



# Imperial Bedrooms

*Bret Easton Ellis*

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## Imperial Bedrooms Bret Easton Ellis

Twenty-five years on from "*Less Than Zero*", we pick up again with "*Clay*".

In 1985, Bret Easton Ellis shocked, stunned and disturbed with "*Less Than Zero*", his 'extraordinarily accomplished first novel' ("New Yorker"), successfully chronicling the frightening consequences of unmitigated hedonism within the ranks of the ethically bereft youth of 80s Los Angeles. Now, twenty-five years later, Ellis returns to those same characters: to Clay and the band of infamous teenagers whose lives weave sporadically through his.

But now, some years on, they face an even greater period of disaffection: their own middle age. Clay seems to have moved on - he's become a successful screenwriter - but when he returns from New York to Los Angeles, to help cast his new movie, he's soon drifting through a long-familiar circle. Blair, his former girlfriend, is now married to Trent, and their Beverly Hills parties attract excessive levels of fame and fortune, though for all that Trent is a powerful manager, his baser instincts remain: he's still a bisexual philanderer.

Then there's Clay's childhood friend, Julian - who's now a recovering addict - and their old dealer, Rip - face-lifted beyond recognition and seemingly even more sinister than he was in his notorious past. Clay, too, struggles with his own demons after a meeting with a gorgeous actress determined to win a role in his movie. And with his life careening out of control, he's forced to come to terms with the deepest recesses of his character - and with his seemingly endless proclivity for betrayal.

## Imperial Bedrooms Details

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Author : Bret Easton Ellis

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# From Reader Review Imperial Bedrooms for online ebook

## Louise Johanna says

ok jeg er klar for å ha in depth project om at å skrive oppfølgeren til debutromanen sin ikke nødvendigvis garanterer en ny suksess

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## David says

Do not read this book. It's about despicable people doing despicable things.

In other words, it's about being human in the most essential sense of the term.

You will not like it because you have to like the characters you read about. Or because it's too dull or cold or passe. Or because it's misanthropic or misogynistic.

It's really none of these things, but you'll think it is and say it is and you'll be angry and spiteful and write another tired anti-Ellis review. Another tired anti-postmodernism review.

Save your time.

There are many great books you'll not have time to read during your too-short life. Let this be one of them. This, and *White Noise* maybe. And Jonathan Safran Foer.

Clutch desperately to the past. To the literature and music and films of your parents and their parents, and so on. They've said everything that needs to be said. And they've invented all the worthwhile ways of saying it. Now let's just sit back in our tufted wingbacks and regard it, complacently, religiously.

The remainder, after all -- *our* contribution to the conversation -- is only decadence, gimmickry, and superficiality.

How disgusting we are. How pathetically, beautifully, wonderfully disgusting. T.S. Eliot said so, I think. In a manner of speaking.

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## Snotchocheez says

As if the infantile devil silhouette (Halloween self-portrait?) on the cover of its paltry 169 pages wasn't a dead giveaway that "imperial Bedrooms", the sequel to BEE's 1985 less-than-stellar "Less than Zero" was going to be a clunker, all I had to do was turn to the last page to see the "1985-2010" designation. This sequel was 25 years in the making!

God, what an insipid, uninspired, self-absorbed, vapid piece of nothingness this was. I vowed after reading his paean to product placement and torture porn "American Psycho" I'd give up trying to understand why BEE has been heralded by many as the consummate capturer of the Zeitgeist of the disaffected. Only an intriguing review by Stephen King enticed me enough to give "Lunar Park" a try, and that novel, unlike his preceding 5, was borderline brilliant. Starting out as a Mea Culpa of sorts for penning banal crap like American Psycho and Glamorama, he uses his penchant for self-absorption to good use by plunking himself in the middle of a truly eerie meta-reality. After finally being won over with "LP", coupled with a glowing review in Entertainment Weekly of "IB", I figured I'd give him another shot. Bad, bad choice. I found this for \$1.00 at a local thrift store...and let's just say, I'm seriously contemplating asking for my money back. It's that bad.

