

Misogynní muž jako postmoderní hrdina: The Death of Bunny Munro Nicka Cavea a American Psycho Breta Eastona Ellise

Diplomová práce

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Autor práce: **Bc. Jan Konfršt**
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Zénó Vernyik, Ph.D.



The Misogynist Male as a Postmodern Hero: The Death of Bunny Munro by Nick Cave and American Psycho by Bret Easton Ellis

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Author: **Bc. Jan Konfršt**
Supervisor: Mgr. Zénó VERNYIK, Ph.D.



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doc. RNDr. Miroslav Brzezina, CSc.
děkan

L.S.



PhDr. Marcela Malá, M.A., Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

V Liberci dne 27. dubna 2012

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Poděkování

Rád bych touto cestou poděkoval Mgr. Zénó Vernyikovi, Ph.D., jehož rady a poznámky mi byly po celou dobu tvorby této práce cennou pomůckou a jež mne vždy pomáhaly vést vstříc k naplnění cílů.

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá dvě díla moderní literatury –*Americké psycho* od Breta Eastona Ellise a *The Death of Bunny Munro* (kniha nemá český překlad) od Nicka Cavea. Cílem je zaměřit se na to, jakým způsobem je vytvořena postava misogynního muže i to, jak takový hlavní hrdina zapadá do konceptu postmodernismu a do obrázku postmoderního literárního hrdiny.

Klíčová slova

Misogynní muž, postmodernismus, literární hrdina, zneužívání žen

Annotation

This thesis researches two modern pieces of literature – *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis and *The Death of Bunny Munro* by Nick Cave. The aim is to focus on how the misogynist male character is created, the way in which such a character fulfils the idea of postmodernism and how he/she corresponds with the concept of the postmodernist hero.

Key words

Misogynist male, postmodernism, literary hero, women abuse

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1. Introduction

1.1. Choosing the Topic

Human interactions, behaviour and the human psyche in general started to fascinate me a long time ago, and since at the time I was about to choose the topic for my diploma thesis, I decided to opt for literature and mainly to study human behaviour and, more precisely, how one human being behaves towards another.

My list of readings uncovered the fact that most of the books I have read have several things in common – the main character is a male character and the relationship between the main character and a woman, or even multiple women, always plays a strong role. This does not mean romance is my cup of tea, not at all – this only means that I unconsciously tend to study relationships between human beings.

I have thus decided to pay attention to the relationship of the main character towards woman/women and since *The Death of Bunny Munro* was one of my latest readings at that time, I decided to consider a less praiseworthy male character, choosing to take a look at how one can describe a reprehensible character.

As for comparison, I took a famous work by Bret Easton Ellis entitled *American Psycho*, which is widely known for its controversy and how it depicts violence and abuse. In the case of this particular book, most of the aforementioned vices are directed at women and since in the case of the former book the main character is an incorrigible womanizer, I have decided to study misogynist main male characters in contemporary literature.

There are two weak points that I expected to encounter in the course of this thesis. The first one is the unreliability of the narrator in *American Psycho* and the other the fact that I expected that *The Death of Bunny Munro* by Nick Cave may not be well known and widely read and thus it may not be well researched by diverse sources.

1.2. The Misogynist Male Character

My thesis provides an in-depth analysis of misogynist male characters in *The Death of Bunny Munro* by Nick Cave and *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. Both books picture a main male character who has rather an unconventional relationship towards women in general. More specifically, they both treat them in a way that modern society either condemns or even punishes (depending on the cultural and historic background).

The said male characters are Bunny Munro in *The Death of Bunny Munro* and Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*. Both men are unique in many aspects of their life and the two novels in question describe (by our society's standards) some of the most spiteful, condemnable and outrageous human characteristics possible, which work perfectly for the chosen topic, for I am not searching for heroes that one would love to follow, but rather for men that treat others (women in this particular case) as mere objects and who tend to act rather selfishly.

For the purposes of my thesis, I consider a misogynist male man to be a male character that has a certain set of character traits.

Needless to say that such traits and male characteristics in general can change over time, as Berthold Schoene states in his essay

“Serial Masculinity: Psychopathology and Oedipal Violence in Bret Easton Ellis’s American Psycho”:

Whereas traditionally the masculine gender has been defined as incontestably rooted in the faculty of reason, in recent years masculinity has come to be seen increasingly as anachronistic, intolerably volatile, and in crisis. Many characteristically male traits, which used to constitute the gender’s strength and thus legitimize its hegemonic status, tend now to be recognized as symptoms of a variety of psychopathologies, mental disorders and cognitive impairments, most notably Asperger’s Syndrome or high-functioning autism. (Schoene 2008, 378)

This can be directly applied to my thesis – what now constitutes socially unacceptable behaviour could have once been considered masculine in general and one cannot tell if such behaviour will be considered desirable in the foreseeable future.

1.2.1. The Traits of a Misogynist Male

As will be shown below, the first trait is that such a man demonstrates physical and/or psychological aggression against fellow human beings, men and women alike, as a tool to be used to achieve the domination of another human being.

Such a man exhibits narcissistic behaviour and an obsession with what other people think of him (he is a narcissist).

He often represses the female aspects of his psyche and feminine behaviour in his own, male body. This is often, but not exclusively, demonstrated by means of aggression. Although in theory, such behaviour may not always be gender dependent and can also be applied to women repressing male behaviour. However, as the topic of this thesis is the misogynist male, I shall focus only on male behaviour in this paper.

The man in question uses women as objects of transaction with no control over their own body or mind. More specifically, I will talk mainly about the sexual oppression of women by the aforementioned characters.

Finally, such a man thinks highly of himself and is, by contrast, unable to care for others. Again, I shall mostly talk about their inability to care for women.

As will be shown, one can find many examples of these patterns throughout both books. Bunny Munro and Patrick Bateman, the main characters in the books under consideration, are both very far from the example of a kind man working for the benefit of his surroundings and for society itself and one of them actually kills, or at least dreams of killing, a woman.

2. Book synopses

2.1. The Death of Bunny Munro

The Death of Bunny Munro follows the story of a middle-aged male character, Bunny Munro. He is a true lothario, chasing women at every possible opportunity, seeking earthly pleasures every time he can, be it sex or alcohol abuse. (Cave 2010) (Wikipedia 2014)

The story follows the trail of Bunny and his son after the obvious suicide of the wife of the former. Apparently, Libby Munro was not able to cope with Bunny's behaviour. He is what one would call a womanizer, the fact that he had a wife never effectively stopping this. The following extract illustrates how much Bunny "cared" for his wife

and at the same time also serves as a perfect explanation of why I have chosen this book for my thesis.

Bunny moves back to the bed and can hear his wife crying on the end of the phone. Ten years, he thinks, ten years and those tears still get him – those turquoise eyes, that joyful pussy, ah man, and that unfathomable sob stuff – and he lies back against the headboard and bats, ape-like, at his genitals and says,

‘I’ll be back tomorrow, babe, early.’

‘Do you love me, Bun?’ says Libby.

‘You know I do.’

‘Do you swear on your life?’

‘Upon Christ and all his saints. Right down to your little shoes, baby.’

‘Can’t you get home tonight?’

‘I would if I could,’ says Bunny, groping around on the bed for his cigarettes, ‘but I’m miles away.’

‘Oh, Bunny . . . you fucking liar . . .’

The line goes dead and Bunny says, ‘Libby? Lib?’ (Cave 2010, 7)

One can now get a clear image of what is going on – Bunny trying to explain something to his wife while she is clearly not listening to him, thinking of something else. The truth in this case is that Bunny is indeed lying to her, thus providing a perfect opening for my thesis. His relationship with his wife can clearly be displayed as one-sided.

He looks inexplicably at the phone as if he has just discovered he is holding it, then clamshells it shut as another droplet of water explodes on his chest. Bunny forms a little ‘O’ with his mouth and he shoves a cigarette in it. He torches it with his Zippo and pulls deeply, then emits a considered stream of grey smoke.

‘You got your hands full there, darling.’

With great effort Bunny turns his head and looks at the prostitute standing in the bathroom doorway. (Cave 2010, 7)

It can clearly be seen in this excerpt that Bunny has no understanding of his own wife and cares not for her well-being, but only

for his own earthly pleasure. This is what ultimately leads to her successful suicide attempt, leaving her husband and their young son behind. She committed suicide in a nightgown that Bunny enjoyed and that aroused him, most likely knowing it would only bother him some more. This can be demonstrated in a scene where he sees her body through a keyhole, not yet knowing she has already departed.

Through the keyhole he can see Libby standing by the window. Unbelievably, she is wearing the orange nightgown that she wore on their wedding night, which Bunny has not seen in years. In an instant, in a flash, he remembers, in dream-time, his brand-new wife walking towards him in their honeymoon hotel, the sheer near-invisible material of the nightgown hanging perilously from her swollen nipples, the phosphorescent skin beneath, the smudge of yellow pubic hair, veiled and dancing before his eyes.

Kneeling among the Coco Pops, his eye pressed to the keyhole, Bunny thinks, with an unannounced wave of euphoria, that the chances of a mid-afternoon fuck look decidedly better. (Cave 2010, 27)

Again, it is precisely this type of behaviour that makes Bunny the perfect character for the thesis – he can only think of his own good, which on many occasions means being in bed with a woman, sometime one that mere moments prior was unknown to both the reader and to Bunny himself. There are many examples of such behaviour since the story itself can be considered one big sexual journey across the city.

Bunny also thinks a lot about a couple of celebrities, vividly imagining their naked bodies. Included here are Avril Lavigne and Kylie Minogue. Lines that describe this weakness of his can be seen when Bunny gets home from the aforementioned encounter with the stripper – not only does he find his wife dead, he also finds the apartment has been turned upside down, apparently by his recently deceased wife.

Bunny scopes the living room. He has made some attempt at clearing up the debris and bringing some order back to the flat. In doing so he has uncovered the extent of the damage his wife had brought down upon the house. For example, he had found his Avril Lavigne (drool) and Britney (drool) and Beyoncé (drool) CDs floating in the toilet cistern; (Cave 2010, 46)

After the funeral, Bunny takes his son from school and leaves for his journey across the city of Brighton offering cosmetic and beauty products to various kinds of women (he works as a door-to-door salesman). Many of them he has sexual intercourse with, using them as mere objects of his own desire, thus abusing them. Meanwhile, the whole country (the story takes place in the United Kingdom) is on edge due to the constant threat of a serial killer dressed as a devil with a pitchfork, which also works as a perpetual reminder of an imminent death, which with the book actually concludes. (Cave 2010, 4, 5, 12, 50, 124, 195, 212, 213, 270)

Of the traits I have mentioned to be characteristic of a misogynist male, he mainly exhibits oppression, objectification and narcissism. I will provide examples of this later in the thesis.

