

Received: 08-09- 2022

Accepted : 31-12- 2022

The Philosophical Revolution Within Fight Club

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Abstract

The present article tackles the underlined revolutionary philosophy behind Chuck Palahniuk's work, *Fight Club*. It is based on Nietzsche's 'Superman' philosophical concept that is eventually adopted by the main character of the novel, known as the nameless narrator as a reaction against consumerism in a postmodern capitalist context, which eventually triggers a philosophical revolution. Chuck Palahniuk is amongst the most prominent figures of transgressive writing that deals with anti-conformist and anti-consumerist characteristics within fiction. *Fight Club* seems to be the most suitable work that can be used as a case study for this topic since the whole story happens in a postmodern consumer setting wherein capitalism has enslaved its people, except for the main protagonist who decides to wage a revolution against his society. Ultimately, these anti-conformist and anti-consumerist behaviors from the narrator make of *Fight Club* the most appropriate novel amongst the other Palahniuk's literary works to be studied.

Keywords: Consumerism, The 'Superman', Alienation, False consciousness, Commodification.

ملخص

يتناول المقال الحالي الفلسفة الثورية المتجذرة في عمل تشاك بالاهنيوك، نادي القتال. يستند العمل إلى مفهوم "الرجل الخارق" الفلسفي لنييتشه الذي يتبناه في النهاية الشخصية الرئيسية في الرواية، المعروفة بالروائي البلا اسم، كرد فعل ضد التمكين في سياق رأسمالي ما بعد الحداثة، والذي يؤدي في النهاية إلى ثورة فلسفية. تعتبر تشاك بالاهنيوك واحدة من أبرز الشخصيات في الكتابة المتجاوزة التي تتناول السمات ضد المطابقة وضد الاستهلاك في الخيال. يبدو أن نادي القتال هو العمل الأنسب ليكون دراسة حالة لهذا الموضوع نظرًا لأن القصة بأكملها تحدث في سياق استهلاكي ما بعد الحداثة حيث أسر الرأسمالية شعبيًا، باستثناء البطل الرئيسي الذي يقرر أن يشن ثورة ضد مجتمعه. في النهاية، تجعل هذه السلوكيات ضد المطابقة وضد الاستهلاك من الرواية نادي القتال الرواية الأكثر ملاءمة بين أعمال بالاهنيوك الأدبية الأخرى ليتم دراستها.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التمكين، الرجل الخارق، الاغتراب، الوعي الزائف، التجزئة.

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Introduction

A postmodern consumer society is often characterized by the late capitalist economic ideology that creates a certain individual behavior which revolves around excessive consumerism, passivity and a considerable lack of self-critical thinking. Eventually, this postmodern context which appeared around the end of the twentieth century as a follow up to modernism in literature was criticized by several writers. These writers, known as transgressive fictionists for the anti-conformist content that they bear within their works, criticized and denounced through subtle satirical writings the immoderate lifestyle that characterized a postmodern consumer society whose sole aim was to promote consumerism by creating passive individuals who were only bound to consume. The American writer Chuck Palahniuk is one of these transgressionists who advocated through his writings, especially *Fight Club*, for the liberation of the human being from such a postmodern consumer society. Indeed, *Fight Club*, which was written during the climax of postmodern consumerism in the U.S in 1996, criticized postmodern consumer societies by telling the story of an everyman who slowly gains awareness about his redundant lifestyle and how consumerism is making him not the best, but the worst version of himself. This protagonist of the story eventually decides to break his comfort consumer zone by creating Fight Club, wherein every weekend, in basements and parking lots across the country, young men with good white-collar jobs take off their shoes and shirts to fight each other barehanded for as long as they have to. Seemingly, the creation of this club symbolizes the transgressive attempt from the main character to break and fight the postmodern consumer society that enslaved him in the first place.

Fight Club is often regarded as an anti-consumerist novel from the point of view of many critics. However, the opinion about the human condition within a consumer society in this novel varies between the different critics. Some argue that Palahniuk's novel calls for violence and nihilism within a consumer society due to the heavy anarchism portrayed through the character of the narrator/Tyler Durden. Indeed, if not read attentively, *Fight Club* could easily be "misconstrued as an endorsement of violence and nihilism." (Maslin 24) as the literary critic Janet Maslin claimed in her article on the New York Times "Fight Club: Such a Very Long Way From Duvets to Danger". Accordingly, the novel can be explained, as I will show later in more details, through the Nietzschean philosophy of the 'Superman' whose phase of self destruction for betterment is often mistakenly interpreted as a violent, anarchist and nihilist behavior. While this philosophy as Nietzsche said, comes as a solution to banish nihilism and therefore, give meaning to one's life by untying him from his old inauthentic habits. Eventually, in this research, this philosophy comes as a solution to banish consumerism which tends to make people grow nihilistic. On the other hand, the American philosopher Brendan Lalor argues in his article "Fight Club: Marx and Hegel in the Pitt" that "*Fight Club* is optimistic as it is a journey from awareness of alienation and a reactionary posture to a transcendent one, which leaves the negative behind." (Lalor 1). In fact, as I intend to demonstrate in this dissertation, *Fight Club* is not a nihilistic work, as most critics seem to claim, but an existential one that offers a transcendental meaning that may refer to Nietzsche's 'Superman' philosophy which goes against consumerism. This aspect of the novel

is, to my knowledge, relatively new in the academic field and will help to have a different and more optimistic reading of the novel.

Noticeably, *Fight Club* is often regarded as a nihilistic novel that comments on the absurdity of human existence. This superficial and simplistic view frequently hinders the reader from the actual meaning concealed between the lines of this novel, which is quite philosophical, but not in the nihilistic sense. I decided to choose this particular novel in order to dissect it, and therefore show how it has to offer more than a mere nihilistic discourse that advocates for violence and anarchism as most critics and readers tend to claim. Eventually, the transgressive nature of this novel, as well as the philosophical aspect behind it, have led me to ponder about several aspects of the work, mainly the way Nietzsche's 'Superman' philosophy can be a solution against consumerism in *Fight Club*. I intend to answer this problematic by first, casting light upon the consumer ideology that is prominent within the content of this novel by applying three concepts from Marxist literary criticism on the main character. These concepts are alienation, false consciousness and commodification. Then, I will demonstrate how this philosophy is a solution against consumerism by applying Nietzsche's 'Superman' philosophy to show how this philosophy can eventually break the main character's ties with consumerism when he gradually becomes less and less alienated, false conscious and commoditized thanks to this philosophy.

I- The Culture of Consumerism

The French Marxist sociologist Jean Baudrillard defines consumption as "a collective behavior" and as "something enforced, a morality, an institution and a whole system of values" (*Baudrillard 188*) Hence, as Baudrillard claims here, consumption seems to be a form of 'collective consciousness' which encompasses our whole cultural system. Eventually, the latter has eliminated 'individual consciousness' and has gradually given birth to a "false consciousness" (*Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 54*) which prevails within the individuals of a consumer society who have noticeably grown up to be utterly passive. Moreover, according to Baudrillard, consumerism's major role is not satisfaction as one may think, but rather objectification. As he reports "Commodity becomes through a great collective metaphor the image of the gift" (*Baudrillard 132*) which suggests that commodification is disguised in a gifted blessing that generates satisfaction. One may argue then, that it is this commodification of both individuals and social relations that gradually led to the alienation of the individual from both himself and his society. Guy Debord, another French Marxist theorist, comes to support Baudrillard's concepts by joining them to his own concepts and eventually, to shed light on the consumer society who is undeniably a spectacle society as well. Nowadays, it is quite apparent that the western society epitomizes consumerism. Chuck Palahniuk's book *Fight Club*, as I intend to show, is an adequate illustration of this thriving culture.