Yeah, most of the same cast of substance-abusing, directionless, horny kids of privilege from "LTZ" are back (even one that died in the movie version) except now, 25 years later, are 40-something Gen X'ers tangentially involved in the movie industry. It's revealed early on that one of the principal characters (actually Julian, the one that died in the movie version of "LTZ") is violently killed in murky circumstances involving, it is hinted at, Mexican drug cartels and the slimy underbelly of the movie- (and money-) making machine. The main character/narrator Clay (who also narrates "LTZ", and is now a screenwriter/movie producer) spends the bulk of this bloated piffle jumping from seemingly every haute restaurant, nitery, and hot spot in Los Angeles meeting up with his LTZ friends and recreating the last days and circumstances that led up to Julian's grizzly demise. Instead of providing a meaty murder mystery, though, BEE (in BEE-like fashion) seems more interested in showing off his insider cred than actually bothering with coherent dialog or plausible plot development.

Some might argue that BEE is most effective in capturing the Zeitgeist of (as Marilyn Manson calls them) "the Beautiful People"; I would contend, though, that in doing so, a writer must be mindful not to alienate the reader with banality. This latest effort of BEE's, which often reads like an incomplete screenplay and half-hearted vanity project rather than a novel, seems like it was sitting in the back of the author's closet, then hastily cobbled together to satisfy a contractual obligation with his publisher.

[and what is up with the title? Is it a prerequisite to enjoying this novel to have foreknowledge that "imperial Bedrooms" is an Elvis Costello album and song from 1982? (a fact that I had to Google as BEE never bothers to explain its significance or relevance to the novel.) (sorry, Elvis fans) Having lived in a rather poor section of LA for over 30 years, I thought at first maybe he was referring to LA's longest east/west thoroughfare, Imperial Highway, a street that runs from bedroom communities in Orange County and dissects LA straight through the skeeziest parts of South Central, and empties out at LAX in Inglewood with a panoply of seedy pay-by-the-hour-esque motels, but that, evidently would give BEE too much imaginative credit: in BEE's insular world, all roads in LA lead to Chateau Marmont, the Sunset Towers, Dan Tana's, Chasen's, Ivy at the Shore, the Getty Museum, Spago, etc. The sad irony is that, chances are, the omnipresent drugs his protagonists surround themselves with probably came ultimately from a drug dealer within a few miles of the real Imperial Hwy, a fact (I'm sure) totally lost on the befogged BEE].

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## David Lentz says

I really can't seem to remember the last time that I rated a novel with only one star. But I blame myself: I should have seen it coming. A friend of mine met BEE at a party in the Hamptons and raved about him. So despite my misgivings I thought I would take the plunge and now I deeply regret that I did so. Fortunately,

the book was terribly short and it's not so much a novel really as a novella. I assume BEE knocked it out over a long weekend stay at the Beverly Hilton. I am not so much into multiple decapitations anymore. Ditto for torture, drugs and brutal rape. Sorry but apparently hundreds of thousands of us are into these plot points and the book is selling rather briskly, I gather. But who doesn't like another great story about the incredible artifice of Hollywood? I was somewhat shocked to learn of the depths of insincerity lingering in this Mecca of Art, Film, Writing and Music. Who knew there was a casting couch for actresses in Hollywood? But BEE makes the LA scene seem like so totally cool. I can't recall when so many names were dropped in so short a book. About the characters: isn't it such a struggle to love a book when you can't stand every single character in it? I found myself unexpectedly cheering their horrid, individual demise. I'm not sure that effect was meant to happen for readers. His peeps struck me as vain, vapid, vacuous, narcissistic, shallow, materialistic, delusional, conspiratorial, paranoid, escapist... sorry, I don't mean to rant. Isn't this notoriously thin veneer part of BEE's theme? Of course, but to hell with it. Hollywood might somehow actually be deeply and horrifically, even fatally flawed but we love them anyway because they define American culture and who can argue with the proud legacy of great literature that they have given us? All those vampire movies, gangsta rap, reality TV, cheesy romantic films and graphic murder mysteries? I hate to say that the writing in "IB" was contrived but I sensed BEE's contrivances on every page and I so longed to be transported and become immersed in the haunting beauty of the writing. There was a moment when I thought this book may have been written as a parody of books about Hollywood, which would have been a far more inventive way to go in the narrative. But I can see now the sincerity of the narrative in wanting to shock us into understanding that no matter how cool we think Hollywood is, it's really only just... a business. Hollywood is simply... an illusion, a bad dream and sometimes even a nightmare that exists to make money. I know, it's shocking. I do sincerely hope that BEE's children never suffer to read his novel. And I am doing my best to spare you the literary agony of reading this little book, too. But, honestly, I implore you to look elsewhere. Anywhere. This book represents nearly everything that is wrong with American commercial writing and mainstream publishing. I am ashamed to think so many people bought this book, read it and a few even admire it. I can't begin to imagine what they were thinking. But I fell for it, too -- all the great buzz. But buyer beware. Maybe it's just the devil making me write this review. But don't hate me -- as BEE has so famously quipped: "I'm only the writer." To BEE or not to BEE: that is the question. Go with not to BEE this time.