2.2. American Psycho

American Psycho by Bret Easton Ellis is set in Manhattan in New York during the Wall Street boom, towards the end of the last century, in the 1980s. The book shows a group of rich, young Wall Street brokers exploiting the lives full of leisure that their wealth offers them at such a young age. None of them seem to display even signs of a meaningful, moral existence. I can demonstrate such a claim in the following argument over something as small, and perhaps as

meaningless, as their own business cards. The argument is about who has the more prominent and better looking one:

but I decide to even up the score a little bit by showing everyone my new business card. I pull it out of my gazelleskin wallet (Barney's, \$850) and slap it on the table, waiting for reactions.

[...]

"It is very cool, Bateman," Van Patten says guardedly, the jealous bastard, "but that's nothing...." He pulls out his wallet and slaps a card next to an ashtray. "Look at this."

We all lean over and inspect David's card and Price quietly says, "That's really nice." A brief spasm of jealousy courses through me when I notice the elegance of the color and the classy type. I clench my fist as Van Patten says, smugly, "Eggshell with Romalian type ..." He turns to me. "What do you think?" (Ellis 2010, 44)

This works as a perfect example of what seems to be an average problem in the life of a Wall Street broker in the aforementioned book. Situations and arguments similar to this one occur on many occasions in the book. The main character (Patrick Bateman) and his friends are wealthy, they enjoy the life of the rich and, simply do not care for the existence of other people, as one can see in the following extract:

Price leads us around the crowd up to the ropes, motioning to one of the doormen, Van Patten waves a crisp one-dollar bill in front of the homeless bum's face, which momentarily lights up, then Van Patten pockets it as we're whisked into the club, handed a dozen drink tickets and two VIP Basement passes. (Ellis 2010, 44)

Passages like this appear often throughout the whole of the book – these "friends" either do not care for each other or despise other characters previously unknown to the reader. The typical character in the book is a man thinking very highly of himself and believing how important he is, while disregarding human beings all around him.

Moreover, most of the characters do not care for each other in general and this ends up in them constantly confusing one with another:

Patrick's autistic world of self-encapsulation is one of absolute uniformity and indifference. As embodiments of Patrick's interior *dramatis personae*, the majority of characters in *American Psycho* have no distinctive features, no identity and virtually no otherness; instead of being themselves, they only look like themselves, but even appearances cannot save them from anonymous obliteration as they continue to confuse—and be confused with—each other. (Schoene 2008, 383)

This raises the question of their real identities and whether they are not merely extensions of Patrick's ego. This can be considered an example of badly-shaped boundaries, which is an example of narcissistic behaviour. I will elaborate on this idea further in the following chapter.

This leads to the description of a group of men that are only aware of their egos and wealth and their own selfish lives. They do not care for others and this is often demonstrated by their relationship towards women and even the friendship they have. For example, one of the passages in the book shows the main character and his friend in a bedroom. His friend is clearly flirting with the main character's girlfriend, but none of them truly seems to care enough to stop it from happening.

Now Price is on his knees and he smells and sniffs at Evelyn's bare legs and she's laughing. I tense up.

"Oh god," she moans loudly. "Get out of here."

"You are orange." He laughs, on his knees, his head in her lap. "You look orange."

"I am not," she says, her voice a low prolonged growl of pain, ecstasy. "Jerk."

I lie on the bed watching the two of them. Timothy is in her lap trying to push his head under the Ralph Lauren robe. Evelyn's head is thrown back with pleasure and she is trying to push him away, but playfully, and hitting him only lightly on his back

with her Jan Hové brush. I am fairly sure that Timothy and Evelyn are having an affair. Timothy is the only interesting person I know. (Ellis 2010, 23)

Following the main character of the book, Patrick Bateman, a young Wall Street broker in his late twenties, one can see his daily activities and routines which interestingly take an unexpected turn as the narrator starts to describe scenes of pure violence and uncensored gore enacted on victims of all kinds – men (heterosexual and homosexual alike), women and animals (Wikipedia) (Ellis 2010).

It is also interesting to note that in this particular book, the author was also using facts from his own life, perhaps making the narrator slightly more reliable. In this case, it was much more than just the location and settings. To quote his own words:

[Bateman] was crazy the same way [I was]. He did not come out of me sitting down and wanting to write a grand sweeping indictment of yuppie culture. It initiated because of my own isolation and alienation at a point in my life. I was living like Patrick Bateman. I was slipping into a consumerist kind of void that was supposed to give me confidence and make me feel good about myself but just made me feel worse and worse and worse about myself. That is where the tension of American Psycho came from. It wasn't that I was going to make up this serial killer on Wall Street. High concept. Fantastic. It came from a much more personal place, and that's something that I've only been admitting in the last year or so. I was so on the defensive because of the reaction to that book that I wasn't able to talk about it on that level. (Wikipedia)

The book ends with the main character not knowing what exactly is happening around him – he vividly describes killing another character earlier in the text, but in the end he hears stories of him wandering around New York, using the third person. It is therefore justified to speculate on the reliability of the narrator. (Ellis 2010)

This relativizes the events in the book and leads to the fact that the reader may or may not be sure if anything really happened or not, but this does not undermine my argument at all – the detailed description of events and behaviour demonstrated towards women conveys a clear message and allows me to find a misogynist male character in the book.

If the events in the book did not happen, the narrator at least dreamt of them quite vividly, which might lead to the following conclusion – even if the events described in the book were not real, the main character was wishing for his dreams to come true, which fits in well with the argument of the thesis.

Finally, the reliability of the narrator does not affect the main character traits of the protagonist in the books. His behaviour still exhibits all of the aforementioned characteristics of a misogynist male: the objectification of women, narcissism, repression and, mostly in Patrick's case, violent behaviour.

3. Finding Misogynist Characteristics

I will look for misogynist male characteristics in both the main characters of the books:

- physical aggression – commonly used as a tool to dominate, can be demonstrated by rape;
- misogynist male uses sexual oppression against women;
- misogynist male commonly uses a woman as an object of transaction;
- narcissistic behaviour – misogynist male usually relies on what other people think of him;
- repressing feminine behaviour in a masculine body (that is also sometimes demonstrated by aggression towards fellow human beings).

I consider the first and the last point to be very similar; for example, the sexual oppression of women, as will be shown later, can, based on some excerpts from the book, be seen as an act of physical aggression and also partially as an example of the objectification of women.

3.1. Violence and Rape

These two terms function as umbrella terms for the following characteristics of a misogynist male (the similarities mentioned in the last chapter):

- physical aggression – commonly used as a tool to dominate, can be demonstrated by rape;
- the misogynist male uses sexual oppression against women.

Adrienne Rich writes about how the patriarchal order oppressed women and about how women reacted to such oppression. Rich wrote about “compulsory heterosexuality” – considered one of the greatest, most lasting and most influential contributions to the topic of gender studies, gender theory and feminist culture in general (Leitch 2001, 1759).

Rich also writes about how patriarchal society exerts direct power over women’s bodies. Such behaviour is often exercised through violence or even rape (Leitch 2001, 1759).

Both options can be directly linked to the work of Bret Easton Ellis, where I found various examples of the main character venting his violent behaviour against women, thus expressing his male dominance over a feminine mind and body, and many other examples where the

main character uses rape (simulated or not) to demonstrate such power over women. For example,

It seems that Anne Smiley and I share a mutual acquaintance, a waitress from Abetone's in Aspen who I raped with a can of hairspray last Christmas when I was skiing there over the holidays. (Ellis 2010, 94)

Berthold Schoene also mentions how aggression can be used as a means of controlling other people. In this case, women in particular,:

According to Anne Campbell, Patrick's aggressive response must be regarded as stereotypically gender-specific. "Women see aggression as temporary loss of control caused by overwhelming pressure and resulting in guilt," Campbell writes, whereas "men see aggression as a means of exerting control over other people when they feel the need to reclaim power and self-esteem" (viii). Ironically, by "losing it" and lashing out against his others, Patrick seeks to maintain the ideal of infallible self-control that informs modernity's construction of the masculine self. (Schoene 2008, 384)

The following excerpt I find particularly revealing of this. These lines come immediately after a sex scene in which Patrick hires two sex workers. Instead of letting them go after the act, he decides to keep them around for a while, physically hurting them.

"We're not through yet..." An hour later I will impatiently lead them to the door, both of them dressed and sobbing, bleeding but well paid. Tomorrow Sabrina will have a limp. Christie will probably have a terrible black eye and deep scratches across her buttocks caused by the coat hanger. Bloodstained Kleenex will lie crumpled by the side of the bed along with an empty carton of Italian seasoning salt I picked up at Dean & DeLuca. (Ellis 2010, 176)

The last example shows a scene where Patrick wants to hurt the girl, but ends up not doing so for some unknown reason and as a result of some unexpected turn of events:

"I think you should go home," I say.
She opens her eyes, scratches her neck.

“I think I might ... hurt you,” I tell her. “I don’t think I can control myself.”

She looks over at me and shrugs. “Okay. Sure,” then she starts to get dressed. “I don’t want to get too involved anyway,” she says.

“I think something bad is going to happen,” I tell her.

She pulls her panties on, then checks her hair in the Nabolwev mirror and nods. “I understand.”

After she’s dressed and minutes of pure, hard silence have passed, I say, not unhelpfully, “You don’t want to get hurt, do you?”

She buttons up the top of her dress and sighs, without looking over at me. “That’s why I’m leaving.”

I say, “I think I’m losing it.” (Ellis 2010, 94)

But violence against women is not the only form of violence that Patrick demonstrates – on many occasions in the book he hurts women and men alike, clearly not caring for human beings in general. What is more, while killing an innocent homeless man he also kills his dog, aiming his violence at all living things. What follows is a gruesome scene that initiates all the carnage that can be viewed in the book from that point on. The scene takes place around a third of the way through the book; until that point, Pat only seems to be a narcissistic man, but now he pictures himself as a heartless killer.

“Do you know what a fucking loser you are?” He starts nodding helplessly and I pull out a long, thin knife with a serrated edge and, being very careful not to kill him, push maybe half an inch of the blade into his right eye, flicking the handle up, instantly popping the retina. The stench of shit rises quickly into my 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 up somewhat and instinctively he tries to cover himself with his hands and the dog starts yipping [...] Then I turn to the barking dog and when I get up, stomp on its front legs while it’s 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 can’t help but start laughing and I linger at the scene (Ellis 2010, 132)

The next scene is when Patrick kills a man and this episode later functions as the breaking point in terms of the narrator's reliability (which I will investigate later on). In this scene, he (Patrick) is killing a man named Paul Owen. Paul handles the Fisher account, which everyone wants to handle and thus this account, for no special or given reason whatsoever, becomes infamous throughout the whole story. But the book and the story itself close with someone telling Patrick he had seen Paul Owen in London, urging Pat to admit that such an accusation may actually be true. This in fact happens on multiple occasions in the book, but this one last time is when the narrator himself seems to feel unsure. As mentioned, this will be elaborated on later in the thesis.

“No, Owen.” I move slowly around the chair until I'm facing him, standing directly in his line of vision, and he's so drunk he can't even focus in on the ax, he doesn't even notice once I've raised it high above my head. Or when I change my mind and lower it to my waist, almost holding it as if it's a baseball bat and I'm about to swing at an oncoming ball, which happens to be Owen's head.