I.1- Consumerism as an Alienating Force

As a transgressive novel, *Fight Club* seems to be a call to revolution. Indeed, as the reader goes through the pages, he may notice different themes and ideas which are expressed through a quite revolutionary tone. Among these themes, we come across a recurrent one that could

eventually be one of the reasons behind the revolution of the main character against consumerism within this novel, which is the theme of alienation. Throughout the whole story, the writer seems to alienate most of his characters from society due to consumerism. The most alienated character within the story is probably the protagonist himself, whose alienation is manifested from the early beginning of the story through a secret occupation of his. Within this occupation, the narrator resorts to the comfort of different support groups such as the Alcoholic Anonymous and several Cancer groups that he attends on a daily basis. Interestingly, he depicts these groups as being “the only real thing in his life” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 24*) and further describes it as being a source of comfort and a personal haven where he allows himself to delve into. As he claims, “Walking home after a support group, I felt more alive than I’d ever felt. I wasn’t host to cancer or blood parasites; I was the little warm center that the life of the world crowded around.” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 22*) Undeniably, such confessions shed light on the desperate alienated state of the narrator/protagonist who seeks human contact through support groups as a last resort for his solitude and isolation.

Moreover, this protagonist, who is portrayed through a nameless narrator whose life appears to be a mere “copy of a copy of a copy.” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 21*) as he claims, suggests that he may see himself as an outsider and a mere spectator of his own life that is depicted as a redundant copy of something real. Later on in the novel, another scene of the same nature puts more emphasis on this inauthenticity and isolation. While traveling for his work in an airplane, the narrator describes his life as being a “single-serving” kind of life. He reports that “Everywhere I travel, there is a tiny life. Single-serving sugar, single-serving cream, and a single-serving pat of butter. Even the people I meet on each flight. They’re single-serving friends” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 33*). There could not be a better statement to illustrate consumerism than this one. Indeed, what the narrator describes here as being a one-use only objects for every flight makes this redundancy seem like a recurrent simulation of life in a “tiny” format as he depicts it through this passage. This phenomenon is what the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard qualifies as being a simulation that results in an alienating hyper-reality which the protagonist seems to endure through this novel (*Baudrillard 35*).

According to Baudrillard, this ‘simulacrum’, as he calls it, is the undeniable product of the consumer society. The ‘simulacrum’, which is the repeated act of copying until the copy becomes a complete different kind from the original, or a copy that lacks an original, is what the consumer society strives to achieve through both products and individuals. Thus, by creating an alter ego known as Tyler Durden later on in the novel, the narrator seems to bury himself in his own simulation that alienates him even further from reality. Indeed, the narrator soon realizes that his society’s culture is that of imitation whereby the original has lost its significance which leaves no clear distinction between the real and the imaginary. Therefore, the creation of Tyler Durden, seemingly symbolizes the narrator’s state of alienation from his society.

Furthermore, Baudrillard qualifies modern relationships within society as unreal and pale imitations that are presented to the individual as mere simulated copies. In this respect, he contends, “Modern society is characterized not only by simulated objects but also by

simulated relationships. For example, advertisers are seen as imitating intimate, personal modes of communication in an effort to produce a sense of intimacy where, in fact, none exists". (*Baudrillard 54*) In fact, Baudrillard stresses here the fake and non-existent relationship between consumer and advertiser that ultimately traps the individuals in a consumption loop which eventually alienates people from one another. Hence, the simulation here acts as a coordinator that promotes alienation through consumerism, as it is shown in *Fight Club* through the nameless narrator. Indeed, this simulated intimacy, made him buy different products, but at the expense of remaining quite forgetful about recalling any of the advertisers that promoted these commodities to him. In the end, the narrator is left lonely and "trapped in [his] lovely nest" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 44*) as he declares, which is a regular condominium where he lives in surrounded by all sorts of furniture that he obsessively enumerates by brand name in a hopeless attempt to give meaning to mere objects and materials. However, such act only alienates him further.

Indeed, the narrator's entire environment seems to work as an alienating force that traps him deep within. Noticeably, his workplace seems to be the most striking alienating place from the book, as he describes it in the following;

It's not like I have a window at work. All the outside walls are floor-to-ceiling glass. Everything where I work is floor-to-ceiling glass. Everything is vertical blinds. Everything is industrial low-pile gray carpet spotted with little tombstone monuments where the PCs plug into the network. Everything is a maze of cubicles boxed in with fences of upholstered plywood. (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 137-138*)

It is no surprise that the narrator's state of alienation is shown through his workplace. Indeed, the latter being the ultimate symbol of capitalism due to money, which is the main tool used by capitalists to enslave people through their labor, his work office becomes an alienating prison that he describes as a locked box with 'fences'. Seemingly, this depiction highlights even more the narrator's state of loneliness and alienation that the capitalist society inflicts on its people purposely in order to facilitate the control of the masses through their environment as it is portrayed here through the narrator. Therefore, a workplace becomes an enslaving environment that creates the modern slavery which Marx warned the individual about. As he stated in the *Communist Manifesto (1848)*, an office eventually becomes a place where people have "nothing to lose but their chains" (*Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto 42*) Similarly, the narrator here seems to be imprisoned in a 'floor-to-ceiling' office, chained and 'plugged' to the computers in a greyish setting that he describes as 'maze', which eventually stresses even more the hard task of escaping from such an alienating place.

In addition of the alienation from the others, self-alienation is another form of isolation that the narrator experiences due to consumerism. When reading *Fight Club*, we can notice that every night, the narrator changes his name in the different support groups that he attends. Indeed, until the end of the novel, the narrator remains a nameless protagonist who borrows different names every night, which accentuates even more his self-alienated state as a 'nameless man'. Furthermore, we can notice throughout the story, that quite often, the narrator seems to engage in a monologue with himself in the first person point of view via random names given to organs and other human anatomical features that he read in a

magazine entitled *Reader's Digest*. Among these we find expressions such as "I'm Joe's blood-boiling rage" (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 96), "I'm Joe's smirking revenge" (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 114) or "I'm Jack's broken heart" (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 134) Seemingly, these quotes appear to be a clumsy endeavor from the narrator to express himself through another persona. Therefore, *Reader's Digest* seems to epitomize the narrator's self-alienation that he conveys through a quite detached and distanced self from his actual self. Moreover, in line with the previous point of my discussion, Karl Marx defines self-estrangement as being "the alienation of man's essence, man's loss of objectivity and his loss of realness as self-discovery, manifestation of his nature, objectification and realization" (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* 76) Hence, the fact that the narrator is nameless is the ultimate embodiment of self-alienation, for as Marx points out, by denying his name, the latter consequentially denies his 'essence'

In brief, consumerism in *Fight Club* seems to be a strong alienating force that traps certain characters within an estrangement sphere. A sphere that is characterized by a life that is based only on a mere simulation of the reality which ultimately leads the narrator to undergo two kinds of alienations, one from the others and one from the self. Eventually, he creates an alter ego known as Tyler Durden that releases him from this alienating sphere by revolting against the culture of consumerism.

