

American psycho: obsession comes from the inability

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To be successful and functional members of society, we must always be evolving with its changes. But once we grow negligent towards other aspects of our lives, and focus on one only, negative effects inevitably follow.

Obsession renders us dysfunctional citizens due to our inability to maintain balance in our lives, and to accept understand ourselves as we are. In the novel, *American Psycho*, by Bret Easton Ellis, Patrick Bateman, a Manhattan socialite, is a caricature by which the horrors of obsession are demonstrated.

These fixations demonstrate that obsession comes from the inability to accept oneself. In the following paragraphs, we support our argument by considering the fixations of Bateman with physical beauty, success and Jealousy, and murder and gore. Bateman's fixation with physical beauty are clearly seen when he is engaged in bragging and putting his wealth on display for the audience and later, for emphasis, cleansing with expensive products. Bateman spends his days in indulgence of wealth; he snorts cocaine, goes to clubs, and feeds his addiction to expensive labels. Take the ice-pack mask off and use a deep-pore cleanser lotion, then an herb-mint facial masque... I use the Bright tooth polisher and next the Interplay tooth polisher... In the shower I use first a water-activated gel cleanser, then a honey- almond body scrub... I always use an aftershave lotion with little or alcohol, because alcohol dries your face out, and makes you look older. " (26-27) He is motivated by his need for physical beauty to spend hours of every day fulfilling extensive cosmetic and exercise rituals.

He is very specific about his products, settling for no less than " a deep-pore cleanser lotion," and " an herb-mint facial masque. " HIS routines are detailed carefully so as to avoid any damage to his beauty, such as using <https://assignbuster.com/american-psycho-obsession-comes-from-the-inability/>

alcohol, which "dries your face out, and makes you look older." This obsession is born from his insecurity about his physical attractiveness. Throughout the book, Bateman is portrayed as being anxious about his looks, asking, "WOWS my hair?" (232) on numerous occasions. When he is uncomfortable in a social situation with an ex-girlfriend, Peete immediately becomes self-conscious, "What? I panic, immediately touching my hair. "Too much mousse?" (236). Later in the book, he expresses his concerns about becoming addicted to exercise. When confronted, he states, "You can always be thinner, look better. (372)" This obsession with his physical appearance clearly derived from his inability to accept himself physically. Bateman's dissatisfaction with his career is apparent when he expresses his frustration about being a useless member of the Pierce & Pierce firm which his father rustically owns.

This dissatisfaction cultivates into an obsessive jealousy of Paul "Hello, Owen," I say, admiring the way he's styled and slicked back his hair, with a part so even and sharp it... Devastates me and I make a mental note to ask him where he purchases his hair-care products, which kind of mousse he uses, my final guess after mulling over the possibilities being Ten-X. "(111)" From the introduction of Paul Owen in the novel until his murder, Bateman remains fixated on Owen's success and handling of a prestigious account.

There are numerous occasions in which he asks or thinks about this such as, "Owen is standing near the bar... I'm about to walk over and mention something about that damned Fischer account..." (185). Bateman's obsession with Owen's successful career comes from the dissatisfaction with

his own. This is apparent when asked about work Patrick expresses frustration saying, " I Just don't want to talk about... Work... I hate it. "(237). As Batman's fixation with Paul Owen and his success grows, he is less and less able to accept himself, and his failing career until he is able to murder Owen and rid himself of his obsession.

Such actions clearly imply that Batman's obsession was born from his inability to accept himself. Batman's inability to accept and understand himself cultivates in an obsession with murder and gore. This is demonstrated throughout the novel when he murders, rapes, and tortures several people for little to no reason. He is incapable of accepting and coping with his pain and thus becomes fixated on inflicting it upon others. " My pain is constant and sharp and I do not hope for a better world for anyone, in fact I want my pain to be inflicted on others.

I want no one to escape, but even after admitting, I gain no deeper knowledge of myself... " (201) Batman expresses sorrow over not being able to understand himself, or to cope with and accept the pain of psychopaths. This lack of connection with himself results in his dissatisfaction with his life, because of which he does not hope for " a better world for anyone" and inflicts his pain onto others. His inability to accept and understand his own pain is the origin of his uncontrollable obsession with murder and gore.

Patrick Batman's insecurities and the obsessions derived from them are reflective of the issues modern society is confronted with. The obsession with physical beauty as a product of low self-esteem, the obsession with others'

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success as a product of one's inability to achieve their own, and the obsession with bringing pain upon others as a product of pain within oneself are the struggles that Patrick Bateman represents that will perhaps resonate forever with mankind; all of which support the argument that obsession originates from the lack of acceptance and understanding of oneself.