Owen pauses, then says, “Anyway, I used to hate Iggy Pop but now that he's so commercial I like him a lot better than—”

The ax hits him midsentence, straight in the face. (Ellis 2010, 217)

This is followed by a scene in which Patrick attacks and mortally wounds a homosexual man, which follows what seems to be an obvious act of flirtation with him. This might actually damage the idea of the misogynist male, as I will explain in the following chapters.

“Listen,” he says.

“I really hate to ask this.”

“Go ahead,” I urge.

“Oh gosh, this is so silly,” he admits, chuckling.

I start laughing. “Why?”

“Are you a model?” he asks, not laughing anymore. “I could swear I’ve seen you in a magazine or somewhere.”

“No, I’m not,” I say, deciding not to lie. “But I’m flattered.”

[...] and I drop the dog onto the sidewalk, the queer just standing there, still gripping the leash, and this has all happened so fast he’s in shock and he just stares in horror saying “oh my god oh my god” as the sharpei drags itself around in a circle, its tail wagging, squealing, and it starts licking and sniffing the pile of its own intestines, spilled out in a mound on the sidewalk, some still connected to its stomach, and as it goes into its death throes still attached to its leash 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 (Ellis 2010, 165)

As one can see – Patrick in *American Psycho* is a rather violent character, and especially so towards women, if, as has already been pointed out above, the narrator is truly reliable.

One can actually track Patrick’s attitude towards women in the character’s own name, as Schoene points out:

Patrick is a dangerous anachronism, the impersonation of an old order, and, in this respect, his name may in itself be a telling cipher: Patrick representing “patriarchy.” (Schoene 2008, 381)

Bunny Munro, on the other hand, is not that violent, but he excels in other parts of my definition of the misogynistic male. Bunny’s violence against women can be considered psychological – he is not explicitly hurting women, but he does terrorize them and their surroundings and in a way forces his sexuality upon them. First, I provide an example where he takes revenge on a woman who is resentful of him trying out his womanizing techniques on her. His revenge takes the form of him going to the bathroom/toilet and urinating all over the place.

‘Fucking bitch,’ he says, and he pisses on her carpet. Then he pisses on her lilac-coloured walls, then on the rack full of magazines, then on the hand towels, and with a grand flourish he rises up on his toes and pisses on her electric toothbrush that sits in a glass next to the basin. Then he zips himself up, opens the door and strides back down the hall, full of a renewed and

unobstructed purpose, and says, ‘All right, do you want to buy any of this shit or not?’ (Cave 2010, 130)

Bunny’s violence against women can also be understood to be verbal – I already mentioned his keenness for two particular celebrities; the way he thinks of them and dreams about the things he would love to do to them can be easily understood to be verbal violence against women in general:

Bunny turns on the radio and Kylie Minogue’s hit ‘Spinning Around’ comes on, and he can’t believe his luck and feels a surge of almost limitless joy as the squelching, teasing synth starts and Kylie belts out her orgiastic paean to buggery and he thinks of Kylie’s gold hot pants, those magnificent gilded orbs. [...] Then he sees a group of pudgy mall-trawlers with their smirking midriffs and frosted lipstick, a potentially hot Arab chick in full burka (oh, man, labia from Arabia), and then a billboard advertising fucking Wonderbras or something and he says, ‘Yes!’ and takes a vicious, horn-blarng swerve, rerouting down Fourth Avenue, already screwing the top off a sample of hand cream. He parks and beats off, a big, happy smile on his face, and dispenses a gout of goo into a cumencrusted sock he keeps under the car seat. (Cave 2010, 20)

Masturbating is Bunny’s favourite pastime when it comes to thinking about famous women. As an example, one can mention the scene after Bunny’s wife commits suicide. He comes to a disorganized home where everything has been turned upside down. With the knowledge that his wife is dead, Bunny can mostly think of only one thing: women celebrities.

Bunny scopes the living room. He has made some attempt at clearing up the debris and bringing some order back to the flat. In doing so he has uncovered the extent of the damage his wife had brought down upon the house. For example, he had found his Avril Lavigne (drool) and Britney (drool) and Beyoncé (drool) CDs floating in the toilet cistern; (Cave 2010, 46)

Passages mentioning either Kylie Minogue (with whom the author of the book actually worked on a song) (Wikipedia 2015) or Avril

(mentioned above) always go like this – as soon as Bunny starts thinking of them, he ends up having wild fantasies and he feels sexually aroused, often even masturbating to them. For example,

Bunny hears the boy say, ‘Everybody thinks you’re the best, don’t they, Dad?!’ but they are passing a bus shelter, advertising Kylie Minogue’s brand-new range of lingerie for Selfridges called ‘Love Kylie’, and Bunny tries to remember what Poodle told him he had seen on the Internet about Kylie but draws a blank. Instead he feels a rush of blood, viral and urgent, throb in his extremities, his fingers pulsing on the steering wheel. He looks at the boy. (Cave 2010, 106)

As one can see, Bunny cannot think clearly when his idols are mentioned in some way and the fact that there is a child (his own) around cannot truly stop him from having indecent thoughts about the aforementioned women.

There are therefore many examples throughout the books that can be seen within the context of Rich’s work on how violence and rape help to control woman either physically or emotionally. In the case of Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*, the means of control are more obvious – Patrick hurts women, tries to control their sexuality and is even willing to kill one for his own pleasure.

On the other hand, there is Bunny Munro, who would never use physical violence against women, but at the same time tries to abuse them sexually, trying to have sexual intercourse with as many as possible and in the example of celebrities, one can realize that his view of women is that a woman exists only for man’s own pleasure. I consider his violence against women to be mental, but that does not mean it is less dangerous or less important in terms of this thesis. I should also point out

that his own wife's suicide is one example of what such behaviour can lead to.

In this light, and based on the excerpts chosen, the theory of Adrienne Rich works perfectly with the topic of the thesis and provides a view on how Patrick and Bunny tend to control women by means of violence and rape even though it sometimes is not actually physical. However, violence and rape are not the only means of controlling women.

3.2. Woman as an Object of Transaction, Objectification

When one talks of a misogynist man, the subject of discussion is often an act of objectification – namely the objectification of a woman by a man and seeing a *woman as a mere object of transaction*, mainly between two or more men, or even in a patriarchal and/or chauvinistic society. As Gayle Rubin claims in *The Traffic in Women*,

If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the women being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it. The exchange of women does not necessarily imply that women are objectified, in the modern sense, since objects in the primitive world are imbued with highly personal qualities. But it does imply a distinction between gift and giver. If women are the gifts, then it is men who are the exchange partners. [...] Woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners. This remains true even when the girl's feelings are taken into consideration, as, moreover, is usually the case. (Rubin 1998, 779)

There is a multitude of examples in both books of a woman being portrayed as a mere object of a man's desire (i.e. that of the main character – Patrick and Bunny). I provide a modest list of examples from *The Death of Bunny Munro*.

Bunny Jr. is (yet again) waiting in the car for his father when a girl around his age approaches him – he likes her, but to begin with does not realize what she is saying. She is telling him, “Your dad is giving my mum a fuck,” and that, “He’s sticking his dick in her.” In fact, it seems he truly does not understand what she is saying, but later on, when talking to his father about the girl he just met, he says, “Maybe I should go back and give her a fuck!” (Cave 2010, 162)

In another scene, Bunny, Jr. is watching some TV show and he sees an advertisement for a holiday camp called Butlins – a camp where he once was with his father, Bunny, Sr., and immediately starts recalling random facts about his father. It is immediately clear that his father was exactly the same womanizer as Bunny is now, thus putting the character of Bunny in a much broader context. (Cave 2010, 156)

Perhaps the most important example is a specific set of women seen and perceived as a true object of transaction. At one point in the book, the main character receives (after the death of his wife) a list of other women – of customers (he works as a regular door-to-door salesman). The list is handed to him as something to be cherished as a list of possible sexual rendezvous – a gift from one man to another. To Bunny from his boss.

‘OK, Bunny, you’re the boss,’ says Geoffrey, handing Bunny a list of names and addresses that he folds in two and slips into the inside pocket of his jacket. (Cave 2010, 100)

This can also be viewed within the context of the work of Adrienne Rich, who also writes about the objectification of women. Rich mentions eight characteristics of male power in archaic and

contemporary societies. It is the last two that are of the utmost importance to this thesis.

6. To use them [women] as objects in male transactions. (Rich 2001, 1766)

I have already mentioned Bunny's boss handing him a list of women customers and the way it can be interpreted as a transaction of its own – Bunny's boss treats the list as something truly precious and the way Bunny does his job means that he only understands the list as a list of women (hopefully) willing to have sex with him. Therefore, this particular object (the list) actually does become an object of transaction between one male and another.

Here I mention two examples from the book. In the first one, Bunny anticipates a young, attractive woman when looking at the name on the top of the list, , but is disappointed after meeting an old lady; nonetheless, the anticipation and sexual arousal is undoubtedly there. The other passage comes earlier in the book and is more obvious than the first. Bunny meets three women at once and the excerpt pictures him as a man calculating what he can or cannot do with them and to them.

He looks at the name on the client list and it says Mrs Candice Brooks, and he experiences in the base of his spine a thrill of sexual anticipation that brings clarity of purpose to his mind. But the door opens and a tiny, bent and impossibly ancient lady in dark glasses appears before him and says in a surprisingly youthful voice, 'Can I help you?' (Cave 2010, 170)

Bunny smiles at Georgia and Georgia, in time, meets his eyes and smiles back at him, and Bunny knows, without arrogance or hubris, more than he knows anything in this world, that he could fuck Georgia in a heartbeat. Amanda too, he thinks. Zoë would need a little more work but it was Georgia that would give out and give out all the fucking way. (Cave 2010, 118)

As for Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*, I have already mentioned he had episodes with prostitutes – this on its own is yet another example of objectification of women and treating them as mere objects of transaction between males. After all, a prostitute is a woman who is paid for her services in the end, but whose payment usually goes through another male, her so-called “pimp”,

“A client?” I ask, interested.

“Well,” she starts nervously. “Let’s just say a business acquaintance.”

“Was this a pimp?” I ask—then the weird part happens.

“Well”—she stalls again before continuing—“let’s just call him a business acquaintance.” (Ellis 2010, 302)

I consider it very clear that both main characters tend to treat women as mere objects and that sometimes they understand them only as subjects of male transactions and something for their pleasure only.

The next point Adrienne Rich clarifies is a more delicate one, one that can be directly applied only to the work of Bret Easton Ellis:

7. To cramp their creativeness – [...] definition of male pursuits as more valuable than female within any culture, so that cultural values become the embodiment of male subjectivity. (Rich 2001, 1767)

For this argument I use a scene that can be applied both to points 6 and 7. The excerpt describes a scene in which Patrick is with two women at once. They are prostitutes, which can be viewed on the one hand as treating women as objects of transaction and abusing their sexuality. It also describes cramping their creativeness – Patrick is not only having sex with them, he is arranging them into positions they would probably never willingly agree to by themselves, thus stripping

them of their imagination in such an intimate moment as the act of sexual intercourse.