I.2. The False Consciousness of the Narrator

Alienation as previously discussed, seems to trigger other states of the mind such as false consciousness within the narrator of this novel. *Fight Club* seemingly manages to show through the narrator how mass media is often used as a tool by capitalist institutions to shape the minds of the people. Interestingly, the French Marxist theorist Guy Debord, depicts this mass media universe as an entertaining 'spectacle'¹² delivered to a malleable audience who is ready to get their minds filled with any kind of information. But most importantly, he states that this 'spectacle' or mass media is the main source of alienation and false consciousness within the individuals of a society. He claims in this context that, The "spectacle" is defined by Guy Debord in his book *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988) as being "the totality of the new techniques of the government which accompanied its reign" in other words, these "new techniques" are the different mass media used by the government to tame its people. (Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*)

The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is the focal point of all vision and all consciousness. But due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness; the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation. (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 64)

Through this excerpt, Debord demonstrates how a higher power such as the government tends to use mass media as a means of manipulation and 'unification'. He explains that, similar to Baudrillard's 'simulated relationships' as previously discussed, these governmental institutions use media only to provide the people with the illusion of 'unification', while all they generate is alienation and false consciousness in people. Indeed, most of the time, media

is used by the capitalist corporations to implement certain ideas and a specific way of life based on materialism to increase consumption in order to benefit the capitalist market. For, in order to raise their profit, they need an audience who is ready to consume their products. Thus, they use mass media to reach their audience through all kind of advertising for their commodities.

Hence, as Debord stated, when using a medium to communicate with people, these capitalist institutions build a distance between people which eventually results in their alienation. Moreover, as formerly mentioned by Marx, due to materialism and consumerism, alienation could ultimately result in false consciousness. For, due to mass media imposing the consumer culture in *Fight Club*, the narrator grows to be dependent on things he does not necessarily need and embraces willingly the idea that “this is how the modern life looks like now.” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 53*), which sheds light even more on his false conscious state.

Similarly to Debord’s ‘spectacle’ concept, Baudrillard’s ‘simulacrum’ concept could also be applied here to demonstrate how consumerism creates and encourages the narrator’s false consciousness through mass media. Baudrillard argues that, “Mass media have greatly enhanced and generalized the simulation process. Instead of reality, people are treated to simulations involving the constant recombination of various signs and elements of code.” (*Baudrillard 112*) Through this claim, Baudrillard emphasizes that for the capitalists, a medium is nothing but a simulation of reality that is mediated to people in a form of ‘signs’ and ‘codes’. He further develops his argument by highlighting how these ‘signs’ and ‘codes’ are intended to facilitate the transmission of consumption through the implementation of certain ideas, which ultimately results in the establishment of false consciousness within consumers. (*Baudrillard 115*) In other words, mass media uses the different ‘signs’ and ‘codes’ to establish specific wants and needs in people, which will eventually drive them to become false conscious. “Signs” and “Codes” are systems by which capitalist societies work with in order to create needs and increase the demand of products. It is the personalization of items that give the impression and illusion of uniqueness to a given individual in an attempt to encourage him to buy a certain product. Indeed, this state could be observed through *Fight Club*’s narrator. The former seems to be entrapped willingly within a false consciousness that he describes while sitting in the bathroom reading his magazine as it follows;

Like so many others, while sitting in their bathroom with their IKEA catalogue, I had become a slave to the IKEA nest. If I saw something clever like the shape of a Ying Yang table, I had to have it. The Johanneshov-armchair in the Strinne green stripes pattern. The Rislampa/Har paper lamps made from wire and environmentally friendly unbleached paper. I have flipped the catalogues many times wondering, what kind of dining set defines me as a person. (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 43*)

Through this passage, we can notice that indeed, as Baudrillard previously stated, a medium is used to implement false consciousness within the narrator in order to increase consumption. The narrator seems to be enslaved as he claims by the different ‘signs’ and ‘codes’ presented to him through this medium. He seems to willingly embrace the ‘spectacle’ that is manifested to him through a catalogue magazine. Through this, the narrator appears to be totally conditioned, for he cannot recognize and does not want to recognize his own material

dependence on the spectacular system, which ultimately makes him trapped within a state of false consciousness.

To sum up, Baudrillard's 'simulacrum' and Debord's 'spectacle' effectively merge together to highlight the narrator's state of false consciousness within *Fight Club*. Indeed, both concepts manage to show the narrator's passivity and willingness to embody such a state of mind that is implicitly imposed on him through mass media. Seemingly, this concept eventually opens a new window that will continue to impact the narrator, only in another form of concept.

I.3. The Commodification of The Narrator

Mass media, which seems to be the ultimate weapon of capitalists, succeeds at establishing a certain lifestyle based on consumption within individuals. Eventually, to achieve this lifestyle, as previously mentioned, capitalist societies tend to create several states of minds such as alienation and false consciousness within their people. Commodification is another mindset that the consumer society succeeds at implementing through mass media in an attempt to provide its consumers with a false sense of identity that gradually shifts to self-objectification. "Individualism" is a social theory that favors freedom of actions for individuals over collective or state control. Source: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en> Media within a consumer society seems to play a major role at using commodities to define and shape the identity of the narrator within *Fight Club*. Indeed, when the narrator browses his IKEA catalogue magazine, he establishes an interesting statement when he says, "I have flipped the catalogues many times wondering, what kind of dining set defines me as a person." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 43*) Through this quote, the narrator seemingly identifies himself to mere objects. But most importantly, these commodities are delivered to him via a medium which seems to sell him an identity that gives him the illusion of being unique.

Baudrillard further argues about this identity-selling by giving a concrete example of an advertisement about a "Recital Blonde Shampoo" (*Baudrillard 134*) in his work, *The Consumer Society (1970)*. The advertisement is being described within Baudrillard's book by the woman as the following; "It gives me the light tint in my hair to create the perfect harmony with my complexion and my eyes, which made me to be more than ever myself." (*Baudrillard 134*) Here, Baudrillard comments on this advertisement by claiming that media's ultimate role within a consumer society is to show "The little touch that will show up our deep individual bent, the difference which will make us ourselves." (*Baudrillard 134*) Indeed, similar to this advertisement, *Fight Club's* narrator also seems to find "more than ever [him]self" through commodities which media succeeds at conveying and selling by building this illusion of uniqueness within each individual.

In this regard, Debord contends that ultimately, "The real consumer has become a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this materialized illusion and the spectacle its general expression." (*Debord, Society of the Spectacle 56*) In other words, Debord argues here in Baudrillard's terms that the consumer has become a consumer of simulations which are materialized in the form of consumable commodities that are eventually conveyed through

mass media or the spectacle in an attempt to endow him with the illusion of an identity, as it is eventually portrayed through the narrator's obsession with objects that seem to define him.

