to exploit his body sexually. He sucked one

girl's vagina, allowing other girl to suck his dick. Bateman enjoys such sexual activities as though he is born to exploit his body sexually. More than these two girls exploiting him sexually, it is he who is taking his sexuality to the unimaginable level of ecstasy. The following lines describe the process in which Bateman is allowing two girls to come to the indescribable posture of sex:

Lick her cunt first, I tell Sabrina and with her own finger she spreads it open and starts lapping at it like a dog while massaging the clit and then she moves up to Christie's asshole which she laps at in the same ways. Christie's moans are urgent and uncontrolled and she starts pushing her ass harder into Sabrina's face, onto Sabrina's tongue, which Sabrina pushes slowly in and out of Christine's asshole. While she does this I watch, transfixed, and start rubbing Christie's clit quickly until she is humping onto Sabrina's face and shouts. I am coming and while pulling on her own nipples has a long, sustained orgasm. And though she could be faking it I like the way it looks so I do not slap her or anything. (118)

He is engaged in those sexual activities which are entirely transgressive. He succeeds in performing sexual activities with two girls at the same time. His sexual activity assumes triangular form which helps him to reach the height of unusual sexual pleasure. He allows Christie and Sabrina to squeeze his body sexually. To Bateman, each and every organ of human body is charged with sexuality. The whole human body is an erogenous zone. The domain of sexuality is widened by Bateman's single-handed efforts. Madness, wildness and certain degree of ruthlessness are noticeably present in the scene in which Bateman is performing sexual activity with Christine and Sabrina at the same time. He excites them sexually so much so that they begin to

masturbate. One girl begins to suck the clitoris of another girl. No clear-cut boundary is seen in the spectrum of such violently transgressive sexuality. Sometimes it looks like lesbian sex; while at other times it looks like heterosexual relation. Both sadistic sex and masturbatory practice are also visible in this bizarre sexuality. This scene of violent and quirky sex act ruptures all the demarcations and barriers that are established in the history of human sexuality and sensuality. In this regard, Bateman's sexual life and his sexual adventure are utterly transgressive, shocking and subversive. The prospect of healthy human relation is rendered bleak and pessimistic in the wake of terribly transgressive sexuality practiced by Bateman, Christine and Sabrina. The following extract further illustrates how transgressive and insane sexuality cherished and practiced by postmodern youths produce ruinous effect in society:

She fingers her cunt, which is so wet that her upper thighs look like someone's slathered something slick and oily all over them. I push Christie down past my waist to help Sabrina suck my cock off and after the two of them take turns licking the head and the shaft, Christie moves to my balls which are aching and swollen, as large as two small plums, and she laps at them before placing her mouth over the entire sac, alternately massaging and lightly sucking the balls, separating them with her tongue. Christie keeps masturbating herself this entire time. Clean and pink and wet and spread, her clit swollen, engorged with blood, her cunt hangs over my head and I push my face into it tonguing it, craving its flavor, while fingering her asshole. (118)

Bateman, Christie and Sabrina seldom pay heed to what is morally forbidden and what is socially approved. For them, the extreme intensity of joy is enough. Rather

than thinking about the moral and social boundary to experience, the intensity of experience is important. They are madly avid for orgasm. They are ready to break and breach any kind of norms and conventions. In their ceaseless struggle for the gratification of orgiastic hunger, they seem no less than beasts. This is a credible instance of the degradation and disintegration of characters who take as the great adventure the task of crossing the boundary of the saving graces of life.