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## **Tori Jo Lau says**

Do you remember when Bret Easton Ellis was a ground-breaking new author who wrote novels that shook you to the core, that angered you and made you feel like you were reading something new and unique? I know that's how I felt when I read *American Psycho* - it was a horrible look into a killer mind, one that stayed with me for a long time after I finished reading the book.

I've read two books by Ellis recently, *Imperial Bedrooms* and *Lunar Park*. They both have the same problem in that there's nothing really new in them. *Lunar Park* at least has the meta enjoyment of Ellis being haunted by his own creations, but *Imperial Bedrooms* is merely a 'where are they now' of the *Less Than Zero* cast. And you know what, I don't care. It's boring, all of it.

The whole book can be summed up as blah blah people suck blah blah Hollywood is heartless blah blah sex blah blah violence blah blah paranoia blah blah betrayals and so on. It's a huge pile of nothing, that was not challenging or even remotely interesting.

There was one thing gained from reading *Imperial Bedrooms* however: I now know better than to bother

with another novel by Bret Easton Ellis. If there was any doubt before they are now blown completely away - Ellis is irrelevant. He has nothing new to say, and he's not even saying the old stuff in a new way that makes it feel remotely fresh.

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## Lorileinart says

Imperial Bedrooms is Bret Easton Ellis' sequel to *Less Than Zero*. It's not a book for most people.

Having dismissed most of you out of hand, I now turn my attention to those of us for whom this book was written.

If you were young, smart, rich, and beautiful in the early 1980's, here is our glorious, shameful tribute (it was once okay to openly admit you were an elitist). Before the ravages of AIDS, herpes, crack cocaine, and the resulting cautionary morality that swallowed us whole, we were a freewheeling set of shameless consumers. I'd forgotten how awesome it was to live dangerously. I'd forgotten how it felt, too, when everyone accepted responsibility for their own misfortunes rather than blaming society or the government. Somehow it was better that way.

Imperial Bedrooms follows the young Californians of *Less Than Zero* into their mid-40's. They are exactly as we left them: lethal, self-obsessed. Ellis' greatest gift to the reader is that this tale is mercifully brief. It didn't take long to remind us of who we were.

I devoured this book in one night, and for those few hours, I was twenty years old again. I was infused with the idea that anything--and anyone--was possible. Risk, sex, drugs, strangers: so what?

The final pages are a crash landing that jolt you back to reality. I said farewell to my old self and gratefully returned to the mundane world of mortgages, multiple tuitions, and dinner parties.

Our legacy.

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## R. says

Highly polished *Less Than Zero* fan-fiction: for not one second do I buy into the idea that Bret Easton Ellis actually believes his characters survived beyond the very late 80s or early 90s. The literary equivalent of a "Späder-Man" action figure.

Also please note that Elvis Costello does not make an appearance - beyond an epigraph - as any sort of symbol or signpost, as he did in *LTZ*.

But Warren Zevon *does*.

Twice, actually.

As such, since naming a novel set in LA "Werewolves of London" or "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead" would be...be just *silly*...I suggest future editions of IB be retitled "My Shit's Fucked Up" (from the WZ album *Life'll Kill Ya*).

Since Clay is, y'know, such an *excitable boy*.

