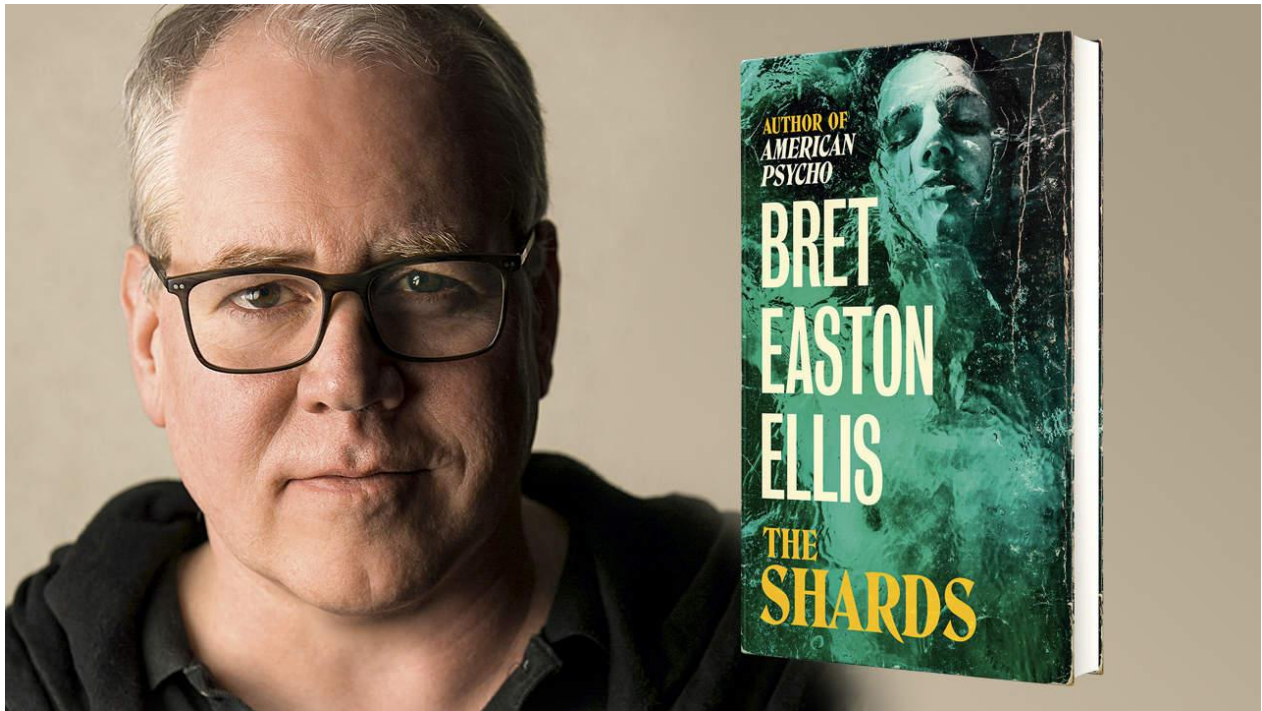


Past Revisited: Bret Easton Ellis [C1]

L'autore del controverso "American Psycho" torna con il nuovo romanzo "The Shards" nella California degli anni '80, rivisitando alcuni dei suoi temi preferiti come le droghe, il sesso sfrenato e i serial killer.



American novelist and filmmaker Bret Easton Ellis [shot to fame](#) in 1985 after the success of his first book *Less Than Zero*. He became truly [notorious](#) in 1991, however, with the novel *American Psycho*. That book, later made into a film starring Christian Bale, was initially [slammed](#) for being [overly](#) violent and misogynistic, but has since been [reappraised](#) by critics.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL?

After a thirteen-year hiatus, Easton Ellis is back with *The Shards*, an auto-fictional novel that was originally serialised on his [paid-for](#) podcast, but was subsequently published in book form. In it, the fifty-nine-year-old revisits his 1980s high school days using his memories as a [backdrop](#) to explore his typical themes of sex and violence. A cast of affluent teenagers, [caught up](#) in a world of drugs and casual relationships, find themselves under threat from a serial killer. In a presentation for *The Shards*, Easton Ellis discussed his