Bateman's psyche suffers a rift. In his diurnal course he is methodological in his approach to handling daily task and activity. He shows love for order, system and courtesy. He is far more aware of what he needs to celebrate Christmas. He reserves a great deal of time to purchase things for Christmas. In seeking to establish social rapport, Bateman seems to be pretty agile and nimble-footed. Most of the time, he seems to be spontaneous and insouciant. He appears to be fancy-free, direct and candid in his daily life. But in his nocturnal course of life, Bateman harbors unnecessary fantasies. He fabricates dreadful fantasies. Some of his fantasies are about his plan to commit gruesome murder. The proclivity to fabricate dangerous fantasy never leaves him free throughout his nocturnal life. It seems Bateman has fallen into the matrix of compulsive misery and murder. To come out of the deadening workaholic life stuck to occupational schedule, he has to commit several fantasies. Bateman is a split personality. His methodological approach stands in sharp contrast to his serial killings. The following extract demonstrates his love for methodological approach to the diurnal course of action:

My priorities before Christmas include the following: to get an eight o' clock reservation on a Friday night at Dorsia with Courtney, to get myself invited to the Trumps Christmas party aboard their yacht, to find out as much as humanly possible about Paul Owen's mysterious

Fisher account, to saw a hard body's head off and Federal Express it to Robin Barker -- the dumb bastard -- over at Salomon Brothers and to apologize to Evelyn without making it look like an apology. The patty winters show this morning was about women who married homosexuals and I almost called Courtney up to warn her as a joke but then decided against it. (120)

Outwardly, Bateman demonstrates sane and reasonable behavior. In office, parties, shopping malls and restaurant he displays gentility and decorum. He produces every impression of being a member of well-cultivated class. This is one face of Bateman while conversing gently with his friends; he goes on concocting dreadful fantasy of killing a man who is passing good time with his beautiful girl friend. At night Bateman participates in the spree of serial killing. The split psyche of Bateman is an effect and outcome of postmodern trends that are in full swing in the then American corporate society.

Bateman's inner drives and primordial unconscious instinct are so volatile and irresistible that he has no control over them. On the contrary, those forces have overpowered him. In the restaurant he comes in a rush to the table and kisses Owen's girl friend Cecelia. Everyone in the restaurant believed that Patrick has the image of a devil, an elf. By the time he is coming to restaurant, Cecelia tells her friends that Patrick, the Christmas elf, is coming. At the mention of his name, Bateman wanders widely on the room and plants violent kiss on Cecelia. He himself does not know how swiftly his anger at Cecelia for her backbiting changed into his sporadic act of planting kiss on her lips. Bateman narrates "I shout, and people around us are suddenly ducking, and then I kiss her on the lips while looking at Owen and Meredith, both of them staring at me strangely" (126). Patrick Bateman has appeared as a misfit

and a threat to the social norms and morality. He is fallen to such a level that he is capable of anything and any kind of act heedless of the effects of such act in society.

Paul Owen is another friend of Bateman. Paul Owen is hilarious, affable and jocular. He is jocularly fond of twisting matters to create funny and humorous atmosphere. But Bateman does not penetrate this sort of humorous disposition of Paul Owen. Bateman is lost in his own inner solipsistic world. He takes this manner of Paul Owen as a serious insult. Bateman does not complain with Owen about this sort of insulting behavior. He feels irritated and creates a dreadful plan to murder Owen ruthlessly. Bateman's irritation at Owen's jaunty and jocular manner transmutes into the ruthless plan of killing. Bateman says "what I have mistaken at first for pomposity on Owen's part is actually just drunkenness. When I press for information about the Fisher account he offers useless statistical data that I already knew about" (148). Bateman is infuriated at Owen's way of providing information. But such fury should not drive him to hatch a fatal conspiracy against Owen. Bateman continues to lament "I attempt to steer the conversation back to the mysterious Fisher account, he infuriatingly changes the topic back to either tanning salons or brands of cigars or certain health clubs or the best places to job in Manhattan and he keeps guffawing" (149).

In joint business, misunderstanding amidst business partners is bound to crop up. It can be settled through talk. If misunderstanding deepens, either business partner can withdraw his partnership. But Bateman is far from following this common custom. He wants to let misunderstanding change into hostility.