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## Tiny Pants says

I would advise potential readers -- and if you're reading this now, that may mean you -- don't read any reviews of this book. Stop reading this right now. It's written in a fairly elliptical way, with dialogue faintly sketching and shading in the bones of the plot, and so anything you do know will take away from what's there. Even though I read his interview in *New York* and the "Talk of the Town" piece on Bret Easton Ellis in the *New Yorker*, these mercifully didn't give anything away. Okay, they said he was writing the book while living in the apartment that in the book belongs to Clay, but that doesn't tell you anything you couldn't already suspect if you knew anything about him. But then, *then*, I read the *New Yorker* "Books in Brief" capsule review -- just a few hundred words! Barely two inches of column text! -- and *four words* in that gave away the central plot of the book. I know, I know, I should just stop ever reading reviews if I haven't already read the book. But I'm not going to go back later and dig out that issue of the *New Yorker*, yada yada yada, so what can I do. Well, I can do this, and advise you, potential future reader, to stop reading this review, if you ignored my earlier directive. If you've already read it, or don't intend to read it, or simply don't care to follow advice from a stranger, read on.

If you thought *Lunar Park* was meta, hold on to your effing hat. At first, I thought that this book was simply the fruits of Bret Easton Ellis having had one idea in the early 80s, and then milking it for all it was worth. (And this is definitely true.) But as it turns out, I think this is actually his attempt to rewrite the movie adaptation of *Less Than Zero*, and turn it into something that's more his style, aka torture porn. The beginning is, if indulgent, at least engaging, and particularly if you are very familiar with the book, the movie, and his subsequent writing, you will get the cozy feeling of being an insider who gets all the references. Throughout the middle, I was like, "You know what? He might just actually pull this off!" One thing Ellis does do well here is create a fictive Hollywood world that blends relatively seamlessly with the real thing -- to his credit, he is good at weaving in references without overdoing it. But I shouldn't have been surprised that it disappointed in the end.

Maybe I'm misremembering *Less Than Zero*. But you know, I claimed it as my favorite book for a few years there (admittedly, my darkest years), and I've read it several times, so I think I remember it pretty well. In spite of the drug use, in spite of the sexual assault, in spite of well, all of it, I never really thought Clay was bad. He just was sort of, well, *there*, letting it wash over him. Things just happen, and the only thing bounding the book in any way or making it cohere into a plot is the school calendar, his Christmas break beginning and ending. Probably this is why I liked it so well -- if you've read many of my other reviews, you know that I sincerely enjoy books that are structured this way, with lots of characterization through description and minor incidents that show us more about the character, and without a big "will s/he find him/herself/fix the marriage/move on/overcome cancer/learn to love again" etc., etc.

As this book reminds us, Clay shows up as a minor character in the background of *The Rules of Attraction*, and though my memory here is fuzzy, may well pop into *American Psycho*. It's only with *Lunar Park* that Ellis decides that we need to see Clay as not simply a blase 80s ~~hedonist~~ nihilist but as basically a West Coast Patrick Bateman. Why? Who the hell knows. Who knows how he comes up with any of this stuff? There was one scene in this book that I couldn't read in its entirety, and you really have to wonder how he comes up with these ways to degrade and destroy human bodies. One thing I will say in this book as compared to the others, for whatever reason, he's made everyone sort of vaguely bisexual, so even though women still get the worst of it (there isn't a single work in the Ellis *oeuvre* that makes you think he has anything but complete contempt for women, making my persistence in reading it all the stranger), he's definitely gotten more into humiliating and eviscerating men. Good times!

Long story short: Don't believe the jacket copy that describes this as "a genuine literary event" unless you are the kind of person who thinks that *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* is going to be "a genuine cinematic event." While it doesn't destroy whatever charm *Less than Zero* still holds for me (as I fully expected it to), it would have been better to let sleeping dogs lie.