Now the three of us are on the futon. Christie is on all fours facing the headboard, her ass raised high in the air, and I'm straddling her back as if I was riding a dog or something, but backward, my knees resting on the mattress, my dick half hard, and I'm facing Sabrina, who is staring into Christie's spread-open ass with a determined expression. Her smile seems tortured and she's wetting her own lips by fingering herself and tracing her glistening index finger across them, like she's applying lip gloss. With both my hands I keep Christie's ass and cunt spread open and I urge Sabrina to move in closer and sniff them. Sabrina is now face level at Christie's ass and cunt, both of which I'm fingering lightly. I motion for Sabrina to move her face in even closer until she can smell my fingers which I push into her mouth and which she sucks on hungrily. With my other hand I keep massaging Christie's tight, wet pussy, which hangs heavy, soaked below her spread, dilated asshole.

"Smell it," I tell Sabrina and she moves in closer until she's two inches, an inch, away from Christie's asshole. My dick is standing straight up now and I keep jerking myself off to keep it that way. (Ellis 2010, 173)

Furthermore, Patrick describes one of his sex scenes (again, with prostitutes) as a "hard-core montage". I believe the scenes function both as a demonstration of masculinity and as an example of Patrick abusing women. Yet again, though, the women are placed in positions they would not normally find themselves in:

Sex happens—a hard-core montage. After I shave Torri's pussy she lies on her back on Paul's futon and spreads her legs while I finger her and suck it off, sometimes licking her asshole. Then Tiffany sucks my cock—her tongue is hot and wet and she keeps flicking it over the head, irritating me—while I call her a nasty whore, a bitch. Fucking one of them with a condom while the other sucks my balls, lapping at them, I stare at the Angelis silk-screen print hanging over the bed and I'm thinking about pools of blood, geysers of the stuff. Sometimes it's very quiet in the room except for the wet sounds my cock makes slipping in and out of one of the girls' vaginas. Tiffany and I take turns eating Torri's hairless cunt and asshole. The two of them come, yelling simultaneously, in a sixty-nine position. Once their cunts are wet enough I bring out a dildo and let the two of them play with it. Torri spreads her legs and fingers her own clit while

Tiffany fucks her with the huge, greased dildo, Torri urging Tiffany to fuck her cunt harder with it, until finally, gasping, she comes. (Ellis 2010, 302)

Examples and excerpts like this can be found in many of places in the book – Patrick truly sees women merely as objects born / created to become his own objects of pleasure. Although this does not necessarily hurt the female characters, at least not physically, as I mentioned earlier, Patrick certainly does not stop there and also likes hurting people, not only women. Women only make easier targets for him, thus effectively allowing him to target more than one object at a time, demonstrating his manly power.

His attention drifting away from the action, to the image, together with him only describing, rather than truly experiencing the intercourse might also be considered further evidence of his objectifying relationship towards women. Rather than him truly participating in the action in any sense, he remains a detached observer who only comments on and impersonally arranges the action carried out by those women. There is no evidence of feelings on his part, neither in the sense of emotion, nor in that of mere bodily sensations. The actors in this scene are not even truly sexual objects, as his arousal remains a distantly fleeting fact, not something that happens because of them, or thanks to them, but is merely juxtaposed to the action in his description: “Fucking one of them with a condom while the other sucks my balls, lapping at them, I stare at the Angelis silk-screen print hanging over the bed and I’m thinking about pools of blood, geysers of the stuff” (Ellis 2010, 302). The scene is hardly erotic: if it is indeed a “hard-core montage”, as Patrick calls it, then it is more hard core because of the presence of naked

body parts than because of any arousal and possibly also because of the additional presence of blood, gore and power.

The most common case of a woman taken as an object of mere transaction in *American Psycho* is a woman that can be bought, which happens often throughout the book. I provide an example here:

I tell the chauffeur to head over to the meat-packing district just west of Nell's, near the bistro Florent, to look for prostitutes and after heavily scanning the area twice—actually, I've spent months prowling this section of town for the appropriate babe—I find her on the corner of Washington and Thirteenth. (Ellis 2010, 217)

Again we can see in the excerpts chosen, in light of the theory of Adrienne Rich, multiple examples of women used and abused as mere objects and as commodities used in transactions mostly made by other men.

3.3. Pornography Used as a Tool of Oppression

This chapter builds further on the idea that misogynist male uses sexual oppression against women.

It is not only sex that is a huge part of the lives of both main characters, but pornography too. One can find an interesting view on the topic of pornography in *American Psycho* when the main character is walking a random pick-up girl home, thinking of sex and finally deciding to let it go,

“Do you want to come up for a drink?” she asks too casually, and even though I'm critical of her approach it doesn't necessarily mean that I don't want to go up—but something stops me, something quiets the bloodlust: the doorman? the way the lobby is lit? her lipstick? Plus I'm beginning to think that pornography is so much less complicated than actual sex, and because of this lack of complication, so much more pleasurable.

“Do you have any peyote?” I ask.

She pauses, confused. “What?” “Just a joke,”

I say, then, “Listen, I want to watch David Letterman so ...” I pause, unsure as to why I’m lingering. “I should go.” (Ellis 2010, 264)

As shown, pornography itself is of at least some importance to Patrick – he clearly prefers watching pornography and possibly masturbation to actual sex.

As for the story of Bunny Munro, I refer to one example of Bunny visiting his family. He enters the living room to meet his father (also a big womanizer, as I already stated) and sees him watching a pornographic movie, during the day, caring not for his surroundings. I consider this excerpt important in terms of the fact that Bunny’s father seems to be a character very similar to his son.

The old man has sat himself in a sole leather armchair in front of the TV, his walking stick resting across his knees. Behind him a mahogany standard lamp with a tasselled shade casts a fierce light on the back of the old man’s elongated skull. On the TV, a pornographic video involving a teenage girl and a black rubber dildo plays out in colour-saturated reds and greens. The old man pushes his gnarled fist into the lap of his rancid grey trousers, claws at his crotch and proclaims, ‘The fucking thing don’t work!’ (Cave 2010, 240)

Adrienne Rich writes the following about pornography, its influence on women’s position in society and its influence on their consciousness:

The function of pornography as an influence on consciousness is a major public issue of our time, when a multibillion-dollar industry has the power to disseminate increasingly sadistic, women-degrading visual images. But even so-called soft-core pornography and advertising depict women as objects of sexual appetite devoid of emotional context, without individual meaning or personality – essentially as sexual commodity to be consumed by males. (So-called lesbian pornography, created for the male voyeuristic eye, is equally devoid of emotional context or individual personality.) The most pernicious message relayed

by pornography is that women are natural sexual prey to men and love it, that sexuality and violence are congruent, and that for women sex is essentially masochistic, humiliation pleasurable, physical abuse erotic. But along with this message comes another, not always recognized: that enforced submission and the use of cruelty, if played out in heterosexual pairing, is sexually “normal”, while sensuality between women, including erotic mutuality and respect, is “queer,” “sick,” and either pornography and bondage. Pornography does not simply create a climate in which sex and violence are interchangeable; *it widens the range of behavior considered acceptable from men in heterosexual intercourse* – behavior which reiteratively strips women of their autonomy, dignity, and sexual potential, including the potential of loving and being loved by women in mutuality and integrity. (Rich 2001, 1768)

As one can see above, pornography can easily be taken as yet another example of a means of controlling women and their sexuality, which both main characters do so often. Both Patrick and Bunny abuse women and exploit their sexuality in a way they mainly find pleasurable for themselves.

In the excerpt above, there are four features of pornography of particular interest to the thesis:

1. women are allegedly natural sexual prey to men and love it (Rich 2001, 1768)
2. sexuality and violence are supposed to be congruent (Rich 2001, 1768)
3. for women sex is considered to be essentially masochistic, humiliation pleasurable, physical abuse erotic (Rich 2001, 1768)
4. submission and the use of cruelty are seen as sexually “normal” (Rich 2001, 1768)

All of these points can be found in many points in the book and I have already provided many examples. In the excerpt with prostitutes hired by Patrick Bateman, one can find an example of women being considered by the protagonist as natural sexual prey who are supposed

(and paid) to enjoy it. Patrick also shows that violence and sexuality are congruent in his world (this cannot be applied to the case of *The Death of Bunny Munro*),

“We’re not through yet...” An hour later I will impatiently lead them to the door, both of them dressed and sobbing, bleeding but well paid. Tomorrow Sabrina will have a limp. Christie will probably have a terrible black eye and deep scratches across her buttocks caused by the coat hanger. Bloodstained Kleenex will lie crumpled by the side of the bed along with an empty carton of Italian seasoning salt I picked up at Dean & DeLuca. (Ellis 2010, 176)

This excerpt might also demonstrate the third and the fourth points – that for women sex is seen by male consumers of pornography as essentially masochistic, humiliation pleasurable (although one can easily speculate about the pleasure itself – after all, the girls were leaving sobbing), physical abuse erotic and sexual submission and cruelty “normal”: the girls were willing to spend more time with Patrick while being abused by him for nothing other than money.

Patrick loves pornography and at a certain point in the story hires two prostitutes and arranges them in a way that pleases his “voyeuristic eye”, as Rich states (Rich 2001, 1768):

“Lick her cunt first,” I tell Sabrina and with her own fingers 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 way. 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 Christie’s asshole. While she does this I watch, transfixed, and start rubbing Christie’s clit quickly until she’s humping onto Sabrina’s face and shouts “I’m 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 don’t slap her or anything. (Ellis 2010, 173)

It can clearly be seen that pornography and the principles of it are visible in many places in both books and that in *American Psycho* it

is also combined with a great amount of sexually oriented violence used as a tool of oppression against women.

I consider the attitude towards pornography (often depicting women as mere objects of men's sexual desires) as a clear example of yet further objectification and in turn a further example of the two characters' misogynistic behaviour.

3.4. Narcissistic behaviour

3.4.1. Seven Deadly Sins of Narcissism

Narcissism can be seen as something undesirable and unwanted for a functional life in a social group (especially with children, who are, according to Freud, narcissistic by default) and can truly be understood as something undesirable when the manifestations of such behaviour are exaggerated. In such a case, we commonly talk about *Narcissistic personality disorder*. Narcissistic personality disorder affects 1% of the population and it is really common that such people not only do not try to change their behaviour, but also do not even know they have such a problem; this can be directly applied to the stories of both Patrick and Bunny. (Millon 2004, 145), (Groopman, Cooper 2006).