The infuriating manner of Owen wounds Bateman's heart. Actually, there is none of such things to be deeply offended and wounded. Bateman invites Owen to his apartment under the plea of discussing business matter seriously. He provides plenty



of drinks to Owen. Owen soon gets intoxicated. He gets intoxicated and helpless. Seizing this moment Bateman strikes a lethal blow on Owen's head with an ax and slays Owen down mercilessly. The following extract describes how Bateman happens to kill Owen mercilessly:

The ax hits him midsentence, straight in the face, its thick blade chopping sideways into his open mouth, shutting him up. Paul's eyes look up at me, then voluntarily roll back into his head, then back at me, and suddenly his hands are trying to grab at the handle, but the shock of the blow has sapped his strength. There is no blood at first, no sound either except for the newspapers under Paul's kicking feet, rustling, tearing. Blood starts to slowly pour out of the sides of his mouth shortly after the first chop, and when I pull the ax out – almost yanking Owen out of the chair by his head- and strike him again in the face, splitting it open, his arms flailing at nothing, blood sprays out in twin's brownish geysers straining my raincoat. (149)

Callously, Bateman kills Owen. Bateman does not derive heroic pride in this ruthless act of serial killing. Killing makes him feel psychic release from unknown and inexpressible burden. He feels that he has done an act which counterbalances the insult Owen has given. Bateman acts more than tit for tat theory. He gives death in favor of insult. To the best of Bateman's understanding, murder is the best panacea for the troubles others bring in Patrick's life.

Bateman is a complex bundle of hypersensitive nerves. Sensations, over reactive and temperamental inclination overtook his life. He acts what sudden upsurge of sensation and emotion goads him to do. He says that he needs immediately what are within the immediacy of his vision. He lacks an atom of patience and superego.

The following snatch of his interior monologue reveals many things regarding his personality:

I think about other things while she describes her recent past: air, water, sky, time, a moment, a point somewhere when I wanted to show her everything beautiful in the world. I have no patience for revelations, for new beginnings, for events that take place beyond the realm of my immediate vision. A young girl, a freshman, I met in a bar in Cambridge my junior year at Harvard told me early one fall that life is full of endless possibilities. I tried valiantly not to choke on the beer nuts I was chewing while she gushed this kidney stone of wisdom, and I calmly washed them down with the rest of a Heineken, smiled and concentrated on the dart game that was going on in the corner.

(168)

Even for a single moment, Bateman cannot endure the violent upsurge of his emotions and impulses. In the moment of violent reactions, Bateman acts as though he has no control over his insane passions. But when he is on restaurant and on shopping trip with his girl friend he acts as though he is a cool, calm and collected personality. By applying any normal framework, it is difficult to figure out what kind of man Bateman is. His dark and obscure motives behind his activities are inaccessible to everyone who reads the novel.

Patrick tempts girls with the power of wealth. He spends a good deal of money on girls. He takes them to shopping malls and restaurant. It is just the technique of tempting girls convincing them and bringing them to his apartment. Once girls are impressed by him, he enacts violent sexual relation with them and kills them.

Therefore his outward show of gentle and seemingly normal life is just the subterfuge

to create setting for serial killing. Bethany is one girl whom Bateman killed by confining her in a helpless situation:

Once it is placed on its stand and running on automatic, with a pair of scissors I start to cut off her dress and when I get up to her chest I occasionally stab at her breasts, accidentally slicing off one of her nipples through the bra. She starts screaming again once I have ripped her dress off, leaving Bethany in only her bra, its right cup darkened with blood, and her panties, which are soaked with urine, saving them for later. I lean in above her and shout, over her screams, try to scream, keep screaming. I have opened all the windows and the door to my terrace and when I stand over her, the mouth opens and not even screams come out anymore, just horrible, guttural, animal-like noises.