Moreover, one may notice that Palahniuk endows the different furniture that the narrator seems to be obsessed about with fictional names that do not exist in real life such as the 'Johanneshov armchair' and the 'Rislampa'. The use of such fictional words to define materials ultimately puts more emphasis on the world of simulations that they tend to create, as well as explain the narrator's obsession and enslavement toward these objects, for they are the only thing inclined to provide him with a sense of a self. But the latter, which is conveyed through media's simulations, is ultimately nothing but an illusion of a 'self' that is meant to implement the false idea of individualism. For, as Baudrillard claims,

The person as an absolute value within a consumer society, with its passions, its will, its character forged by the western tradition is absent, dead, swept out of our functional universe. And it is this lost being which is going to reconstruct itself in abstracto by force of signs, in the *Recital Blonde Shampoo*, a *Mercedes*, and a thousand of other signs, incorporated and arrayed to re-create a synthetic individuality. (*Baudrillard 135*)

In this extract, Baudrillard explains the identity loss that a consumer tends to experience within a consumer society. But most importantly, he shows how this loss of identity is used to forge new identities which are closely attached and related to commodities, which eventually gives the consumers the illusion of having a certain sense of individualism. In the novel, the narrator similarly experiences this identity loss and desperately attempts to recover it through objects that "define [him] as a person" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 43*) as stated above. However, gradually, this 'profusion'¹⁵ of commodities, as Baudrillard calls it, for the sake of building a 'self', leads to another outcome wherein this quest for a 'self' eventually turns the individual into a commodity. "Profusion" as defined by Baudrillard in *The Consumer Society* is the excessive buying and consumption of all kinds of unnecessary commodities.

Seemingly, as the narrator strives for a 'self' through objects, he barely notices how consumerism contributes to his own objectification. In a slight moment of realization of the latter, the narrator claims,

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple of years you are satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you have got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes, the rug. Then you are trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 44*)

Thus, we can notice through this passage how consumerism traps the individual in a never ending loop of consumption. The narrator, who is totally alienated and false conscious, as previously mentioned, lists here a variety of commodities that he enumerates one after the other in a frenzied fever that seems to never cease or reach a climax of satisfaction.

Eventually, this frenzied profusion keeps culminating until it reaches the point of self-objectification where the narrator claims that “the things you used to own, now they own you.” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 44*) This particular statement could be juxtaposed with Marx’s concept of “thinghood”. Indeed, as previously mentioned, according to Marx, a false conscious and self-alienated individual such as the narrator within a consumer society will ultimately be subject to self-commodification.

Interestingly, the word ‘thinghood’ as he calls it, hints to a satirical connection between the two words, ‘thing’ and ‘personhood’ where he replaces ‘person’ with a ‘thing’. Therefore, through this concept, it appears that Marx sheds light on the objectification of the individual who is not a person anymore in a consumer society, but rather a mere commodity. Hence, the narrator, who used to identify himself through objects, now becomes one of them. He becomes a product within the hands of a capitalist society who only sees him as a consuming profitable merchandise. Thus, the narrator seems to experience what Baudrillard calls “The fall into the commodity sphere” (*Baudrillard 190*), which is a commodity realm where individuals, such as the narrator, who successfully reached the degree of self-objectification, dwell into.

Finally, it is interesting to notice that once again, Baudrillard and Debord’s concepts join together to highlight another Marxist concept which is present in this novel, known as ‘commodification’ that the narrator within *Fight Club* seemingly experiences. For, as I have shown through my analysis, the ‘spectacle’ and the ‘simulacra’ ultimately lead the narrator to start by identifying himself through objects until gradually becoming one of them.

II- The ‘Superman’ We Ought To Become

The path to the ‘Superman’ is no easy task as Nietzsche points out through his character Zarathustra who ends up choosing only the elite to aspire for such a heavy quest for meaning. The narrator goes through this perilous journey by first, shifting his ‘Will to Power’ into a productive experience to become ready to embrace a creative meaning. Then, by abandoning the state of the ‘Last Man’ in order to give up on his nihilist state, which ultimately allows him to move forward from the inauthentic ‘Camel’ phase, to the self-destructive ‘Lion’ phase, and finally to the re-birthed ‘Child’ phase in order to reach the ‘Superman’.

II.1. The ‘Will to Power’

The ‘Will to power’ as previously defined by Nietzsche could be easily manifested through a sterile experience that offers no fruits to the meaning of existence. First, the narrator seems to embrace the ‘Will to Power’ in a different way than the Nietzschean life-affirming experiences which aspire to a creative evolution. Rather, the narrator seems at first to embrace the ‘Will to power’ in the form of “unchanging life experiences” For, he displays this innate “insatiable desire to manifest power” (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power 14*) in order to assert his existence through a prodigal consumption that gives him this false illusion of power manifestation, which eventually makes him utterly passive. In this respect, Baudrillard claims that, "All societies have always consumed beyond what is strictly necessary for the simple

reason that it is in the consumption of a surplus that the individual, and society, feel not merely that they exist, but that they are alive." (*Baudrillard 142*) From this extract, it appears that Baudrillard relates consumption and Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' in the sense that consumerism can obstruct Nietzsche's life-affirming experiences that he hopes for the individuals by misleading them to a non-productive experience which manifests power through materialism rather than a spiritual self-overcoming quest that is achieved through the 'Overman'. In other words, Baudrillard argues that the individuals consume because it makes them feel powerful and alive. Here, Baudrillard seems to join his argument to Nietzsche's definition of the 'Will to power' when the latter claims that, "The struggle for power is the ambition to have 'more' and 'better' and 'quicker' and 'more often'." (*Nietzsche, The Will to Power 16*). Evidently, consumerism seems to satisfy the 'struggle for power' by providing 'more', 'better', 'quicker' and 'more often' as Baudrillard previously highlighted.

Therefore, it becomes easy for the narrator to undeniably fall under the trap of consumption that provides him with the illusion of a certain power display after every purchase and consumption of the different products, which eventually explains his frenzied state of excessive buying and material accumulation. However, as the story unfolds, another major character appears to break the narrator's state of illusion, and gradually shift his non-productive experience into a life-affirming one. Tyler Durden, who is manifested as a hallucinated alter ego of the narrator, appears to wake the protagonist from his deep passive slumber by showing him the real purpose and definition of the 'Will to power'. Indeed, this new character is quickly introduced as a mischievous character with revolutionary ideas within this novel. As he states to the narrator "This is our world now and those ancient people are dead" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 14*). Through this quote, Tyler Durden noticeably seems to hint to the birth of a new era, and the replacement of old conventions.

Indeed, Tyler Durden seems to embody change and revolution, and it becomes clear as the story unravels, that these conventions are closely related to consumerism and the mass culture. As he further states to the narrator, "We have a great revolution against the culture" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 149*). The word 'culture' in this quote is quite revealing, for it implies that consumerism has become a culture. Indeed, as Baudrillard claims, "Consumption has been extended to all of culture; we are witnessing the commodification of culture." (*Baudrillard 143*) Thus, "the commodification of culture" being the objectification of the latter, makes it clear that consumerism became a culture. And it is this culturalization phenomenon that makes it difficult for the individual to notice its negative impact over him, for, similar to any culture, it becomes an ordinary activity that has been deeply immersed within the person's life. Thus, this phenomenon of the culturalization of consumption explains the narrator's choice of a non-productive experience instead of a life-affirming one when it comes to his 'Will to power'.