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### **M.J. Fiori says**

I expect to be able to read YA fiction in under three hours (or a Charlaine Harris book), but not literary fiction. This slim, flimsy novel is not a worthy followup - especially after three decades - to that eighties-Zeitgeist-capturing classic, *Less Than Zero*. The characters have not aged well, natch; but much more seriously, their creator seems to have regressed in trying to invoke them again. While the jaded narrative voice of Clay (as an Alice who made the mistake of staying too long in the shallow Wonderland of L.A.) is still pitch-perfect, other characters remain mere wisps or stand-ins. Blair is a cardboard cutout; everything having to do with Julian can be summed up by the single word "desperate."

Actually, the main character here is L.A., but Ellis has nothing new or interesting or particularly current to contribute to the inordinate cultural output already devoted to our own American Gomorrah. Similarly, Ellis loves to compare himself to Raymond Chandler, but his work is nothing like Chandler's. So the city-as-character shtick is anemic and unforthcoming, while Ellis' attempt to persuade us that he is writing in a vein of "contemporary noir" falls flat. In fact, there is no mystique or enigma here, no sense of urgency about the story's forward momentum or its characters' arcs. This is not a thriller or a character study; worst of all, it has nothing lucid to say about our modern age. Whatever one's opinion of Ellis and his style, it must be argued that his early works did capture some essential, postmodern malaise that seemed to infect twentysomethings of the eighties. His name and his early books will always be at home in any conversation about that decade of brand-new MTV, cocaine-fed trustafarian culture, and disaffected youth left flat by the failure of the Age of Aquarius. Here, the only real mystery has to do with Rain (who is just too dumb, dull and grasping to be quite believable as a plot-driving character): What exactly ARE the personal merits that make it possible for her to seduce nearly every male character in Greater L.A.? Nothing that could possibly explain her charm is to be found in the pages of this book. I'm disappointed. I demand a sequel to *The Rules of Attraction*!

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### **Scott says**

Bret Easton Ellis has always adopted two distinct personae as an author—that of the lurid purveyor of ultra violence and base sexual appetites set out to shock a bourgeois critical establishment that dares to question his literary mettle, or the closet moralist who wags his finger at the involvement of his characters, and the attendant interest of his fans, in said behavior.

Interestingly enough, it is these same warring impulses that put Ellis in a real narrative predicament in *Imperial Bedrooms*, a sequel written for the 25th Anniversary of his first novel, *Less Than Zero*. Does he force his narrator, Clay, to undergo a moral catharsis and risk scorn from his fans and critics alike for attempting to humanize the hollow, affectless character remembered from the earlier novel, or does he remain true to the moral turpitude and relentless vacuity of *Zero* and risk simply repeating the very narrative that he is supposedly continuing?

After reading *Imperial Bedrooms*, I think that I can answer the latter question with a certain degree of



certainty: Ellis is not afraid of repetition. Where I may see narrative stasis, Ellis likely sees thematic unity with his earlier work.

As stated, this is a literal sequel that features most of the same characters, in mostly the same emotional states, from *Less than Zero*. One short interlude Clay spends with two teenage prostitutes—one male, one female—would be better suited to Patrick Bateman of *American Psycho* fame. The conspiracy murder plot echoes the equally aimless and unresolved terrorist plot of *Glamorama*. The threatening phone calls and texts, along with the meta-narrative that includes Ellis himself as a character in the novel, are brought in part and parcel from his last disappointment, 2005's *Lunar Park*. The only thing missing from *Imperial Bedrooms*, other than the kitchen sink, may be the literal vampire from the interconnected vignettes of *The Informers* (although Clay has written a screenplay for a movie similarly named *The Listeners*).

Equal parts Hollywood satire, Raymond Chandler noir parody, and a mixtape of Ellis himself, *Imperial Bedrooms* can't help but feel like a muddled toss-off—in fact, at a mere 170 pages, and sporting margins wide enough to fit your thumbs in, it is hard to even call it a novel. However, if there is interest to be found here, it is in trying to decide where Clay stands at the narrative's end in relation to the question I posed at the outset: is he a reformed hedonist, or, as David Bowie might say, is our Major Tom now just “hitting an all time low”?

In the best passages of the novel, Clay reveals a newfound vulnerability as he becomes involved with Rain Turner, an aspiring starlet who is trying to net a role in the film being made from his screenplay (if his sway as a producer trumps his insignificance as a mere writer is never fully revealed). And while the commentary on the fetishization of youth and beauty in Hollywood is stale and clichéd, the scenes where Clay tries to perfect an intimate, monogamous relationship with Rain after decades of destroying any chance he has ever had at one stand as some of the most emotionally resonant Ellis has ever written.