(171)

The murder which Bateman committed in the above-cited extract shows that Bateman does not deserve to be called a human being. So much meanness, brutal lust for blood and sadism exist in Bateman's heart that he appears as animality incarnate. The frozen life in corporate center and machine like bogus culture of 1970 are to be held responsible for the fall of Bateman from the status of human being to the hell of sadism and savagery.

Bateman performs several things at the same time. He talks to his girl friend. At the same time he visualizes the scene of exploiting her sexually and then murdering her. When he sits close to her, he derives a thrilling sense of romantic warmth. At that moment he hallucinates a vivid scene in which extreme festivity takes place. In a single moment Bateman's mind acts dangerously. He goes on hallucinating

and then behaving like a gentle man with his girl friend in restaurant. The following lines describe how Bateman's mind has turned into a fountain of insanity:

And though it has been in no way a romantic everything, she embraces me and this time emanates warmth I am not familiar with. I am so used to imagining everything happening. The way it occurs in movies, visualizing things falling somehow into the shape of events on a screen, that I almost hear the swelling of orchestra, can almost hallucinate the camera planning low around us, fireworks bursting in slow motion overhead, the seventy-millimeter image of her hips parting and the subsequent murmur of 'I want you' in Dolby sound.

(184)

Bateman's mind has become a storehouse of insanity, hallucinatory fantasy and murder plans. Even the slightest disorder in the outer world provokes Bateman to act dreadfully. Inner psychic malaises have put Bateman in confinement. To achieve a temporary moment of freedom from his inner psychic malaises lets his mind operate in whichever way his mind dictates.

Even in his office Bateman is concerned with how to hide the dead body of Owen. Wherever he goes, his mind is surrounded by thoughts of murder. He ponders painfully on how many days it would take for dead body to disintegrate. The following extract gives ideas about Bateman's messy and meandering thoughts:

In this office right now I am thinking about how long it would take a corpse to disintegrate right in this office. In this office these are the things I fantasize about while dreaming: Eating ribs at Red, Hot and Blue in Washington D. C. If I should switch shampoos, what really is the best dry beer? Is Bill Robinson an overrated designer? What's

wrong with IBM? Ultimately luxury. Is the term 'playing hardball' an adverb? The fragile peace of Assisi. Electric light. The epitome of luxury. Of ultimate luxury. The bastard's wearing the same damn Armani linen suit I have got on. How easy it would be to scare the living wits out of this fucking guy. Kimball is utterly unaware of how vacant I am. There is no evidence of animate life in this office, yet still he takes notes. (192)

In this above-cited extract, Bateman uses terms like 'epitome of luxury', 'ultimate luxury'. While deliberating upon his extreme luxury, he happens to use these terms out of impulse. Luxury has become his bane and boon. His vast luxury and good financial prospect on Wall Street put him on decadence. It is the same prosperity which enabled Bateman to get his sadistic sexual hunger. The same financial strength opened him an opportunity to perpetrate serial killings. Bateman lacks concentration. He feels vacuous. Despite his long-term contemplation, Bateman finds nothing to animate his life. He is drowned into the solicitude, lethargy and vacuity. Without committing violent deed, it would be difficult for him to achieve self-awareness.

Driven by emptiness and desolation, Patrick Bateman loves to wander aimlessly through public park, zoo and open land left for idle gathering. Aimless loitering helps him to overcome his emptiness. Once he saw an infant being suckled by his mother. The scene of a woman breastfeeding her infant evokes in him love for the child. Within the flash of a moment, he feels a strong compulsive urge to kill the infant. The momentary flash of affection for an infant changes into a violent urge to kill. But he ruminates on this plan. Soon the idea of killing the infant is replaced by the idea of killing the mother. The tranquil and solitary environment softens his insane mentality. Finally he slaps the infant's mother and disappears suddenly leaving no

trace behind him. He is always jolted with pointless excitement and formidable despair. The following extract presents evidences about how Bateman is jolted into despair and driven towards terrific mood to murder:

Though I am satisfied at first by my actions, I am suddenly jolted with a mournful despair, I am suddenly jolted with a mournful despair at how useless, how extraordinarily painless, it is to take a child's life. This thing before me small and twisted and bloody, has no real history, no worthwhile past, nothing is really lost. It is so much worse taking the life of someone who has hit his or her prime, who has the beginnings of a full history, a spouse, a network of friends, a career whose death will upset far more people whose capacity for grief is limitless than a child's would, perhaps ruin many people's lives than just the meaningless, puny death of this boy. I am automatically seized with an almost overwhelming desire to knife the boy's mother too.