Nevertheless, the creation of Tyler Durden seems to symbolize the narrator's 'will' to fight against this culture of mass consumption. In this regard, this hallucinated character states when addressing his speech to the narrator, "You have a class of young men and women and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they do not need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can

buy what they do not really need." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 149*) Through this speech, Tyler Durden confronts the narrator by breaking his comfort zone. He pops out his personal sphere of reality that was previously based on wealth accumulation and consumption, and eventually orientates him to a new "Will to power" that strives for a self-affirming experience. Gradually, he encourages the narrator to overcome himself and aspire for a new meaning, as he claims to him "We do not have a great war in our generation. We have a great war of the spirit, and a great revolution against the culture." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 149*) Hence, through this quote, it appears that Tyler Durden undeniably hints to a spiritual quest against the mass culture of consumption that the narrator gradually draws his path to as it will be further discussed.

All in all, it is interesting to note how the narrator gradually shifts his 'Will to power' from a non-productive experience to a life-affirming one through the creation of his alter ego Tyler Durden who symbolizes his will to free himself from the invisible ties of consumerism. For, this crucial shift constitutes the first steps for a new meaning that slowly paves the way to his spiritual quest to the 'Superman/Overman'.

II.2. The Last Man

Nietzsche's concept of the 'Last Man' reminds us of the non-productive experience that the narrator in *Fight Club* seems to adhere to before embracing a 'Will to power' based on a life-affirming experience. The 'Last Man' is a nihilistic individual who after the death of God, chooses to abandon himself on what seems to be a hedonistic¹⁶ way of life based on consumerism. Indeed, as Nietzsche points out, contemporary humans are "One herd. Everyone wants the same, everyone is the same... They have their little pleasures for the day and their little pleasures for the night." (*Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra 97*) Hence, in Nietzsche's view, contemporary humans are a herd of consumers who give themselves to an utterly hedonistic life-style whom the sole drive consists in the satisfaction of their lavish desires. These people according to Nietzsche, are what he calls the 'Last Man'. As the philosopher and critic Jeffrey Metzger further explains in his book *Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Philosophy of the Future (2009)*,

Hedonism is an ethical theory in philosophy which claims that pleasure in the sense of the satisfaction of desires, is the highest good and proper aim of human life.

Nietzsche calls this human being the last man not because he stands at the end of history, but because he is the last human possibility before the beasts who are dominated entirely by instinct and desire. (*Metzger 29*) From this passage, Metzger points at Nietzsche's fear of nihilism through the 'Last Man', for, the latter is the most despicable possibility for the human being who will no longer be much different from an animal which behaves purely on instinct and desire.

Similarly, the narrator of *Fight Club* seems to be for a short period of time this 'Last Man' that Nietzsche warns the individual about. Indeed, before the creation of Tyler Durden, the narrator's state of alienation, commodification and false consciousness that were inflicted to him through consumerism seem to have created a nihilistic individual who gave up on

meaning by embracing the culture of consumerism, which seemingly results in a non-productive 'Will to Power'. In addition to that, his alter ego, Tyler Durden, later on stresses the narrator's lack of individuality due to consumerism by exclaiming to him "You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake. Our culture has made us all the same. We all want the same. Individually, we are nothing." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 134*) Undeniably, from this quote, it clearly seems that the narrator is part of the consumer 'herd' that Nietzsche spoke about in the culturization of the consumer phenomenon. Hence, the 'Last Man', which is at first represented through the narrator, seems to be the individual with a sterile 'will' devoid of meaning and purpose, which eventually makes him utterly nihilistic. This state however, is gradually broken as the story unravels through his alter ego Tyler Durden.

The creation of Tyler Durden seems to symbolize Nietzsche's character, Zarathustra¹⁷ who climbed down from his mountain to offer guidance as well as warn the people against the 'Last Man' that they must repel to become. Indeed, similar to Zarathustra's ambitious journey to deliver his message to all of his people, Tyler Durden starts his journey with high hopes of spreading his ideas all around the world; however, he soon realizes that his philosophy, much like Zarathustra, is only understood and embraced by the few. Akin to Zarathustra who calls those who do not grasp his ideas as being the 'Last Man' or the 'Ugliest Man' who gave up on meaning, Tyler Durden qualifies these people as the "Middle children of history who have no purpose." and appeals to the few who understand as "Space monkeys" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 166*) who are ready to travel on a new journey to become the 'Superman'.

Zarathustra is a fictional character created by Friedrich Nietzsche in his book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1997). Zarathustra is the main protagonist who acts as a prophet to guide people to a new meaning after the death of God, known as the "Superman". Similarly to Zarathustra, Tyler Durden fulfills his prophetic role as he comes to warn the narrator of his passive state of the 'Last Man' by referring to him as being a purposeless and lost "middle child of history" (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 166*) who is enslaved by consumerism. In this regard, he claims to him, "We are consumers. We are by-products of a lifestyle obsession. So quit it with your sofa units and Strinne green stripe patterns." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 167*), which the narrator dearly held into. This ultimately shows that Tyler Durden is a character created by the narrator who came to change the narrator's perspective on the world by breaking his dormant nihilist state in order to become a new man, or, a 'Space monkey' ready to embark on the journey to the vastness and harshness of space for the sake of self-discovery and self-overcoming to become a 'Superman'.

To sum up, the narrator seemingly experiences the state of the 'Last Man' through his nihilistic and hedonistic lifestyle dictated by consumerism, before gradually shifting his way to the dawn of a new journey that involves self-overcoming through the creation of his alter ego, Tyler Durden who eventually guides him to the path of the 'Superman'.

II.3. The 'Superman'

The narrator gradually shifts his 'Will to power' into a productive experience that strays him further away from his 'Last man' state of mind to engage in a new quest for meaning known as the 'Superman'. The narrator goes through the first 'Camel' stage, then the

'Lion' stage and finally the 'Child' stage from Nietzsche's philosophy to reach the 'Superman' through his alter ego, Tyler Durden, in attempt to escape the consumerism. He officially begins his quest to the 'Overman' as he acknowledges his inauthenticity through the 'Camel' phase. Indeed, when the narrator lost his apartment due to an explosion, he claims in a hopeless tone; I loved my life. I loved that condo. I loved every stick of furniture. That was my whole life. Everything, the lamps, the chairs, the rugs were me. The dishes in the cabinets were me. The plants were me. The television was me. (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 110-111*)

Indeed, through this passage, the narrator who identifies himself to mere objects, admits his dependency on the latter as well as his inauthenticity as an individual who belongs to the consumer society. His 'whole life' as he defines it, was based on the possession of mere commodities that defined his shallow identity, which eventually made him an inauthentic individual who is not that different from other consumers who swim in the same capitalist-consumer pool.

