

ABSTRACT:

The Millennial Manhattan Metrosexual Anti-Hero

The American new lads of Bret Easton Ellis' novels are metrosexual demons, each obsessed with costly designer apparel and cosmetology products, under the spell of popular culture phenomenon, and more often than not, financially sound for life thanks to trust funds and/or high profile jobs. These characters have a glorious surplus of designer labels, money, women, and drugs, but because they are such self-obsessed cosmopolitan-ites, Ellis fuels their interior monologues with enough neuroticisms for every Los Angelean, Londoner, and, especially New Yorker, to idolize these social climbers and kings of convenience. Ellis city men, these metrosexual skyscraper-dwellers, are simultaneously chauvinistic and princess-like, most notably his infamous anti-hero Patrick Bateman, who must detail for himself the clothing labels and costs of everyone in his immediate surroundings.

On the surface level these characters are selfish materialistic jerks who would kill their own mothers for a one-of-a-kind Paul Smith suit. On a deeper level, though, they are selfish materialistic jerks who would kill their own mothers for a one-of-a-kind Paul Smith suit (oh)...but do not know why they are the horrid way that they are. Costumed by expensive threads and labels, these materialistic Ellisian characters are each in a desperate crisis with his Other. Most of all, these man-boys fight vehemently to not have to grow up, no matter how much materialism, consumerism, violence, misogyny, and homophobia they decorate their plastic battle armor with.

Mark Simpson created the term "metrosexual" in 1994 when he wrote his article "Here Come the Mirror Men" for 'The Independent'. In 2002 Simpson updated and expanded his article for Salon.com to include the likes of male fashion divas David Beckham, Robbie Williams, George Clooney and Brad Pitt as definitive 'Mirror Men', and retitled it "Meet The Metrosexuals".

In 2002 Simpson wrote:

"The typical metrosexual is a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis -- because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference. Particular professions, such as modeling, waiting tables, media, pop music and, nowadays, sport, seem to attract them but, truth be told, like male vanity products and herpes, they're pretty much everywhere."

By examining Ellis's language, descriptions of, and obsessions with male fashions, this paper details Ellis's metrosexual anti-heroes and the physical costumes they wear in order to hide their psychological masculinity crises. If time and space in my analysis permits, I will also incorporate metrosexual characters of other contemporary Manhattan-based writers including Jay McInerney, Adam Davies, and Jonathan Franzen.

Zachary Snider