Hotchkiss identified what she called the seven deadly sins of narcissism:

Shamelessness: Shame is described as the feeling that lurks beneath all unhealthy narcissism, and the inability to process shame in

healthy ways, often even processing it in socially inadequate ways.
(Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Magical thinking: Narcissists see themselves as an examples of perfect human beings, often using distortion and illusion known as magical thinking that can also be understood as fantasizing. They also tend to use projection to dump their own shame onto other people.
(Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Arrogance: A narcissist who is feeling deflated may reinflate by diminishing, debasing, or degrading someone else from his surroundings. (Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Envy: A narcissist may secure a sense of superiority over the other human being in the face of another person's ability by using contempt to minimize the other person or other person's abilities.
(Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Entitlement: Narcissists hold unreasonable expectations of particularly favorable treatment and automatic compliance because they consider themselves special among other people. Failure to comply is considered an attack on their own superiority. The perpetrator is then considered an "awkward" or "difficult" person that sometimes needs to be dealt with. Defiance of their will is a narcissistic injury that can trigger narcissistic rage and unexpected behaviour. (Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Exploitation: This can take many forms but always involves the exploitation of others (in the case of this thesis we mainly talk about exploitation of women in general) without regard for their

feelings or interests. Often the other person is in a subservient position where resistance would either be difficult or even impossible. And sometimes the subservience is not so much real as assumed. (Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

Bad boundaries: Narcissists do not recognize that they are supposed to have boundaries and that others are separate human beings of their own, and are not only mere extensions of themselves. Others either exist to meet their selfish needs or may be completely nonexistent in general. Those who provide narcissistic support to the narcissist are treated as if they are part of the narcissist, and are expected to live up to those expectations. In the mind of a narcissist, there is no boundary between self and other. That can also again lead to, for example, the exploitation of others. (Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

I will now demonstrate all the points mentioned above and support the claim that both main characters truly are narcissistic, which is an integral part of the definition of a misogynist male character provided above.

3.4.2. Identifying Narcissistic Behaviour

Shamelessness – I already mentioned a scene in *The Death of Bunny Munro* where Bunny urinates all over a (female) customer's bathroom, which I would consider to be the ultimate act of a shameless man – Bunny actually told her afterwards that he had done this.

The cases of shamelessness in *American Psycho* are a bit more subtle and harder to find. It also depends on what one considers

to be an act of shamelessness. I might, for example, consider Patrick to be a shameless man on account of him hiring prostitutes, thinking of actually killing other people or just his very own deepest thoughts, which he expresses so often on the pages of *American Psycho*:

If Luis were killed would Courtney be upset? Could I genuinely be of comfort without laughing in her face, my own spite doubling back on me, giving everything away? Is the fact that she dates me behind his back what excites her, my body or the size of my dick? Why, for that matter, do I want to please Courtney? If she likes me only for my muscles, the heft of my cock, then she's a shallow bitch. But a physically superior, near-perfect-looking shallow bitch, and that can override anything, except maybe bad breath or yellow teeth, either of which is a real deal-breaker. Would I ruin things by strangling Luis? If I married Evelyn would she make me buy her Lacroix gowns until we finalized our divorce? (Ellis 2010, 157)

I decided to point out one even more interesting example of shamelessness – Patrick in bed with Courtney, his friend's girlfriend. In addition to the fact that she is a woman in a relationship with another man (whom Patrick knows very well and who also happens to be a friend of his), Patrick is also ignoring the fact that he also has a girlfriend of his own at the time. And while in bed with her, he recalls what he was doing in the morning on that particular day – watching a TV show at home on the topic of teenage lesbians, masturbating to it.

I'm in Courtney's bed. Luis is in Atlanta. Courtney shivers, presses against me, relaxes. I roll off her onto my back, landing on something hard and covered with fur. I reach under myself to find a stuffed black cat with blue jewels for eyes that I think I spotted at F.A.O. Schwarz when I was doing some early Christmas shopping. I'm at a loss as to what to say, so I stammer, "Tiffany lamps ... are making a comeback." I can barely see her face in the darkness but hear the sigh, painful and low, the sound of a prescription bottle snapping open, her body shifting in the bed. I drop the cat on the floor, get up, take a shower. On The Patty Winters Show this morning the topic was Beautiful Teenage Lesbians, which I found so erotic I had to stay home, miss a meeting, jerk off twice. Aimless, I spent an

inordinate amount of the day at Sotheby's, bored and confused. Last night, dinner with Jeanette at Deck Chairs, she seemed tired and ordered little. We split a pizza that cost ninety dollars. After toweling my hair dry I put on a Ralph Lauren robe and walk back into the bedroom, start to dress. Courtney is smoking a cigarette, watching Late Night with David Letterman, the sound turned down low. (Ellis 2010, 360)

The very fact that he was actually in bed with his friend's girlfriend can be understood as an act of shamelessness. What is more, Patrick had a girlfriend of his own at the time and ends up thinking of teenage lesbians, which might render him a character with no feelings of shame at all, for he can obviously think of one thing only – his own libido and how to be successful with women (in terms of getting them into bed). I believe this is the perfect excerpt to picture our so-called hero in the best possible light (in terms of the topic of this thesis), a showcase for real moral decline itself.

Magical thinking is very easy to spot in *American Psycho* if we take the narrator as unreliable. I have already mentioned the scene where Patrick allegedly kills his friend Paul Owen. However, he thereafter hears other people mentioning him very often. People seem to be having dinners and business lunches with him throughout the story:

He stares at me as if we are both underwater and shouts back, very clearly over the din of the club, "Because ... I had ... dinner ... with Paul Owen ... twice ... in London ... just ten days ago." (Ellis 2010, 388)

One can see that even though Patrick allegedly killed Paul Owen, he still ends up meeting other characters who claim to have met him in the days following the so-called and vividly-described murder. It should be noted, however, that this might also be attributed

to the fact that the individual characters, as I mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, tend to confuse one another.

Another very interesting example of Patrick being unreliable as a narrator and of his vivid imagination and magical thinking is a scene where he describes how he is being chased by the police and takes part in a shootout on the streets of New York. The conflict ends with no repercussions for Patrick – he kills many people in broad daylight, shooting loudly, but does not get caught, which is something so improbable in such a big city as New York that one can easily spot Patrick as a liar and irreparable daydreamer:

I have no idea what I've done to increase my chances of getting caught, I shot a saxophonist? a saxophonist? who was probably a mime too? for that I get this? and in the near distance he can hear other cars coming, lost in the maze of streets, the cops now, right here, don't bother with warnings anymore, they just start shooting and he returns their gunfire from his belly, getting a glimpse of both cops behind the open doors of the squad car, guns flashing like in a movie and this makes Patrick realize he's involved in an actual gunfight of sorts, that he's trying to dodge bullets, that the dream threatens to break, is gone, that he's not aiming carefully, just obliviously returning gunfire, lying there, when a stray bullet, sixth in a new round, hits the gas tank of the police car, the headlights dim before it bursts apart, sending a fireball billowing up into the darkness, the bulb of a streetlamp above it exploding unexpectedly in a burst of yellow-green sparks, flames washing over the bodies of the policemen both living and dead, shattering all the windows of Lotus Blossom, Patrick's ears ringing ... (Ellis 2010, 350)

One can also note that in this particular excerpt the viewpoint of the narrator shifts all of a sudden from the first person to the third and omniscient, which might also indicate that somebody is making something up and that the whole story may not even have taken place.

Magical thinking in Bunny Munro can be seen in ghostly stories of his dead wife, who clearly “follows” him on his journey.

Sometimes he experiences cold shivers, sometimes he can see a shadow or has a dream of some sort. There is a sex scene, for example, during which Bunny sees his wife watching him and his friend's girlfriend having sex.

Bunny is about to close his eyes when he sees, by the window, hidden in the folds of the rose-coloured chenille curtains, what appears to be his deceased wife, Libby. She is dressed in her orange nightdress and she is waving at him. Spooked, Bunny makes a hopeless, wounded sound and opens his mouth and releases a hiss of gas as if his very soul was escaping and then bucks frantically at River in an attempt to dislodge her, which is just what River needs to send her over the edge. Bunny, trapped in the vice of her climaxing haunches, squeezes shut his eyes. River screams and digs her nails into his chest. Bunny opens his eyes again, looks wildly around, but Libby has gone. (Cave 2010, 86)

Arrogance is another of the “seven deadly sins of narcissism”. Again, this is a very broad term and can be understood in many ways. I for one consider the very treatment of women demonstrated by both main characters to be an act of arrogance – I have already pointed out the way they both treat women as objects in themselves and as objects of transactions, without any consideration for their own personalities or opinions. Patrick, for example, shows his arrogance while in bed with his friend's girlfriend, happily ignoring the fact that he himself also has a girlfriend of his own. Bunny Munro demonstrates this during his marriage, in that he (sometimes successfully) tries to get other women and in the way he treats them, even in his mind. One particular example happens during something as sacred as his wife's funeral, where Bunny “checks out” his deceased wife's friends:

Next to her is the seriously sexy Helen Claymore, who also gives Bunny nasty little looks, but Bunny can see that her heart isn't in them and that she is clearly up for it. This is not an opinion but a statement of fact. Helen Claymore is dressed in a tight black tweed suit that does something insane to her breasts, militarises them, torpedoes them, and something out of this world to her depth-charged rear end. Helen Claymore has been transmitting signals to Bunny in this way for years, and Bunny takes a deep breath and allows himself to open up to her vibes like a medium or spiritualist or something. He gives vent to his imagination and realises for the millionth time that he has none and so he pictures her vagina. Bunny marvels at this for an unspecified moment. He sees it hovering before his eyes like a holy apparition and intuits the wonder of it and feels his dick harden like a bent fork or a divining rod or a cistern lever – he can't decide which. (Cave 2010, 52)

Examples like this are common for Bunny throughout the book. In fact he also misbehaves even on the day Bunny and his wife return from the hospital with their new-born child:

Bunny remembers the day he and Libby arrived home from the hospital with the baby. The tiny child's eyes, yet to find their colour, peered out of his scarlet Claymation face as they laid him in the cot.

[...]

That was also the day that Sabrina Cantrell, Libby's workmate and 'oldest friend', came to pay her a visit. While Libby nursed the baby in the living room, in their tiny kitchenette Sabrina made the exhausted new mother a cup of tea. Bunny, who offered to help her, was suddenly and unexpectedly visited by a venereal compulsion that involved Sabrina Cantrell's arse and both his hands – something midway between a slap and a full-blown squeeze. It came out of nowhere, this compulsion, and even as he groped up great handfuls of her backside he wondered, What the fuck am I doing? Nothing came of it, of course, and it was the last time he ever saw Sabrina Cantrell, but a chain of events was set in motion that Bunny felt was beyond his control. There was a voice and a command, there was an action and there was indeed a consequence – shockwaves reverberated through the Munro household for weeks. Why had he done it? Who knows? Whatever. Fuck you. (Cave 2010, 152)

I consider this a fine example of arrogance – a man is supposed to take care of his wife, especially when a child arrives, and he is arrogant enough to try to get his hands on another woman in

another room in the very same flat only moments after they get home with their son.

