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“American Psycho” is a 2000 film directed by Mary Harron and adapted from the novel of the same name by Bret Easton Ellis. The story follows Patrick Bateman, a wealthy New York City Investment Banker, through the soulless labyrinth of consumerist culture and his eventual descent into madness. This Juvenalian satire serves as an unsettling and still highly relevant portrayal of a harrowing American society consumed by individualism and superficiality. There are various scenes interweaved in the narrative that demonstrate the strong use of satirical techniques and literary devices to reinforce this central idea. The morning routine scene, where Bateman introduces himself by describing his morning routine, makes use of caricatures, parallelism, imagery, and juxtaposition to characterize the extremes of Bateman's self-obsession and shallowness. The business card scene, in which Bateman and his colleagues compare their business cards, makes similar use of techniques such as caricatures, hyperbole, symbols, and irony to highlight the absurdity and emptiness inherent in the characters' fixation on trivial status symbols. Throughout “American Psycho,” Harron uses various rhetorical devices to depict the dark excesses of consumerism and the erosion of identity, presenting a damning critique of a society that places meaning in the wrong things.

The first scene in “American Psycho,” a monologue from protagonist Patrick Bateman, serves as an introduction to the subject of the satire and an illustration of his extreme narcissism, self-obsession, and existential alienation. This scene uses a plethora of literary devices, including

caricatures, parallelism, imagery, and juxtaposition, to distort Bateman as a typification of contemporary consumerism and individualism. In this monologue, Bateman indirectly characterizes and caricaturizes himself with his meticulous morning routine. The exaggerated details of this routine, such as the extreme exercise regimen consisting of intense stretching, cardio, and “thousands of stomach crunches,” go beyond discipline and fitness, entering a territory of extreme obsession with physical appearance. The subsequent listing of products and steps in Bateman’s self-care routine further emphasizes this point, making use of parallelism and imagery to augment his fastidiousness and self-obsession. The visual and physical descriptions of the products, such as the different facemasks, cleansers, lotions, etc., are listed within a parallel structure, creating a sense of uncanniness around Bateman’s satirical persona. This uncanniness is built upon in the latter part of the monologue, which describes Bateman’s alienation from society and others. Various forms of imagery are used to create visual symbols that reinforce his struggle with identity. The use of mirrors and masks throughout the scene underscores Bateman’s obsession with outward appearance and contextualizes his conflict between perceptions of himself. Finally, a juxtaposition is created between Bateman and the viewer, using imagery of a handshake with no feeling behind the flesh to highlight his disconnection and elicit caution within the viewer by drawing the dichotomy. Overall, this scene's nuanced use of satirical techniques builds up the hollow existence and misplaced meaning perpetuated by a consumerist society.

Another scene in “American Psycho” that did a notoriously fantastic job of conveying the depicted society's narcissism and obsession with status is the comparison of business cards. In this scene, Patrick Bateman and his colleagues dramatically and scrupulously compare their business cards, reflecting their fixations on trivial things and others’ views of themselves. The

use of caricatures, hyperbole, symbols, and irony is laden throughout as the scene expresses the lack of substance behind Bateman and his colleagues. All the characters presented in this scene exemplify the caricatured and exaggerated self-absorbed personas of consumerist culture. Their extreme obsession with the look of the business cards, as highlighted by their detailed analysis and comparison of the colors and lettering, uses hyperbole to satirize how these characters placed such importance on superfluous things. The business cards are symbols of status and society's obsession with it. They illustrate the characters' shallowness by showing how they equate their worth to external markers of status and the derived social validation. As demonstrated by his discomfort when he thought one of his colleagues preferred a different business card, Bateman is obsessed with his outward image to the extent that the idea of someone having a better card causes him to act neurotic. The situational irony behind this scene is the juxtaposition between this obsession with trivial things and the abhorrent acts that Bateman commits later in the film. The contrast between Bateman's larger-scale moral decay and almost comical superficiality emphasizes the emptiness underlying his external persona. This scene, a classic in "American Psycho," highlights the shallowness and misplaced meaning of the broader societal landscape.

Throughout "American Psycho," there are a multitude of rich examples of the use of rhetorical devices to paint a picture of society. It remains a highly relevant piece of art that offers important commentary on the nadirs of excessive individualism and materialism within it. Despite taking extreme turns and expressing its message in absurd ways, "American Psycho" at its core is a call to put material possessions and status below the pursuit of personal meaning and identity.

P.S. Robert Pattinson is the better Batman