Furthermore, in the fifth chapter from *Fight Club*, one may notice how the narrator exclaims in what seems to be a desperate tone to Tyler Durden in a passage; "Oh, Tyler, please rescue me. Deliver me from Swedish furniture. May I never be complete. May I never be content. May I never be perfect. Deliver me, Tyler, from being perfect and complete." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 46*) Seemingly, through this excerpt, the narrator experiences a slight moment of enlightenment as he calls on Tyler to save him from 'Swedish furniture' which symbolizes the consumerism that he is deeply immersed in. Moreover, as he begs Tyler to rescue him, he also acknowledges his inauthenticity when he declares not wanting to be 'perfect', 'content', and 'complete' anymore. Hence, by declaring the latter, the narrator shows that he no longer strives for perfection, satisfaction and completeness from a consumer perspective. Rather, he seems to aspire for a new meaning, as he claims, "I hated my life. I was tired and bored with my job and my furniture, and I couldn't see any way to change things. I felt trapped. I was too complete. I was too perfect. I wanted a way out of my tiny life." (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 172-173*)

From this passage, the narrator officially acknowledges his inauthenticity as he points out to the boredom and redundancy that consumerism creates within an individual by 'trapping' him in a certain illusory sphere which only gives him the illusion of being perfect, complete and unique as Baudrillard and Debord discussed through the concepts of 'simulacra' and the 'spectacle', which the narrator seems to have been a victim of through commodification, alienation and false consciousness. Above all, the narrator seems to be in a state of awareness wherein he awakes from his deep passive slumber as he declares wanting to 'change' and 'a way out of [his] tiny life' in this passage. This hints to a little spark of self-awareness that seems to be ready for ignition as he gives up in the shallow meaning of consumerism and gets ready to embrace a new meaning.

The death of God brings two possibilities, the nihilistic 'Last Man' and the existentialist 'Camel' who remains a believer. In contrast to the nihilistic 'Last man', the 'Camel' is a believer who did not give up on meaning. Rather, he chose to believe in the possibility of a new meaning known to him as the 'Overman'. In *Fight Club*, this new meaning is brought to the narrator by his alter ego, Tyler Durden who exclaims to him that

they have a “great war of the spirit.” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 149*) As one may notice here, the word ‘spirit’ carries a believer connotation. Similarly, ‘spirit’ is what Nietzsche qualifies the three stages to become a ‘Superman’ in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1885), as the ‘Camel spirit’, the ‘Lion Spirit’ and the ‘Child Spirit’. The latter emphasizes that Nietzsche saw the ‘Superman’ as an alternative against the nihilism that the death of God, i.e. the relinquishment of the man-made religious values would eventually lead to. For, Nietzsche claimed that it is within the core of the human being to believe in something, for the sole reason that belief gives purpose, and without purpose, man’s nihilistic state would only lead to “chaos and destruction.” (*Metzger 30*) therein the ‘Superman’ as a solution to banish the nihilism that may stem from a non-religious community.

Noticeably, as any believer, the ‘Camel’ seems to look for guidance in his belief. Indeed, the narrator starts claiming as soon as he meets Tyler, “In Tyler I trust” (*Palahniuk, Fight Club 32*). This saying shows that Tyler Durden symbolizes the road to the new meaning that the narrator aspires to reach. Moreover, this statement further sheds light on the similarities between Tyler Durden and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra wherein both come as prophets to enlighten people with their knowledge about the “Superman”. Hence, the narrator, who seemingly remains a believer, consequently appears to open himself to a new meaning with the help of his alter ego, Tyler Durden. In short, by acknowledging his inauthenticity due to consumerism, as well as remaining a believer, the narrator presents the necessary characteristics which identify him as going through the first ‘Camel’ phase to reach the ‘Superman’. Noticeably, the fact that his inauthenticity is related to consumerism, and that the ‘Camel’ phase helps him to gradually untie himself from consumerism, shows that the ‘Overman’ philosophy could eventually detach one from the strong ties of a consumer society if pursued until the last phase, which the narrator eventually does as he gets ready to embrace the second ‘Lion’ phase from Nietzsche’s philosophy.

The second stage to reach the “Superman” is the metamorphosis of the ‘camel’ to the ‘Lion’ spirit which gradually helps him to detach himself from consumerism by breaking his state of false consciousness, alienation and commodification. The destructive ‘Lion’ as Nietzsche explains, is a self-destructive individual who goes on a quest to slay his relative ‘great dragon’. As the philosopher Metzger clearly elaborates in his critique about Nietzsche’s ‘Superman’ philosophy; The “Lion”, according to Zarathustra, creates a new freedom by saying a sacred “No” to the “thou shalt” that governs the obedient “camel/believer”. The “Lion” spirited man is the destroyer of old values, the slayer of the dragon on each of whose scales is inscribed a “thou shalt”. He is above all a destroyer. (*Metzger 30*) Seemingly, the narrator goes through this stage as he starts his journey from an inauthentic ‘Camel’ to a self-destructive ‘Lion’ when he blows up his apartment wherein he previously described the furniture so vividly and obsessively. Noticeably, this explosion symbolizes the first step taken to detach himself from consumerism, which eventually makes the latter his metaphorical ‘great dragon’ on which every scale has inscribed a ‘thou shalt’ consume. Moreover, the destruction of his apartment, which is a form of self-destruction, hints to the fact that the narrator is no longer false conscious. For, the destruction of his apartment indicates the breaking point of his passivity towards consumerism, which eventually shifts his thinking into someone who believes that he can do something against the consumer society.

Interestingly, after destroying his apartment, the narrator moves in to live with his hallucinated alter ego Tyler Durden in an old, isolated and wrecked house situated in Paper Street. He describes the house as a place in which “Stacks of magazines are about the only furniture.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 39) This contrast between his old furnished apartment and his new empty apartment accentuates even further his gradual relinquishment towards the consumer society. Indeed, this relinquishment shows that the narrator is gradually freeing himself from the commodification of consumerism as he states in a monologue; “Disaster is a natural part of my evolution. I’m breaking my attachment to physical power and possessions, because only through destroying myself, can I discover the greater power of my spirit. The liberator who destroys my property is fighting to save my spirit. The teacher who clears all possessions from my path will set me free.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 110) Through this passage, the narrator seemingly abandons all of his material possessions and embraces disaster as a ‘natural part’ of his ‘evolution’ to become an ‘Overman’. For, it is only after embracing such a self-destructive stage, that he can discover and reach the highest stage of his spirit, which is the ‘Superman’ as Nietzsche’s philosophy states. Hence, the ‘Lion’ phase seems to allow the narrator to gradually free himself from the consumer sphere through a gradual process of self-awareness.

However, the process of self-destruction as Nietzsche explains through his character Zarathustra is no easy task. Indeed, the narrator almost abandons his quest to the ‘Overman’ during the chemical burn scene where Tyler Durden pours some lye on the narrator’s hand wherein he triggers the painful burn with the saliva of his kiss on his own hand. During this scene, the narrator attempts to flee from the physical pain that was cast on him by Tyler Durden by imagining peaceful and calm settings, as he exclaims to himself while feeling the pain; “Don’t ever think of the word pain, searing, flesh, tissue or charred. You are in Ireland, walking through the beaded wet car silence of streets where it just rained. It’s night.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 76) This shows how one tries to avoid pain at all costs, which eventually makes the quest to the ‘Superman’ hard to achieve, and let people remain stuck in their consumer spheres which are quite comfortable and free from pain. Nevertheless, Tyler Durden brings the narrator back to his pain and encourages him to embrace the self-destructive process as he exclaims to him “Come back to the pain. Look at your hand. Open your eyes. This is the greatest moment of your life.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 77) Eventually, the narrator acquiesces and decides to accept and befriend his pain, which Tyler Durden finally congratulates, for, this makes him “one step closer to self-betterment.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 78) as he states to the narrator. Ultimately, this scene shows that the narrator is finally ready to move forward and fully embrace the painful and exhaustive ‘Lion’ stage to reach the ‘Superman’.