Envy is yet another feature of narcissistic behaviour and I have already mentioned the scene where Patrick and his friends are comparing their business cards – something that other people might find utterly meaningless means a lot to Patrick (and also to other people around him) and he feels envious when his friend Tim takes out his own card to demonstrate how beautiful it is. Another example is the scene in which Patrick thinks about the Fisher account that one of his friends (Paul Owen, allegedly killed by Patrick) is handling:

“What in the fuck is Morrison wearing?” Preston asks himself.
“Is that really a glen-plaid suit with a checkered shirt?”

“That’s not Morrison,” Price says.

“Who is it then?” Preston asks, taking his glasses off again.

“That’s Paul Owen,” Price says.

“That’s not Paul Owen,” I say. “Paul Owen’s on the other side of the bar. Over there.”

Owen stands at the bar wearing a double-breasted wool suit.

“He’s handling the Fisher account,” someone says.

“Lucky bastard,” someone else murmurs.

“Lucky Jew bastard,” Preston says.

“Oh Jesus, Preston,” I say. “What does that have to do with anything?”

“Listen, I’ve seen the bastard sitting in his office on the phone with CEOs, spinning a fucking menorah. The bastard brought a Hanukkah bush into the office last December,” Preston says suddenly, peculiarly animated. (Ellis 2010, 36)

As for Bunny, one can, for example, spot his envious character in his chasing of women. One might consider his incorrigible behaviour as an act of envy – he wants what other people

have, something which can easily be applied to his obsession with particular celebrities.

Bunny gropes around on the bed until he finds the remote and, with a crack of static, the TV implodes into nothingness and he closes his eyes. A great wall of darkness moves towards him. He can see it coming, vast and imperious. It is unconsciousness and it is sleep. It moves like a great tidal wave but before it breaks over him and he is away, before he renders himself completely to that oblivious sleep, he thinks, with a sudden, terrible, bottomless dread, of Avril Lavigne's vagina. (Cave 2010, 160)

One can easily spot envy in such behaviour – Bunny is able to seduce a lot of woman, but woman celebrities are examples of women he will most likely never have in his bed; he therefore ends up merely having vivid dreams about them.

Entitlement is yet another characteristic of a narcissistic person. I will point out how both main characters feel entitled to receive special treatment and that when the other person in question is unable to do so, they consider this an attack on their personality and feel offended. I again relate this to their behaviour towards women – they are both expecting to be treated in a particular way. For example, I have already mentioned Bunny's scene with the masculine woman, who failed to meet his expectations, and what he did afterwards, urinating all over her bathroom and telling her about it, proud of himself. He was beaten by her soon after, but that does not change the fact that he felt offended by her attitude towards him. He was losing the argument and felt it was not right; indeed he felt genuinely angry about the whole situation:

Bunny sees the super-toned muscle in Charlotte's thigh twitch and thinks he sees, carried on the happy, ozonic air, golden sparks of love jumping out of the legs of her pink towelling

shorts. Emboldened, Bunny leans in and wiggles his eyebrows and says, suggestively, ‘Well, Charlotte, you know what they say about rabbits?’

‘No, I don’t. What?’

‘Well, they’re . . . um . . . well, you know . . .’ says Bunny.

‘No, I don’t know what they say,’ and then Charlotte adds something that sees this entire episode slip through Bunny’s fingers like the string of a child’s fly-away balloon.

‘Does this routine actually work on the ladies, Bunny?’

Charlotte waggles her hands behind her head, mocking him, and Bunny feels a spike of umbrage worm its way through his bowels.

‘You’d be surprised,’ he says and, before he can check himself, winks at her.

Charlotte shrieks with laughter and says, ‘Did you just wink at me?’

Bunny thinks, Did I? then feels her laughter scrape its fingers down his spine.

[...]

‘You ridiculous man.’

‘Hey, I’m just trying to do my job here.’

‘You sad, ridiculous little man,’ she says.

‘What is this? Jesus!’ says Bunny as he grabs handfuls of beauty samples and throws them into his case. A shadow falls across his face and he looks devastated and injured. ‘Jesus,’ he repeats to himself. (Cave 2010, 129)

As for Patrick in *American Psycho*, one can find his need for entitlement in his meeting with his ex-girlfriend Bethany. He obviously feels hurt by being rejected – it would seem, in what he says and how he acts, that this was the one and only time this has happened to him in his entire life.

“Jesus, here’s a cab. Hey, taxi.” I whistle at an oncoming cab that has just turned off Eighth Avenue, but someone taps my shoulder and when I turn around, Bethany, a girl I dated at Harvard and who I was subsequently dumped by, is standing in front of me wearing a lace-embroidered sweater and viscose-crepe trousers by Christian Lacroix, an open white umbrella in one hand. The cab I was trying to hail whizzes by.

“Bethany,” I say, stunned.

“Patrick.” She smiles.

“Bethany,” I say again.

“How are you, Patrick?” she asks.

“Um, well, um, I’m fine,” I stutter, after an awkward byte of silence. “And you?”

“Really well, thanks,” she says.

“You know ... well, were you in there?” I ask.

“Yeah, I was.” She nods, then, “It’s good to see you.”

“Are you ... living here?” I ask, gulping. “In Manhattan?”

“Yes.” She smiles. “I’m working at Milbank Tweed.”

“Oh, well ... great.” I look back over at Daisy and I’m suddenly angry, remembering the lunch in Cambridge, at Quarters, where Bethany, her arm in a sling, a faint bruise above her cheek, ended it all, then, just as suddenly, I’m thinking: My hair, oh god, my hair, and I can feel the drizzle ruining it. “Well, I gotta go.”

“You’re at P & P, right?” she asks, then, “You look great.”

(Ellis 2010, 211)

Needless to say that Bethany ends up being tortured to death in the story by none other than Patrick himself. (Ellis 2010, 211, 251)

As for exploitation and bad boundaries, I believe I can connect these two characteristics and use some of the examples and excerpts I have already mentioned in the thesis. Exploitation can be targeted at women in general and I have already mentioned several examples of the men in question exploiting and even attacking women. Bunny was cheating on his wife, having many affairs behind her back, which ultimately led to her committing suicide, while Patrick also abused and exploited women in a way some of them might have found at the very least unpleasant.

Bad boundaries involve the protagonists acting in a way where they fail to recognize other people as independent human

beings and one can again see a type of exploitation in such behaviour. I could again mention Patrick hiring prostitutes and physically hurting them afterwards, or indeed Bunny Munro having a prostitute in a hotel room while talking to his wife, saying he could not make it home yet.

Moreover, the very fact that one can understand many characters from *American Psycho* as mere extensions of Patrick's own self ultimately draws him as a character with badly shaped boundaries:

American Psycho obsesses explicitly over a variety of mental disorders ranging from multiple personality disorder to autism and schizophrenia. With only a few exceptions—as, for example, Jean, his secretary, and Bethany, his first girlfriend at college—there are no characters in *American Psycho* who are not primarily reflections or imaginary extensions of Patrick's self. (Schoene 2008, 382)

As Schoene points out, this takes a twisted turn later on in the book, when Patrick starts killing those who one might consider extensions of him:

Patrick could in fact be described as frantically, albeit not entirely without logic, murdering off the parts of himself that he loathes the most. This becomes particularly evident in his excessively gory killing of Paul Owen, his insufferably career-driven and professionally successful alter ego, who “is exactly my age” (215) and whose voice “to someone hearing it over the phone [sounds] probably identical” (218). (Schoene 2008, 383)

Thus, I believe that the evidence found in the excerpts from the books clearly shows both main characters as narcissistic. Of “the seven deadly sins” I presented, I found evidence of all of them in both books and their main male characters. (Hotchkiss 2003, 29)

3.5. Repressing Feminine Behaviour in a Masculine Body

As I stated at the beginning, the misogynist male actively represses any remaining feminine part of his psyche in his own body and mind. This can also be translated in a way that the male character in question lets his masculine part play a major role in his life.

The essay “Serial Masculinity: Psychopathology and Oedipal Violence in Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho*” mentions Oedipal boys and their need to cut themselves off from the feminine part of their psyche.

To win recognition as a man, Oedipal boys must radically cut themselves off from the feminine, which is accomplished through repression and results in neurotic self-division. Effectively, they must split the world, as well as themselves, into a heroic manly “me” on the one hand and a despicable effeminate “not-me” on the other. (Schoene 2008, 385)

The heroic, manly “me” can be seen in many places in the books – I mentioned Patrick acting aggressively towards men and women alike and Bunny Munro and his constant hunt for women.

The following excerpt is from the essay “The Traffic in Women” by Gayle Rubin. Among other, the essay, talks about the repression of the feminine part of the psyche in a male body and the repression of the masculine part of the psyche in a female body:

But the idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something other than a nonexistent “natural” opposition. Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities. It requires repression: in men, of whatever is the local version of “feminine” traits; in women, of the local definition of “masculine” traits. The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women. The same social system which oppresses women in its relations of exchange, oppresses everyone in its insistence upon a rigid division of personality. (Rubin 1998, 782)

The repression of the feminine part of the psyche in a male body and the repression of the masculine part of the psyche in a female body can be seen in the example of Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*. Bunny Munro in *The Death of Bunny Munro* is a different example – while this character seems to be masculine without any noticeable feminine trait, he nevertheless feels threatened by a woman who actually seems to be more masculine than he is, as has been already mentioned in a bathroom scene.

If I could now consider for a moment an act of aggression as an act of desperation in an attempt to assert masculinity, I believe it is obvious that one can again find a multitude of examples in the text by Bret Easton Ellis, even though, as I already mentioned, the text could be considered a mere figment of the main character's imagination. On the other hand, this might actually fit in perfectly with my argument that underlines the manifestations of repression of the female part of the psyche in a male body – Patrick might act aggressively (and we have already mentioned many examples of him hurting and actually killing women) because he might be afraid to be seen as a rather feminine figure. If, of course, he is only imagining such acts, he might actually be even more desperate to be seen in “the best possible light” in his imagined scenes of killing women, trying to present himself to the reader as a real man by his own and at the very least twisted standards. (Ellis 2010, 252).

One can also find several examples of why one can consider Patrick as being afraid to be seen as a feminine figure. In many parts of

the book he expresses how much he cares his looks and other behaviour patterns, which might be considered feminine by the traditional (and modern) definitions of masculinity:

Then I always slather on a moisturizer (to my taste, Clinique) and let it soak in for a minute. You can rinse it off or keep it on and apply a shaving cream over it—preferably with a brush, which softens the beard as it lifts the whiskers—which I’ve found makes removing the hair easier. It also helps prevent water from evaporating and reduces friction between your skin and the blade. Always wet the razor with warm water before shaving and shave in the direction the beard grows, pressing gently on the skin. Leave the sideburns and chin for last, since these whiskers are tougher and need more time to soften. Rinse the razor and shake off any excess water before starting. Afterwards splash cool water on the face to remove any trace of lather. You should use an aftershave lotion with little or no alcohol. Never use cologne on your face, since the high alcohol content dries your face out and makes you look older. One should use an alcohol-free antibacterial toner with a water-moistened cotton ball to normalize the skin. (Ellis, 2010, 26)

Such behaviour is not considered normal by most men – putting this sort of effort into one’s look is in general more commonly seen among women and not in men. I consider this excerpt to be an example of feminine behaviour, which, I believe, is then repressed by the main character by means of the violent behaviour he demonstrates against women in particular, as I have already mentioned.