(208)

Throughout the text what remains puzzling is why Bateman is seized by an overwhelming desire to kill people whom he hardly knows. At one moment he wants to kill an infant. Within a fraction of a second his overwhelming desire subsides and he contemplates on murdering not the infant but the mother. In no way it can be said that Bateman's reasoning power is corrupted and distorted due to his limitless passions for the extremity of any kind of experience. When he is seized by an overwhelming desire to kill an infant, he delivers a brilliant chain of reason. In terms of his reasoning power he is no less than a normal man with sane psychology. Something has deadened his rational mode of perception. Certain thing has blocked

the psychic flow of rational conscience. To make a clean breast of the blocked consciousness, Bateman has to take resort to violence and killing.

Without a short span of time Bateman's mind travels from anticipation to nostalgia, exuberance to agony, loneliness to lassitude. He comes to relish in the several activities which ultimately make him feel empty and desolate. While surveying things that happen in the busy station, platform and fallow land his eyes fall on those things which match with his desolate and fantasy-driven mind. He says "I feel empty, hardly here at all, but even the arrival of the police seems an insufficient reason to move and I stand with the crowd outside the penguin habitat" (208). His eyes happen to fall on an owl's eyes which are an objective correlative to his own harsh existence. In his own words "for some reason this breaks the tension I started feeling when I first noticed the showy owl's eyes and then when it recurred after the boy was dragged out of the penguin habitat" (208). From imaginative stand to the painful sense of nostalgia, Bateman moves, leaving no comprehensible clues about his downfall and degradation.

Torri is a girl whom Bateman exploited sexually in the same way in which he had exploited other girls. Thereupon he kills her by peeling her skin, cutting her fingers and then pouring acid on her belly and genital. Bateman enacts his ritualistic act of killing girls after having sex with them. The following extract depicts how Bateman performs his ritualistic cult of serial killing:

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, begging for mercy in a high thin voice and I am hoping that she realizes her punishment will end up being relatively light compared to what I have planned for the other one. 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 is left of her neck stuck on bone and I stop. (210)

Bateman kills Torri and when she is dead he inserts his penis on the mouth of dead Torri and performs sex act. With dead body's sex organs he performs sexual relation. It becomes clear that Bateman seeks dreadful variations in his uninterrupted sexual life. He is far detached from the normal basis of life in his search for the unknown bliss in his sexual hunt and serial killing. No matter what sort of crimes he commits and the dreadful path he chooses, the troubled relation between individuals and deadening socio-economic phenomena are to be held accountable for the degradation and insanity of youths like Patrick Bateman.

In his conversation with Evelyn, Bateman himself says that he is unable to go back from his homicidal activities because his engagement in homicidal activities helped him to express his blocked need. The postmodern trends like counting life in terms of extreme financial profit, frequenting malls and restaurants to bring variations in pleasure, going to the extreme joy, exploiting life's all possibilities for alternative pleasure put Bateman on such conditions. The following extract is related with the conversation between Evelyn and Bateman, which reveals Bateman's needs behind uninterrupted series of homicidal acts:

I think, Evelyn, that I start, stall, start again that we have lost touch. Why? What is wrong? She is waving to a couple - Lawrence Montgomery and Geena Webster, I think and from across the room Geena hold up her hand, which has a bracelet on it. Evelyn nods



approvingly. My need to engage in homicidal behavior on a massive scale cannot be, um, corrected; I tell her measuring each word carefully. But I have no other way to express my blocked needs. I am surprised at how emotional this admission makes me, and it wears me down. I feel light-headed. As unusual, Evelyn misses the essence of what I am saying, and I wonder how long it will take to finally rid myself of her. (237)

