

Greed and materialism in the 1980s



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Part Thesis: When the conservative values of the Cold War 1950s hit the technology of the 1980s, it was like a kid in the candy store where everything was possible, but only the lustful greed was probable.

"... a new facial scrub by Caswell-Massey and a body wash by Greune, then a body moisturizer by Lubriderm and a Neutrogena facial cream. I debate between two outfits. One is a wool crepe suit by Bill Robinson I bought at Saks with this cotton jacquard shirt from Charivari and an Armani tie" (76).

This statement shows the shallowness of the commercialism that was used to demonstrate how capitalism was winning the Cold War. Nevermind that it was just a string of name dropping meaningless products.

" I'm wandering around VideoVisions, the video rental store near my apartment on the Upperwest Side, sipping on a can of Diet Pepsi, the new Christopher Cross tape blaring from the earphones of my Sony Walkman" (111). Bateman is naming the litany of products and is pointing out items made possible by the defense research of the 1950s and 60s. Now they are made available as commercial goods. He has no appreciation for the goods, but values them for their space age quality and trendy name, much like owning an MX Missile.

" What really is the best dry beer Is Bill Robinson an overrated designer What's wrong with IBM Ultimate luxury. Is the term " playing hardball" an adverb The fragile peace of Assisi. Electric light. The epitome of luxury. Ultimate luxury" (274). The conservative kids in the candy store have so many unanswered questions. Give me. Give me. Can I have a star wars defense system

" I'm talking to the delivery guys from Park Avenue Sound Shop about HDTV, which isn't available yet, when one of the new black AT&T cordless phones

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rings. I tip them, then answer it" (308). The cold war had spurred technological advancements and Bateman was planning on reaping the benefits in the usual mindless, capitalist consumer fashion.

"... I watched the huge Sony TV over a breakfast of sliced kiwi and Japanese apple pear, Evian water, oat bran muffins, soy milk, and cinnamon granola, ruining my enjoyment of the grieving mothers..." (138). Bateman was watching a show featuring parents of murdered children. One of the few healthy things he encounters (mostly imported, mostly fruit) and he is annoyed by it. He wants to see the suffering. After all he was winning. Winning the Cold War, and enjoying someone else's misery would be the spoils of victory that he was entitled to.

Part 2

"... the unlikely figure, the former movie actor Ronald Reagan, to whom Americans turned in the critical election of 1980 to arrest the nation's sclerotic drift" (Collins). The country was in a post-70s depression and still hung over from the 60s. The country woke up in the 80s still thinking it was 1950

" The most greedy and self-serving spending was done in the 1980s under the guidance of Ronald Reagan" (" Generation X"). The Cold War Champion spearheaded the greed.

"... the " baby boomers" (born in the 1940s and 1950s) and the " war generation" (born between WWI and WWII) have just returned wobbly and inebriated from decades of wild deficit spending" (Generation X"). The spending is as intoxicating as any drug, a lustful, craving for more.

" Reagan's signal (sic) political and cultural achievement: restoring American optimism during the 1980s... true conservatives should examine some of the

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toxic cultural and social effects of Reaganite individualism and materialism" (Hayward). The toxic effects were numbness in the outer extremities and a shortness of compassion.

" The information technology revolution is the result of a complex dynamic of technological and human interactions. The key innovations that created the radically new electronic environment of the 1990s all took place 20 years earlier, during the 1970s" (Capra). Technology wise, we are living 20 years in the past. The 1980s were actually a creation of the 1960s. The Cold War mentality was still stuck in 1950. The 80s were the 1950s going forward in time. It was like " Leave it to Beaver" meets the " Grateful Dead". Displaced in time.

" The centrality of a soft drink to the identity of both New Coke and Classic Coke advocates reflected America's epidemic consumerism... revolutions in economics, marketing, advertising, and conceptions of leisure, had transformed the cautious American customer, once wary of chain stores, into the 1980s' sale-searching, trend-spotting, franchise-hopping shopper" (Troy). An example that places the book, American Psycho, as more fact than fiction.

" Two kinds of attacks concern U. S. planners. The first is the " bolt from the blue"--an unexpected, premeditated attack against forces on day-today rather than generated alert" (Cimbala). Is it any wonder that Bateman would turn to drugs Caught up in the fear of the 50s and living in the decadence of the 80s.

" The reasons that I did what I did in April of 1985 were personal, banal, and amounted really to kind of greed and folly" (qtd. in Rationalizing Treason). Said by Aldrich Ames, the most damaging Cold War spy. The self-centered

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greed had even reached into the Cold War spy network. Or was this where it started After 20 years of Rip Van Winkle sleep, who could be sure.

" Burst Mode operations would extend for hundreds or a few thousand seconds, with tens to thousands of megawatts of electrical power being required to support space-based directed and kinetic energy weapons, and associated fire control systems" (Federation of American Scientists). This is a scientific report that shows the gluttonous exuberance that pervaded even the scientists. You can feel the glee in the writing of this report. Sounds like Bateman describing his clothes.

" Soviet industry consumed energy with gluttonous inefficiency" (Kotkin). Even the enemy was over indulging in the hysteria of the era. American Psycho was living not the American Dream, but the Global Dream.

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