The essay “‘And As Things Fell Apart’: The Crisis of Postmodern Masculinity in Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* and Dennis Cooper’s *Frisk*”, however, offers a different point of view:

Helyer has noted that Bateman’s carefully orchestrated grooming procedure “seems an incredibly ‘feminine’ pastime” (736), and on a more complex level, the relentless obsession with his own appearance reveals a deeply narcissistic side to him. A Freudian analysis of Bateman may be interesting in itself, and in terms of his narcissism, it poses a question often raised about the novel. Bateman’s relation to homosexuality is more complex than that too complex, in fact, to elucidate in the

confines of this essay. What these details perhaps show is Ellis's desire to complicate Bateman's misogyny by layering an unconscious femininity into his narrative. (Storey 2005, 65)

There are many points of view of Patrick's masculinity and his fight to maintain this over any feminine part of his psyche. For example, as I have stated, his violence and killing could be considered an example of his masculine side fighting for survival:

Life is lived in sensations and, perhaps, fantasies which have no apparent reference to external reality and no 'I' to think them" (306). As Philip Simpson demonstrates in his analysis of serial-killer fiction, "this indeterminacy of self in relation to Other and environment is a standard of earlier Gothic fiction" revisited, and relived, in contemporary neoGothic works in which, quite typically, "individual identities reveal their fragile constitutions. Selves blur, conflate, and shift with aggravating fluidity" (20). Accordingly, Patrick's ultraviolent killing spree is a desperate battle for the self, a battle for the survival of the self-contained, authoritative, masculinist self of modernity. (Schoene 2008, 383)

Furthermore – the process of murder could be seen as Patrick's fight for survival for himself and his masculinity and for the survival of his own sanity:

Pertinently, in Patrick's view, it is not his murderous escapades that constitute his madness. Murder is Patrick's tool to preempt madness, a survival mechanism devised to reinscribe indisputably the sanity that masculinity has traditionally regarded as an inalienable attribute of its nature. Patrick's psychosis is the result of his effort to reclaim masculinity's entitlement to determine the general order of things by serially reenacting its fortress-like resilience to what it perceives as weakness, subversion, and fragmentation. (Schoene 2008, 383)

So there are at least two possible points of view regarding the repression of the feminine side of Patrick's psyche. The first point of view is violence against women in general and the second the fact that Ellis may have complicated his misogynist character traits on purpose by adding in this feminine behaviour.

However, I believe that in the end it is his masculinity and desire to control women (if real, as I will explain further on) that definitively allow his feminine traits to sink into the background. Storey points out that it is mostly women towards whom Patrick aims his hostility:

The one group who presents the biggest threat to normative masculinity in the postmodern era, and the group toward whom Bateman concentrates much of his hostility, is women. Perhaps the defining aspect of the type of masculinity that Bateman represents is the subjugation of femininity, whether that femininity is embodied in women or, more disturbingly for those men, in themselves. (Storey 2005, 65)

Finding such behaviour in *The Death of Bunny Munro* is much more difficult, since the main character does not seem to express any feminine traits at all. Thus I cannot easily find any direct examples of him repressing such traits.

On the other hand, there are many examples of the indirect approach – the main male character does not exactly repress the feminine part of his psyche, but lets his masculine psyche come to the fore and perhaps even lets this part of his psyche control him above everything else, which would explain why he is unable to stop lying to his wife, who commits suicide merely moments after another batch of his lies and a scene involving a prostitute. There follows another example, showing how even his wife's friends despise him because of his behaviour. This happens at his wife's funeral:

Next to Patsy Parker, Bunny sees, is Rebecca Beresford, who Libby would refer to at any given time as 'the older sister I never had', 'my soul mate' and 'my best friend in the world'. Rebecca Beresford stopped talking to Bunny years ago after an incident at a barbecue on Rottingdean beach that involved a half bottle of Blue Label Smirnoff, an uncooked chipolata, her fifteen-year-old daughter and a serious misreading of the signs.

This led to a furore that a year of contrition could not defuse.
(Cave 2010, 52)

In other words, I found no direct evidence of Bunny Munro repressing the feminine part of his psyche; however, one can find many examples of indirect repression in letting the masculine part of his psyche take control of his mind and body through selfishness, lack of sympathy for the position of women and stereotypically masculine behaviour.

4. Post-modern Hero

4.1. Defining Postmodern

So far I have discussed only the misogynist male in general and found evidence in the books that, based on their behaviour, the main characters I chose truly are misogynistic. However, I have not yet taken into account the other aspect of my thesis – postmodern heroes. With the help of literature, I am now able to divide the expression in two and consider the term “postmodern” and the term “hero” as individual concepts.

One of the first people who widely used the term postmodern and who were closely linked to discussion of the term was French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, who wrote and partially coined the concept in his book *The Postmodern Condition* (Brügger 2001, 77).

One of the points of view of what postmodern actually means that was presented by Lyotard is that the ‘post-’ part of the term means that one cannot go back:

Just as the patient elaborates his present trouble by freely associating the more imaginary, immaterial, irrelevant bits with past situations, so discovering hidden meanings of his life, we

can consider the work of Cezanne, Picasso, Delaunay, Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian, Malevitch and finally Duchamp as a working through what Freud called *Durcharbeitung* – operated by modernity on itself. If we give up this responsibility, it is certain that we are condemned to repeat, without any displacement, the modern neurosis, the Western schizophrenia, paranoia, and so on. This being granted, the ‘post-’ of postmodernity does not mean a process of coming back or flashing back, feeding back, but of ana-lysing, ana-mnesing, of reflecting. (Leitch 2001, 1615)

This is an interesting point of view of what postmodern actually means, but the question of whether the books chosen can be considered postmodern in general is more important.

As Lyotard noted, postmodern can be considered a reaction to the modernism that followed the Enlightenment. It can also be understood as a way of differentiating between the earlier movements and the end of “the great narratives” (Empower Network 2012) (Plencner 2013, 34).

In his article “Film Hero With Messianic Traits”, Plencner also points out that in today’s mass culture (he writes about movies in general, but I do not consider this to be an issue here), postmodern also means ideas and works that correspond to the current mood in society (Plencner 2013, 35). Both books, I believe, prove such a claim by depicting modern Western society and the current decay in moral standards.

Both books depict characters that deviate from what society nowadays considers to be either standard or as having patterns worth following (which does not mean that it corresponds to the mood in society), meaning that both authors create something different to what literature used to represent – heroes that may not be considered heroes at all; misogynist men who treat women in an unworthy way. I believe that

this makes the books postmodern and stirs up a far wider debate – what is a hero and can the characters I chose actually be considered heroes in general? I will consider such a dilemma in the following part of this chapter.

It is also important to admit that there exists a problem with the term postmodern, in that there is actually an issue with the very definition of what postmodernism truly means. Writers, authors and scholars have problems defining the term in general – the term is still not widely accepted or understood, as Frederic Jameson writes. Although it should be better defined in the years to come, there are some common features of “postmodern” which allow us to consider the books in question examples of postmodern literature. (Leitch 2001, 1960)

4.1.1. Features of the Postmodern

There are many features of postmodern literature, but for the purposes of this thesis I will choose the three that are most visible in the two books in question – unreliability, subjectivity and the question of the hero himself. I will write about the postmodern hero in a separate chapter, where I will analyse what a hero is, how the idea of a postmodern hero breaks the traditional archetypes and how it fits the chosen novels.

I consider the narrator in *American Psycho* to be highly unreliable – there are many occasions in the book where it is absolutely clear that the narration is deliberately unreliable. (Ellis 2010, 376) (Storey 2005, 58, 60) I consider the unreliability itself a

major feature of *American Psycho*, so much so that this features in a separate chapter.

In the case of Bunny Munro and his story, I consider his unreliability to be visible in passages where he sees his deceased wife, something which also question Bunny's sanity. For example:

He realises, in a shadowy way, for a brief moment, that the weird imaginings and visitations and apparitions that he has encountered are the ghosts of his own grief and that he is being driven insane by them. (Cave 2010, 200)

Subjectivity is another major feature that can be seen in both books, because both stories revolve around the protagonists and it is mainly they who decide what is about to happen in the stories. This issue is also analysed further in the following chapter, where I take a closer look at the idea of the hero in general (Cave 2010) (Ellis 2010).

As I show in the coming chapters, the books fulfil the idea of postmodern literature and are examples of the movement in question. The heroes themselves can also be defined as postmodern, as I will explain below.

4.2. The Definition of a Hero in literature

As with the definition of postmodern, one might also encounter a problem when trying to define the term hero. What does the term hero mean and who can be considered a hero? This term has been commonly used in literature for hundreds of years now. Mieke Bal mentions five criteria that usually define a hero:

- qualification: the reader is given comprehensive information about appearance, psychology, motivation and even his/her past (Bal 1999, 131)

- distribution: the hero occurs often in the story; his or her presence is felt at important moments in the fabula (Bal 1999, 131)
- independence: in the story, the hero can occur alone or hold monologues (Bal 1999, 131)
- function: certain actions are those of the hero alone: s/he makes agreements, vanquishes opponents, unmaskers traitors, etc. (Bal 1999, 131)
- relations: s/he maintains relations with the largest number of characters (Bal 1999, 131)

When one judges the two heroes in question from the criteria given, one can simply agree that both Bunny and Patrick are heroes. However, this is only part of the problem, as I will demonstrate later.

They are both qualified and the authors not only describe their physical appearance, but their motivation, psychology and past. One sees Patrick having been rejected by a woman in the past and the consequences of this later on and one sees Bunny's confrontation with his father, who used to be a huge womanizer himself, which probably had a major impact on his view of women in general (Cave 2010, 156) (Ellis 2010, 211, 251).

As for distribution, both stories are centred around the characters in question, leaving no doubt as to the fact that it is Bunny and Patrick around whom the universes of the books and stories revolve.

Independence can mainly be seen in Patrick's story – I have already mentioned passages in which he talks about his daily rituals, in that those passages are the ones where Patrick is alone and leads a monologue (although he seems to be talking directly to the reader, I would still consider this an example of a monologue) (Ellis 2010, 26).