Several factors are responsible for Bateman's present predicament. For the most part his own tendency to seek unusual and uncanny joy in everything he does is the main factor of his insane life. Other social factors and postmodern outlook on life are responsible for it. Going to restaurant with different sorts of girls, and brining them to his apartment and then killing them have become means to externalize his blocked needs. Bateman does not explicitly mention what blocked life on Wall Street and his subsequent failure to compete with other corporate figureheads make him feel left far behind in the race for achieving distinct financial glamour. His humiliation at being the second comer in holding business card boggles his mind and chills his heart. He feels drowned in the matrix of misery, desolation and inferiority. His mind is wholly devoid of self-awareness. As a result, he has to engage in homicidal activities to knock the closed door of his consciousness.

Throughout the novel, the conversation between Evelyn and Patrick Bateman reveals further insights into the indecipherable criminal psyche of Bateman. Warrants, stock of offerings, ESOPs, LBOs, IPOs, finances, refinances, debentures, and proxy statements create confusions. Life on Wall Street remained a source of constant confusion and threat. Several risks were found in stock exchanges and share transaction. His daily exposure to the intense possibility of profit and hazardous

chance of loss made Bateman lost in his own fantasy and homicidal plan. He tells Evelyn that he found no identification on Wall Street. Only isolation prevailed in his life. He tells Evelyn that he is lost in his own private maze on Wall Street. The following extract discloses plenty of clues about Bateman's inner condition of mind:

I make no comment, lost in my own private maze, thinking about other things: Warrants, stock offerings, ESOPs, IBOs, IPOs, finances, refinances, debentures, converts, proxy statements, 8-Ks, 10-Qs, zero coupons Piks, GNPs, the IMF, hot executive gadgets, billionaires, Kenkichi Nakajima, infinity, infinity, how fast a luxury car should go, ballouts, junk bonds, whether to cancel my subscription to The Economist, the Christmas Eve, when I was fourteen and had raped one of our maids, Inclusivity, envying someone's life, whether someone could survive a fractured skull, waiting in airports, stifling a scream, credit cards and someone's passport and a book of matches from La Cote Basque splattered with blood, surface. surface, surface, a Rolls is a Rolls is a Rolls. (241)

The consumerist culture and dull life on Wall Street provoke Bateman to seek violent means to establish contact with his core self. If violent deviations have taken place in Bateman's life, nothing is responsible for it other than the impact of consumerist culture and soulless life on Wall Street devoid of any surge and animation in life. His sense of being lagged far behind and his inability to compete with other corporate giants put him in rush and restlessness.

Simulation is the only means. Dissimulation is another refuge for Bateman. As a consequence, Bateman turns out to be a violent deranged killer devoid of a chunk of

humanity and compassion. His monstrous acts and well-planned serial killing make a mockery of fresh trends that have mushroomed in the then postmodern society.

On the basis of all these evidences from Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, it can be deduced that postmodernism generates harmful effects in the psyche of those people who embrace the doctrine of postmodernism. Patrick Bateman is committed to the trend of postmodernism. He gives in to the fervor and fever of postmodern proclivity. The boring and tough life on Wall Street benumbs him. His own failure to revive his belief in normative principle pushes him to the dreadful psychological condition. As a result, he submerges into the inner psychic chaos. The deviant track chosen by Bateman is the result and effect of his immersion and assimilation of the postmodern norms.