Another event that showcases this self-destructive process of the ‘Lion’ stage is the creation of a group by both the narrator and Tyler Durden, known as ‘Fight Club’. ‘Fight Club’, which is a club where people meet in an underground basement to fight one another every night is described by the narrator as a place where people go to fight not others, but themselves. Indeed, the first spark that led to the creation of Fight Club was an iconic scene where the narrator hallucinated Tyler Durden asking him “I want you to hit me as hard as you can.” (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 46) to which the narrator responded with a hit that ended up in a

fight. Hence, Tyler Durden being the narrator himself, this statement which is thus directed to his own self, indicates a self-destructive behavior from the narrator, which therefore suggests that the latter officially moves to the second 'Lion' stage in his quest to become a 'Superman'.

Most importantly, the narrator exclaims to himself after this first fight that "Maybe self-destruction is the answer." (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 49) to his obsessive consumer lifestyle. In this regard, he pursues;

...I wanted to know more about myself. About self-destruction. At the time, my life just seemed too complete, and maybe we have to break everything to make something better out of ourselves. For, only after disaster can we be resurrected. It is only after you have lost everything, that you are free to do anything. (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 49-50)

Through this passage, one may notice how the narrator gradually frees himself from the objectification of consumerism through the self-destructive 'Lion' phase. Seemingly, he achieves the former by 'breaking' and 'losing' everything in his possession to finally allow himself to be 'resurrected' into a new and better version of himself that will lead to the 'Superman'. Hence, 'Fight Club' seems to be the concrete representation of the self-destructive 'Lion' phase that every character who fights in it seems to undergo. Moreover, Tyler Durden exclaims every night at 'Fight Club' to the people joining him that "As long as you are at Fight Club, you are not how much money you have got in the bank." (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 143) This ultimately sheds light on how 'Fight Club', which embodies the self-destructive 'Lion' stage, encourages people to stand up against any thing that promotes consumerism. Fight Club, as well as Tyler Durden therefore, become a symbol against consumerism. Finally, this 'resurrection' which the narrator speaks about, hints to the rebirth of the final stage of the 'Superman' philosophy known as the 'Child' spirit that the narrator gradually draws his path to as he progresses through this philosophy, which will be further discussed.

Similar to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the narrator and Tyler Durden decide to share their wisdom with all the people that ought to listen and endeavor for self-betterment. What was once an individual process to break one's ties with consumerism, has now become a revolution against the consumer culture when the narrator and Tyler Durden took the decision to upgrade 'Fight Club' in what they call, 'Project Mayhem'. Seemingly, the narrator, who defines Project Mayhem as a "reminder to what kind of power people still have." (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 120) suggests that he may see 'Project Mayhem' as a globalization of the 'Superman' philosophy as being a solution against consumerism. As he further states;

The goal of Project Mayhem is to teach each man in the project that he has the power to control history. We, each one of us, can take control over the world. Project Mayhem will break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world. (Palahniuk, *Fight Club* 122)

Through this passage, the narrator seems no longer alienated both from himself and the others. Indeed, before reaching the last 'child' stage of the 'Superman' philosophy, the

narrator seemingly attempts at globalizing this philosophy around the whole world by encouraging a global mayhem, or in other words, a global self-destruction for betterment in order to get rid of the consumer society. For, 'Project Mayhem' preaches the same values as 'Fight Club' did, which are the rejection of consumerism and self-improvement, only worldwide. It aims at destroying every single corrupting element in the postmodern era, as it mostly targets the annihilation of all capitalist institutions and national commercial corporations under secret committees that they named 'Mischief' and 'Assault' committees.

Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that Tyler Durden urges all people within these committees in 'Project Mayhem' to wear the same outfits, as he claims; "In addition, the applicant has to arrive with the following: Two black shirts. Two black pair of trousers. One pair of heavy black shoes. Two pair of black socks and two pair of plain underwear. One heavy black coat. One white towel. One army surplus cot mattress. One white plastic mixing bowl." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 127-128)

Eventually, this likeliness in the applicants' uniforms and scarcity of material possessions suggests that those who carry 'Project Mayhem' are practically identified as the Proletariat who 'unite' together against the capitalist institutions, which seemingly echoes to Karl Marx's call to all the workers of the world to unite against capitalism in his Communist Manifesto (1848) (Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto 11). Indeed, it could be noticed through this statement, as well as through the whole novel that Tyler Durden implies a Marxist discourse wherein he attempts to bring self-awareness by rising people's consciousness about the commodification and alienation that the capitalist consumer society generates. But mostly importantly, 'Project Mayhem' puts people under situations in which they experience what the narrator calls a "near-life experience" (Palahniuk, Fight Club 144) which is a metaphorical death that allows them to encounter a kind of "premature enlightenment" (Palahniuk, Fight Club 144) about their mundane lives as consumers. Noticeably, the narrator himself went through this experience during a car accident provoked by Tyler Durden. When about to crash on a tree, Tyler Durden asked to the narrator "What will you wish you'd done before you died?" (Palahniuk, Fight Club 144) To which the narrator instantly replies "I am stupid, and all I do is want and need things. My tiny life. My little job. My Swedish furniture. My job. I wish I'd quit my job." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 146) Once you face death, which is the final step of self-destruction, Tyler Durden believed that you can finally be honest with yourself and eventually, to be reborn into a better self. For Tyler, the dehumanizing nature of capitalism leads to an insignificant and meaningless death as portrayed through the narrator's job wherein he "pulls a lever, pushes button, and then he just dies." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 148) Hence, Tyler wants to make death a meaningful experience by giving one's life a significant purpose. Thus, this significant death was what the narrator called not a near-death experience, but a near-life one, for it allows you not to die, but to live for real after encountering your 'premature enlightenment' that often sheds a light on one's consumer obsessions and routine. As the narrator exclaimed after the accident "What I am feeling right now is premature enlightenment." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 148)

Eventually, the fact that the narrator mentioned his job and furniture as things he had wished not to be so obsessed with, shows his final detachment with consumerism as he goes

through the bottom line of the 'Lion' phase, and gets ready to embrace the final 'Child' stage to reach the 'Superman', which he seemingly qualifies as a 'premature enlightenment'.

All things considered, the 'Lion' stage, which is embraced by the narrator through 'Fight Club', 'Project Mayhem' and other self-destructive behaviors, successfully detach him from consumerism by breaking his alienation, commodification and false consciousness. Noticeably, as the narrator goes through this stage, the former slowly paves him the way to the final step before reaching the 'Superman', known as the 'Child' stage.

Finally, the final stage to reach the 'Superman' is the last metamorphosis of the 'Lion' to the 'Child' spirit. This metamorphosis constitutes the last step which gradually helps the narrator/Tyler Durden to completely detach himself and get rid of consumerism at once.