However, as the novel's climax seems to hint, as much as Clay may feign a wanting of love and commitment, glimmers of hope in the world of Ellis quickly fade. Clay may have to confront the fact that the moral darkness of his peers and his L.A. can never match the darkness within, the darkness that he hides from the ones he claims to love, and that he struggles to hide from himself. So, as to the verdict on Clay's moral rehabilitation: like the intended genre of the novel, and the success of the novel as a sequel to the seminal *Zero*, Ellis pitches it somewhere down the middle. How appropriate for this most moral of carnival barkers.

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## **Rachel Louise Atkin says**

I finished the majority of this in about 4 hours because what the actual hell did I just read. I don't know why I ever expect to come out of a Bret Ellis book feeling fine because that never happens, this book was fucked. But not in a good way, more in an annoyed way.

This is by far Ellis's worst book. No sense of time, no sense of space - when you compare with the overwhelming gloom of the city in its predecessor *Less Than Zero*, and the toxic consumerism of the 80s in *American Psycho*, there is just nothing here. The first third of this book was a shit version of *Less Than Zero*, the second third a shit version of *Glamorama*, and the last part a shit version of *American Psycho*. Admittedly, the ghosts of these novels that I still felt inside this book made me like it at some points, but that's just it - I didn't like *Imperial Bedrooms*, I liked the meagre déjà vu of his previous novels.

Ellis tries to imitate his old tricks of metafiction and conspiracies and violence, but it felt forced. I mean I was still fucked up at the end of this book after not moving from my bed for hours to finish it, but at this point I'm just like, stop? Because it's not moving me anymore.

This was the last Bret book I had to read and now I am very sad. I read his entire bibliography this year and it feels like such an anti-climax to end with this book so I'm probably going to go back and read *Less Than Zero* again.

Oh and I bet you are wondering why I gave this book four stars. That is because I am a dickhead and anything with Bret Easton Ellis's name on automatically gets four stars. Sorry lol.

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### **Fabian says**

I have defended this writer quite enough already. The time's up! We are henceforth severing all ties.

Jeez... how can a critically-acknowledged writer move so far back in his own craft, in originality? Entering the realm of the true masters with "American Psycho" & even the more recent "Glamorama" and then totally selling out... what a disgrace! You, Mr. Easton Ellis, should feel shame. Please retire!

I really don't want to get into a brief synopsis of this sad excuse for a novella (sure... its modern only in its brevity--all popular writers are now seriously editing back what used to be 500+ page behemoths) since its all been done and seen before. Everything found in the mistitled "Bedrooms" has been witnessed in previous books, half of which are brilliant ("Am. Psycho", "Rules of Attraction") the others duds (especially "The Informers") ... though all of them are hopelessly stuck in the 80's. This book sucks for those barely getting into B.E.E., but even more so for hardcore fans like me. And, really, how pathetic is it that 2010 is just a drained, drab version of that rock-&-rollin' decade we've all come to appreciate? Even the fakeness of the 80s is preferable over all this recycled garbage.

Just move over, Oldster, and let others explore teenage nihilism and despair...

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### **Supreeth says**

Fortunately, I didn't have to wait 25 years to read this one. But unfortunately this one sucked big time. This is mostly a standalone than a sequel for less than zero. While the detached unfazed narration of clay is still same, the whole book didn't intrigue me in any way. It mostly reminded me of 5th season of Californication, but the darker version. If you loved LTZ and want more of Clay, you're in for a disappointment. You should've *disappeared there*.

I guess Bret Easton Ellis is still stuck in 80's and 90's (still my favourite author).

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### **Orsodimondo says**

#### **INLAND EMPIRE**

*La storia ripete gli antichi vezzi, le facile risposte, le stesse sconfitte...*, canta Elvis Costello in epigrafe (Beyond Belief).

Ma deve per forza farlo anche la letteratura?