## Chapter V. Conclusion: Limitations of Postmodern Thought

The core finding of this research is that postmodern conditions produce detrimental psychological effects on those who follow unduly the doctrine of postmodernism. Ballard's *Crash* and Ellis's *American Psycho* are case in point. These two novels present dramatically the worst effects caused by the unrestrained immersion and assimilation of postmodern thought. In *Crash*, the protagonist, Vaughan, gives free rein to these passions. He does not restrain his emotional urges. He gives free rein to his passions. He tends to go to the extreme. He is obsessively preoccupied with deformed objects. Vaughan is hardly tempted by shapely and symmetrical objects. What tempt him frantically are ugly objects. It is difficult to know how Vaughan happens to be attracted by ugly and deformed things.

It is obviously clear that no normative norms and values have governed Vaughan's passion for deformity. Sexual passions at normal level hardly tempt him. He has to take resort to violence in order to reach the height of sexual ecstasy. All the choices and experiences of Vaughan appear to be odd, deviant, deadly and detrimental if judged from the perspective of the normative. But Vaughan takes his search for solace in the deformity and the ugly as the normal experience. Ungoverned and unguided by normative ethos and values, Vaughan's passions and experiences take the messy and meandering direction. Gradually he falls into the bad matrix of obsession, debauchery, self-deception, ignominy and narcissism. His search for new sexuality in relation to violence puts his existence on the verge of instant evaporation. Similarly, the protagonist Bateman of *American Psycho* is ignorant as to how to moderate his desires and passions. He works on Wall Street.

The corporate world of Wall Street puts heavy pressures on him. He has to engage himself in the tough competition with other tycoons of Wall Street. He assumes that he is the first person on Wall Street to hold smart business card. When he finds out that there are already other businessmen who have smarter card than that of Bateman, Bateman becomes profoundly shocked and jealous. Out of his jealousy, he concocts a scheme to ruin them. He is too weak to defeat his business rivals in a competitive way. Since he is too weak to compete with them in the corporate world, he hatches a conspiracy to demolish them. There are reasons behind such choices of Bateman.

When Bateman becomes unable to defeat others in a reasonable and competitive way, he takes resort to violence. Even for his friends who slightly insult Bateman while dealing with business issues, Bateman could not help feeling consumed by jealousy and vindictive desire. He determines to take revenge on them. He invites them to his apartment, feeds them and finally kills them by using hatchet. In his romantic life also Bateman commits the same error. He dates with several girls. He does not hesitate to enjoy with them. At the same moment, Bateman enacts sexual relations with two girls. Then he kills these girls. Bateman demonstrates cruelty and compassion at the same time. He represents sanity and insanity at the same moment.

It is true that Bateman is compelled to simulate the personality which he is incapable of achieving. By the same token, he dissimulates his real nature for some time and gives vent to his repressed desires in a maddening way. Such a proclivity drags him on the path to serial killing. Bateman could not feel contented with what he holds and what he has possessed. He is totally unable to exercise and exert moral pressures, sense of restraint and firm sense of control over his haphazard and meandering passions. Simulation and dissimulation confine Bateman in a narrow cell

of solipsism and distorted ambition. To come out of this sort of miserable plight, Bateman has no option other than concocting violent fantasy.

One after the other Bateman goes on to commit serial killings. Involvement in serial killings is the only one way of Bateman to set up contact with the real world. It is still uncertain if he commits serial killings at mental level or in real life.

Schizophrenic symptoms grow in Bateman's personality. Outwardly he presents himself as the respectable citizen and corporate tycoon of Wall Street. Inwardly he has revealed dreadful appearance. He is a murderer who is able to show any kind of face in the public. Bateman does not follow any kind of established order and normative discipline. As a result he continues to encounter several unprecedented happenings. At last he collapses into insanity and schizophrenia.

Thus it can be summed up that Ballard's *Crash* and Ellis's *American Psycho* foreground the detrimental effects which can arise from an individual's unrestrained immersion and engagement in the cult of handling life after the postmodern fashion. Since no normative ethics and values are credited by postmodern doctrine, unrestrained immersion in postmodern ethos leads to the disintegration and degradation of an individual's psyche.

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