Bunny, on the other hand, cannot be seen alone as often, for he has a child to take care of. Finding an example of him acting on his own is a delicate problem, but one can see his loneliness and him acting on his own on the many occasions when he leaves the boy behind and goes offering beauty products to female customers. He does not want to be accompanied by his son as he is often on the look-out for something more than just their cash. Even if he ends up not being alone, he still acts on his own, fabricating elusions when it comes to responsibilities resulting from having a son to take care of:

‘Wait here, Bunny Boy, I’ll be back in a minute,’ he says and he hauls himself out of the car. Bunny thinks his dad looks like a real go-getter, with his sample case and his suit. ‘OK, Dad,’ says Bunny Junior and he adjusts his sunglasses. ‘I’ll wait here.’ Bunny makes to cross the road, then turns back and sticks his head through the driver’s side window. ‘If a traffic warden comes by, pretend you’re a spastic or something.’ ‘OK, Dad.’ (Cave 2010, 97)

The next feature is function, which can take many forms. In the case of Patrick, one can detect the vanquishing of opponents, whereby he either dreams of killing or even kills many people (mostly women). Whether he does or does not actually kill anyone does not affect the idea presented here – it is the thought itself that I have taken into account. Once again, I will discuss the narrator’s reliability later on.

As far as this function is concerned, Bunny is portrayed as a man who is in control most of the time and who makes his own decisions, as one can see in the following excerpt:

The boy ate his breakfast quickly and, anxious to leave, pulled out the client list and said, ‘Where to now, Dad?’ but his dad told him they were going to visit a loyal customer in Rottingdean – one they could tap into at any time. She just loved that body cream! (Cave 2010, 161)

In terms of relationships in connection to heroes, one talks of characters that maintain relationships with the largest number of characters. I believe there is no issue in stating that these two characters are heroes in terms of relationships. I have already mentioned many cases of both of them having intercourse with different women, which might be considered one of the main aspects of both stories.

As one can clearly see, both of the main characters can be seen as (postmodern) heroes in terms of these characteristics; however, one must also not forget about the moral part of the decision-making process involved in determining who is a hero and who is not.

Although both texts have a “hero” (i.e. a protagonist) from a strictly functional point of view, the classical definition also implies a moral and qualitative aspect. This aspect gains even greater importance in a thesis that describes misbehaviour towards women.

Traditionally, as Aristotle suggests, a hero should be a man that is not eminently good, but that is at least someone with high moral standards. Aristotle’s tragic hero is a noble person who commits an injury (on purpose or not) and who is then haunted by the consequences and by a great realization concerning the events that led to his destiny (Butcher 2015).

Based on this point of view, both Bret Easton Ellis and Nick Cave undermine the archetypes of traditional heroes. When put together with the idea of the postmodern, however, one does not face a hero that is traditional, but who fulfils the idea of a postmodern hero. Allow me to support such claims with the following two excerpts:

‘You’d be surprised,’ says Bunny, looking at his watch and suddenly remembering an alcoholic dream he had had the night before that involved finding a matchbox full of celebrity clitorises – Kate Moss’s, Naomi Campbell’s, Pamela Anderson’s and of course Avril Lavigne’s (among others) – and trying unsuccessfully to stab holes in the lid with a blunt knitting needle while the little pink peas screamed for air. (Cave 2010, 172)

The things I could do to this girl’s body with a hammer, the words I could carve into her with an ice pick. She hands the guy behind her my boxes—and I pretend to ignore his horrified reaction as he recognizes me after he looks at the Body Double box—but he dutifully walks into some kind of vault in the back of the store to get the movies. (Ellis 2010, 112)

Bunny is again pictured as a character that thinks (and in this case even dreams while inebriated) of one thing only, especially when it comes to celebrities. In the second excerpt, Patrick is yet again depicted as a violent person who daydreams of physically hurting people.

Plencner states that the postmodern art might also contain a typical anti-hero, something which is clearly fulfilled by both Patrick and Bunny. Plencner even uses Patrick (from the film adaptation from the year 2000) as an example of such a hero (Plencner 2013, 37).

These excerpts support the claim that, from the functional point of view, the two protagonists are heroes, but from the traditional perspective they are not, which also proves that the characters belong to the postmodern era, which stands opposed to traditional themes and topics (Empower Network 2012).

5. The Narrator’s Reliability in *American Psycho*

As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there is one possible downside to my theory, that being the potentially unreliable narrator in *American Psycho*.

It may seem that the whole argument I have put forward could easily fall apart if or when the narrator proves himself to be unreliable, which, as I mentioned earlier in the thesis, could be considered the case of Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*.

The essay entitled “‘And As Things Fell Apart’: The Crisis of Postmodern Masculinity in Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho* and Dennis Cooper’s *Frisk*” not only discusses the masculinity of the main characters in *American Psycho* and *Frisk*, but develops theories on the reliability of the narrator in *American Psycho*:

One puzzle that has also fueled the novel’s cult status is whether the “action” actually takes place or is a sustained, nightmarish fantasy. Most critics either think of *American Psycho* as the stylish confession of a yuppie serial killer, a not-so-subtle satire of 1980s consumer greed, or a long, increasingly insane rant, a malign chimera conjured by the disturbed mind of Patrick Bateman. (Storey 2005, 58)

In this case, the potential unreliability of the narrator does not end with Patrick perhaps not telling the truth or perhaps just relating his deepest fantasies based on external elements and sources. The unreliability goes deeper than this – the question that arises with the following excerpt is what happens if the character is actually non-existent:

Now that the notoriety has quietened, those approaches now seem strangely simplistic. It turns the novel into a 400-page puzzle, a kind of ontological whodunnit that one can “work out” by following the clues. [...] The question is not whether the “action” really takes place a careful reading reveals that was never the point but what the “action” tells us about the person who recounts it. The narrative is life through the prism of Patrick Bateman’s psyche, but closer inspection reveals his psyche is nonexistent. Instead, Ellis gives us a central identity created by external forces, a fictional world encased in the language of the society that created it and told through the voice of a man who in real terms is not actually there. The narrative is deeply mired in the “crisis of masculinity,” exploring the

creation of an identity in a postmodern world in which the concept of identity has changed. (Storey 2005, 58)

If his own experiences did not provide him with the external sources and elements of which his stories are full, he had to find them somewhere else. He could have obtained them, for example, in books, movies or the stories of other people. Such an experience could have been real, but from other character's point of view, not from his own, thus making *his experience* and stories more or less unreal.

One particularly interesting point for such a claim is the tense used for the description of the murders and all the violence:

The most obvious starting point for realizing this is the violence, the source of the novel's notoriety. Once our initial squirming is over, an almost too obvious question occurs to us: How can Bateman maintain so detailed a description of what he is doing when it is in the present tense? This cannot be a written confession; anything other than past-tense narration makes no sense. This may seem a questionable point, even a facetious one, but as an unavoidable facet of the narrative it surely short-circuits any attempt to read Bateman too trustingly. We can reach only one conclusion: He got the details from elsewhere. When Bateman at one point mentions Ed Gein,² one of his associates comments, "You've always been interested in stuff like that, Bateman" (92), and a conversation at the Yale Club turns once again to serial killers. (Storey 2005, 60)

Credibility then takes another hit as Storey points out some specific examples of Patrick's possible inspiration, and thus makes him even less reliable. Unreliable narration truly hurts the credibility of the story in general, but it does not affect the message that is conveyed on its pages.

Storey also points out that, based on how detailed the descriptions of his common actions and murders are, some other individuals must necessarily be involved, probably a maid of some kind, who is, again, either unreal or who puts too much effort into being silent about what is (or not) going on in Patrick's apartment.

Philip Simpson notes that “Bateman talks about notorious real-life serial killers and fictional ones with no apparent discernment between them” (150). Bateman’s viewing choices also seem extreme: He mentions watching *The Toolbox Murders* (278), a film notorious for its graphic scene of someone being murdered with a nail-gun; he has watched his favorite film, *Body Double?* thirtyseven times and tells the counter assistant at the video store that his favorite part is when “the woman . . . gets drilled by the . . . power driller” (113; ellipses in original). The scenes in which he is apparently committing “real” violence subsequently take on a different tone: They are so over the top, so filmic, even comic-book in the details that we are given (including one murder using a nail-gun and another using a power driller) that it seems like something he has taken from a book or a film. The state of Bateman’s apartment on the morning after a particularly horrific night (290- 91) is typical: The smell emanating from the mangled corpses (he opens Venetian blinds covered with the fat of electrocuted breasts), would be hard to cover up. As he seems never to do any cleaning, we can only presume that his maid, whom he mentions more than once, does it for him. Would she stay silent about finding a decapitated head wearing sunglasses on the kitchen work surface? Or were there no remains to find because the murders never took place? Or perhaps there is no maid? The evidence of the novel alerts us to Bateman’s unreliability, but the language that describes his atrocious acts sets off alarm bells on a deeper level; life for Bateman, it seems, is one long film. (Storey 2005, 60)

In the following excerpt, Patrick himself provides the final piece of the puzzle that depicts him as an unreliable narrator. The following paragraph portrays him as an incomplete human being, maybe even a non-existent one:

... there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there. It is hard for me to make sense on any given level. Myself is fabricated, an aberration. I am a noncontingent human being. (Ellis 2010, 376)

Of course, this can be interpreted in more than one way. Not only might it mean that Patrick does not exist at all, it could also mean that Patrick is simply not sure of his own sane mind and has serious doubts

about what his life has to offer, either to himself or his surroundings. He might simply be doubting his own sanity in modern society. However, I believe I can safely say that Patrick can be considered an unreliable narrator within the context of the previous excerpts from the book.

In his article “Film Hero with Messianic Traits”, Plencner also mentions the fact that a hero can be non-existent and that it does not harm anything – a hero must be existent in the very work of art, meaning he is well depicted, which, I believe, Patrick is (Plencner 2013, 37).

In such light, I believe that in the end the reliability of the narrator and the fact that Patrick Bateman may be non-existent does not undermine the thesis in any meaningful way. Reliable or not, Patrick is nevertheless a misogynist male, if not in his actions then in the way he talks and describes himself as a man. Even if one deals with fantasies alone, and perhaps has even done so, he fits the aforementioned description of a misogynist male and thus fulfils the needs of this thesis, also supporting my claim that this book belongs to the postmodern era.

6. Conclusion

The Death of Bunny Munro is a book not well read and studied, meaning that finding any journals or articles of particular interest and/or that deal with my topic is far more difficult than finding anything concerning *American Psycho*. I believe I successfully demonstrated that the main characters truly treat women badly and are thus considered misogynist in nature.

I made a list of character traits of misogynist male characters and demonstrated in various excerpts that almost all of them can be found in both Patrick and Bunny in the books chosen.

I encountered two possible downsides that could threaten the credibility of my theory in general.

One is that Patrick Bateman might be considered unreliable in the role of narrator,. There is also the fact that at one point the narrator leaves the first person viewpoint of Patrick and tells the story *of* Patrick, using the third person.

Even if the narrator of *American Psycho* is truly unreliable, however, it would not change the fact that his reality or his fantasies work well for the topic of this thesis.

Another flaw could be the fact that I did not find many texts and analyses of the book by Nick Cave. However, I do not believe that this changes the credibility of my analysis of the main character. I had other important texts to follow as directions and pointed out quite clearly that Bunny Munro is misogynist in nature and that he, as is the case with Patrick Bateman, only considers his own good when dealing with women.

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