obsessions as an author, and the effect his age has had on his writing. He was first asked why he chose to write the novel in the first place. **Bret Easton Ellis (American accent):** Well, it was simply time. What happened was that this was a book that I had thought about writing when it was occurring, when these events happened, in 1981. I've always been a writer, ever since I was a little kid, I was a fabulous... I wrote graphic novels, I wrote children's books... I wrote short stories, I wrote comic books, I wrote two novels actually before I wrote *Less Than Zero*. It was just something that I was obsessed by. About 50 to 60 per cent of it is purely autobiographical, in fact to the point where the girl who I modelled the girlfriend in the book after, Debbie Schafer, contacted me after forty years and sent me a Facebook message that said, "Of all the names you could have used, why did you use Debbie? I hate that name!" And then when I met her for dinner and we hadn't seen each other in so long, she said, "You used entire sections of our conversations in this book", and I said "Yeah, I kept a [journal](#), I kept a [journal](#)", and I was referring to the [journals](#) all the time. And it was about time I wrote this kind of love letter, in many ways, to a few of the people in this book, explaining how I felt about them.

NO CELL PHONES

Most of Easton Ellis' novels have been set in contemporary times, but *The Shards* is set in the 1980s. The author reflected on how the passing of time has influenced his approach to writing. **Bret Easton Ellis:** This book does take place now. This book does take place in the mind of the man who's writing it in whatever this must be, 2019, 2020. So the book takes place now with him interrupting the narrative, and talking about the things that he remembers happening to him. Age does something to you. I was talking to Quentin Tarantino about this, in terms of why he made [Once Upon a Time](#) in Hollywood. And he was talking to me about *The Shards*, which he's a fan of. And he said, "Wasn't it great? Didn't you have that feeling to go back to your childhood now as a man in your late 50s?" He said, "I don't want to make a movie with a cellphone in it. I don't want to make a movie that has [to deal](#) with the shit that's going on today. I was in a mood to go back and write about my childhood." I think there comes a point where an artist hits

an age and says “I wanna go back.” It’s the novel of an old man looking back and remembering his past.

ONLY BAD ADVICE

Easton Ellis was then asked whether he would have given the young author of American Psycho any advice in retrospect. **Bret Easton Ellis:** Nothing. There would be nothing I could tell the Bret who wrote American Psycho that would change anything. You have to live your life with its mistakes, and its controversies, and its setbacks, and unrequited love, and problems with your parents, and... There’s nothing that I could have told him. I think I went through the American Psycho process pretty well. I think now I would have probably given him bad advice. I think he was kind of smart enough and together enough and strong enough to fight for his novel when so many people wanted it cancelled, so many people wanted it edited, so many people wanted it cut. And at twenty-six, it’s remarkable for me to look back and see that I stood my ground. So I don’t know if I could give him any... any advice except maybe do less coke. I’d probably tell him to do a little less cocaine. You didn’t need to do as much cocaine as you did.

ACTS OF SADISM

The author is infamous for the use of extreme violence in his novels. He considered whether the murders he describes are imagined or researched, and if there are limits to describing acts of sadism. **Bret Easton Ellis:** As I said before, growing up in Southern California, serial killers: huge. Haunted me. Pored over Helter Skelter, the famous book about the Manson family and what they did to those victims. Never forgot it — impacted me forever. I don’t know if it was a preoccupation with the murder of women, though certainly I think in film in 20th century that happened a lot more to women than it did to men. But I wasn’t necessarily interested in writing about that solely. So when it came to the point when I was writing Less than Zero and I realised he was a serial killer, I also knew that Patrick Bateman [the main

character in American Psycho] was going to kill all kinds of people: men, women, children... For me American Psycho was never about that. Like any of my books I always saw American Psycho as a social comedy of manners. And it was also about my pain in terms of not being able to find a place in this world of the late 1980s. I am drawn to violence, and I don't know why. I don't know why I am.

Glossary

- **Pored over** = studiare con cura
- **comedy of manners** = commedia di costume
- **Shards** = schegge
- **caught up** = invischiati
- **journal** = diario
- **whether** = se
- **setbacks** = insuccessi
- **I stood my ground** = sostenere la propria causa
- **edited** = modificare
- **do less coke** = consumare cocaina
- **notorious** = celebre
- **slammed** = stroncare
- **overly** = eccessivamente
- **reappraised** = rivalutare
- **advice** = consiglio
- **unrequited love** = amore non corrisposto
- **paid-for** = a pagamento
- **Once Upon a Time** = c'era una volta
- **together** = centrato
- **drawn** = essere attratto
- **shot to fame** = diventare famoso rapidamente
- **backdrop** = sfondo, scenario
- **to deal** = affrontare
- **remarkable** = notevole
- **Haunted** = perseguitare, ossessionare