**”Less Than Zero-Al di là di tutti i limiti” di Marek Kanievski con Andrew McCarthy, Robert Downey Jr (entrambi nella foto), James Spader, Jamie Gertz.**

*Su di noi avevano fatto un film. Il film era tratto da un libro scritto da una persona che conoscevamo. Il libro era il semplice racconto di quattro settimane trascorse nella città in cui siamo cresciuti e in linea di massima era un ritratto fedele. Venne catalogato come romanzo, ma solo pochi dettagli avevano subito modifiche e i nostri nomi erano quelli veri e non conteneva nulla che non fosse accaduto veramente.*

Ecco che sin dall’incipit inizia il gioco di specchi tanto caro a Bret Easton Ellis, la gara di inseguimento tra fiction e realtà, la continua costante confusione tra romanzo e vita, il rinvio e la sovrapposizione dei personaggi con persone esistenti, a partire dallo stesso autore, che è narratore protagonista laureato con lode in autoreferenzialità.

Cominciò subito, sin dall’esordio. E qui, in questo ultimo romanzo, raggiunge vette che in realtà sono valli dove la letteratura, secondo me, stagna, soffoca.

**”American Psycho” di Mary Harron, 2000, con Christian Bale (in foto), Justin Theroux, Reese Witherspoon, Chloë Sevigny, Daniel Dafoe.**

Qui, il protagonista io narrante, Clay, lo stesso di *Less Than Zero/Meno di zero*, dove Clay, come qui, era io narrante e protagonista, passa tutto il tempo a spiare chi lo spia, a ricevere sms in corsivo che dicono “Ti sto tenendo d’occhio”, ai quali risponde con un “chi sei?” che rimane senza risposta o con un semplice punto interrogativo, che rimane ugualmente senza risposta.

Ti sto tenendo d’occhio, Clay – ma io, Clay, tengo d’occhio te che tieni d’occhio me. Ti osservo mentre mi osservi.

Io, Clay, sto scrivendo un romanzo dove sono protagonista: non è un’autobiografia, è solo un racconto dove io sono il personaggio che viene raccontato e anche la persona che lo racconta.

**”Rules of Attraction” di Roger Avary, 2002, con Ian Somerhalder e Sahnyn Sossamon (in foto).**

La mia personale sensazione è che comunque lo (o la) stalker che gli invia sms da un numero anonimo abbia letto tutta la produzione letteraria di Ellis, o almeno “Lunar Park”: in qualche modo, anche lo stalker suona autoreferenziale.

In queste imperiali camere da letto ci si chiedono cose tipo:

*Come fai a vivere così?,*

per ottenere risposte del tipo:

*Fingo di non farlo.*

**”The Informers-Vite oltre il limite” di Gregor Jordan, 2008. BEE ha scritto sia il romanzo che la sceneggiatura del film.**

Ci sono molti sms e iPhone qui, al punto che sembra Ellis ne sentisse la mancanza già all’epoca di ‘Meno di zero’ e qui si sia infine preso la rivincita, e scatenato.

La solita generosa spruzzata di violenza, più shakerata che mixata, ma meno generosa che in *American Psycho*: una violenza distaccata, fredda, come il modo di raccontarla – stratagemma che presumibilmente dovrebbe aumentare il turbamento e l'inquietudine del lettore.

Anche se forse non sembrerebbe, io mi sono divertito a leggere questo libro, sempre al tempo presente, perché in qualche modo (tanti modi) mi ha riportato a Raymond Chandler, a quel genere di noir.

**"The Canyons", 2013, probabilmente il film più brutto del solitamente bravo, quando non ottimo, Paul Schrader, sceneggiatura di BEE. Con Lyndsay Lohan e James Deen.**

PS

Io credo che Bret Easton Ellis vorrebbe tanto essere David Lynch.

PPSS

In un'intervista all'epoca dell'uscita del romanzo disse: *...per me è ovvio che Obama governerà un solo mandato e non sarà rieletto*. E quindi, per ogni tipo di previsione, chiedere a lui, Bret l'oracolo.

PPSSS

Ellis ha scritto twitter velenosi contro DFW, il quale non poteva difendersi essendo già morto. A onor del vero, quando era ancora vivo, neppure DFW era stato tenero di giudizi verso BEE. Quanto lo capisco...

**"The Curse of Downers Grove" di Dereck Martini, 2015. Anche in questo caso BEE firma il romanzo e l'adattamento.**

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## Candy says

### Response Song

When I bought my first copy of David Bowie's *Scary Monsters* I remember the strange feeling of listening to a "song sequel" of *Major Tom*, titled *Ashes To Ashes*. How amazing! Revisiting a character in a song! I was stunned and exhilarated because I had no experience, or rather, no awareness of the idea of "response songs". This practice is more easily tracked in radio and recorded popular music but two of the most classic response songs come from older songs, in the blues, by Muddy Waters responding to Bo Diddly, (*Mannish Boy* and *I'm A Man*) or Buddy Holly responding to his own work. (*Peggy Sue* and *Peggy Sue Got Married*)

What do you do when you write a dark, evil novel filled with aimless, cruel, addicted people who become wildly popular and sentimental favourites to readers?

Kill off your novel with a sequel. That is what Ellis has done. In the same way when David Lynch created an frightening lexicon of images and characters in the mini-series *Twin Peaks* and networks gave him an opportunity to create an actual tv show...he had to hit us over the head. Evil is at home. Evil is not supernatural. The original mini-series tells us who is "BOB" (the name of the devil in the series)...but the packaging was so wonderful we wanted more and seemed to miss the thesis!

I was/am a huge fan of the novel *Less Than Zero*. So I guess I am partly responsible for Ellis having to go back and hit us over the head with "these are awful people"...and god, why on earth would I want to read even *more* about them?

Well, I did. I don't know why. Maybe because I loved the novel, and it was a so-called voice of my generation...it did encapsulate what it felt like to be a young person in the 1980's. It had violence, drugs, sex and existentialism and the feeling of hopelessness. Duh. It was brilliant.

Sentimental? No. I don't believe I was sentimental...but the movie version of the novel...and the fact that almost every hip urban person I knew had also read it and loved it and felt it reflected *something* about urban life, contemporary life...*meant something*. I also went on to follow all of Ellis's novels and am a big defender of *American Psycho*. To this day, I think it is one of the best novels out there, surely from the 80's. I put it alongside *Blood Meridian* and *Cities of The Red Night*.

*Imperial Bedrooms* will bother a lot of readers. It is sick and disturbing and depressing. What becomes of the 1980's characters who were sick, sadistic, addicted, lazy, remote and how could you build a plot about them in the future? How could you take it up a level and what could be worse than rape, drugs and mindgames? Hollywood.

I was excited to see Bret Easton Ellis interviewed on Tavis Smiley a couple months ago. Tavis wanted to address a few things about the sentimental attitude towards *Less Than Zero* (the movie version is beloved) and the generation involved which includes Ellis and Smiley (and me). You can see this interview [here](#). I find Ellis very well spoken and interesting. He says something cool about *American Psycho*..."*about a lot of things happening in financial world today. I think (American Psycho, sic) is a portrait of those men (AIG, Goldman-Sachs) when they were very young*". Ouch.

*Imperial Bedrooms* isn't for everyone. I don't even want to recommend it to you. It is depressing. It is violent and perverse. There is something wrong with the people in the novel, but that's the point. Ellis has been likened to Philip Roth and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and I think those are good comparisons. But I see Ellis as more closely related to Jim Thompson, Raymond Chandler, William Burroughs and Aldous Huxley. He has always portrayed his culture at the very moment of it's setting...and this new novel is really in the noir, transgressive genre, like those writers Huxley and Burroughs and Thompson.

*Imperial Bedrooms* is also quite beautifully written. There are parts of the novel that are so poetic and delicate...no one was more surprised than me. Except when I read his other recent novel, *Lunar Park*. Ellis plays a terrific "meta-fiction" kind of trick in the beginning of the novel which allows him the complete freedom to murder off any sentimentality us fans might have harboured for the original novel. He writes a response song that reveals passivity and composure might just be evil in disguise. In Ellis's world being a mannered successful person isn't all that cool. The quiet ones are the bad guys. And like the Lynchian worldview, if you don't act, then, the killer is inside you.

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