The 'Child' spirit is characterized by his innocence and rebirth after a thorough self-destructive process. In this respect, the critic Metzger elaborates; "What characterizes the child in Nietzsche's view is his innocence, his psychological freedom from the dead hand of the past, or what Nietzsche's Zarathustra calls, the spirit of revenge." (Metzger 33) The spirit of revenge as Zarathustra calls it, arises from the 'Lion' spirit as a desire to free oneself from the past, as Metzger further states, "The past imposes a terrible burden on the will because it limits spontaneity and creativity. The will is thus never able to be truly active and remains merely reactive." (Metzger 33) The will therefore, remains passive, making the individual go back to the 'Camel' phase, and eventually, become a 'Last man' once again. However, Nietzsche argued in his early studies that this problem could be overcome by 'forgetfulness'. Indeed, forgetfulness frees the individual from the psychological burden of the past and allows him/her to act as if he/she is willing spontaneously and creatively. To this, Metzger contends that, "Such forgetfulness allows humans to attain a new innocence. It is this innocence that characterizes the child, the offspring and successor of the lion spirited destroyer who would obliterate the western civilization's ideologies and the burden of history." (Metzger 33)

Noticeably, the narrator who attempts to obliterate the western civilization's ideologies of consumerism and the burden of history based on the latter through the philosophy of the 'Superman' does not embrace forgetfulness to reach the last stage. Rather, he seems to embrace his past to silence the vengeful 'Lion' spirit in order to allow his rebirth as a 'Child'. As Metzger later clarifies, "Indeed, Nietzsche later on argues that it is this affirmation[Accepting one's past] and not forgetfulness, that finally frees one from the spirit of revenge and makes possible true creativity, and it is this creative, self-affirming will that characterizes the superman." (Metzger 34) Indeed, after further reflection, Nietzsche acknowledged the fact that it is impossible for the human being to completely forget his past. Rather, he suggested that one has to accept and love his past through what he called "Amor fati" (Nietzsche, A Nietzsche Reader 86) or, the 'love of one's fate' in order to be reborn as a 'Child' and eventually, become a "Superman". Seemingly, 'Amor fati' could be noticed through the narrator when the former acknowledges Tyler Durden as his own creation, and accepts all the deeds that he has done due to him, as he states before shooting himself in an attempt to get rid of his hallucination, "This is like a total epiphany moment for me. I'm not killing myself, I'm killing Tyler. And I choose to remember everything." (Palahniuk, Fight

Club 204). Here, the narrator seems to undergo a sudden moment of realization where he chooses to recall all of his actions and decides to embrace his fate as it is, and this, despite getting rid of Tyler Durden.

Indeed, the narrator gets rid of Tyler Durden not because he wants to forget, but because he no longer needs his guidance. Similar to the prophetic Zarathustra who guided people to the 'Overman', the narrator no longer needs Tyler Durden's help anymore to reach the final destination of his journey. Indeed, the last words that the narrator uttered to himself through Tyler Durden were "You weren't really fighting me. You were fighting everything you hate in your life. There isn't a me and you anymore." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 200) Through this, the narrator clearly acknowledges the fact that he created Tyler Durden only to guide him in his fight against everything he hated in life, which is consumerism. Hence, the split suggests that the narrator is finally ready to be reborn into a 'child' and eventually, become a 'Superman'.

Interestingly, after shooting himself, the narrator wakes up in a hospital thinking he is in heaven. He describes a feeling of "plenitude and calmness" (Palahniuk, Fight Club 206) as he wakes up in his bed after getting rid of Tyler Durden. Noticeably, the symbolic death of Tyler Durden, who reflected the 'Lion' spirited man through his self-destructive behavior that encouraged the narrator to create 'Fight Club' and 'Project Mayhem' through the novel, shows the readiness of the narrator to let go the vengeful 'Lion' spirit and his willingness to move forward to the final 'Child' phase in order to reach the 'Superman'. Seemingly, the word 'heaven' carries a religious connotation which tends to symbolize renewal and peace of mind. Evidently, the latter indicates that the narrator is embracing a new step as he tells to himself at the end of the novel how he is feeling "resurrected, renewed and reborn." (Palahniuk, Fight Club 207) Eventually, this choice of diction indicates that the narrator may be undergoing the last phase from Nietzsche's 'Superman' philosophy known as the 'Child' spirit. For, the term 'Child' in Nietzsche's philosophy was chosen after a child's pureness and newness to life. Similarly, the narrator's final state of mind after getting rid of consumerism through the different stages of spirit showcase this newness and pureness towards life that he is now experiencing. Ultimately, this final rebirth is what characterizes Nietzsche's 'Overman', which eventually suggests that the narrator indeed became a 'Superman' after going through all of these phases, as well as successfully getting rid of consumerism through the process.

In brief, one may notice how the narrator goes through the 'Child' phase after feeling reborn, and how this rebirth allows him to achieve the last stage from the 'Superman' philosophy and eventually become one. Simultaneously, the final step of this philosophy shows the independence and indifference of the narrator towards consumerism, which indicates that this philosophy may have cured his consumer disease as he woke up in the hospital totally relieved and 'renewed'.

Conclusion

Chuck Palahniuk has successfully portrayed the consumer ideology that is gangrening the postmodern world through a nameless narrator who lives under the yoke of a consuming

capitalist world that has shaped his character into being a passive consumer individual. The way the narrator has experienced three major phases advocated by the Marxists that have shaped the capitalist consumer society. Among the different Marxist concepts, those tackled in the present work are alienation, false consciousness and commodification. Hence, by showing how the narrator has experienced these phases through the Marxist concepts, I attempted to demonstrate how he has become completely enslaved by both capitalism and consumerism. This has made of him the ‘everyman character’ that everybody may identify with. But what makes *Fight Club* transgressive is not the simple presence of the consumer ideology within it; rather, it is the revolt of the main character against it. The narrator seems to embrace a Nietzschean philosophy as he gradually detaches himself from the invisible ties of consumerism. For, by creating an alter ego known as Tyler Durden, as well as the secret groups such as ‘Fight Club’ and ‘Project Mayhem’, the narrator is expressing his transgression and dissatisfaction against the capitalist consumer society of the postmodern world. Seemingly, the creation of these groups and his alter ego which are endowed with revolutionary intentions that promote revolts and uprisings against the consumer culture, show an underlined Nietzschean philosophy that reference to Nietzsche’s ‘Superman’ concept. The narrator gradually frees himself from consumerism as he first gains self-awareness during the ‘camel’ stage wherein he gets rid of his false consciousness, then moves to the second ‘lion’ stage wherein he gets rid of his alienation and commodification, to finally reach the ‘child’ stage wherein he is completely free and reborn into a ‘superman’. This process eventually answers my research question being, “How can Nietzsche’s “Superman” philosophy be a solution against consumerism?” in the sense that Nietzsche’s anti conformist philosophy goes hand in hand with the narrator’s transgressive ideas within Fight Club. This leads him, as I showed, to the search of a new meaning in his life through an anti-conformist behavior which results in a revolution.

However, despite the ‘Superman’ being an eventual solution against consumerism in Fight Club as I aimed to show through this dissertation, this philosophy still remains a quite ambiguous mystery. Indeed, until the end of his life, Nietzsche never gave an explicit definition of the ‘Superman’. In addition of the three stages that one has to achieve in order to reach it, he defined the latter as an abstract concept that transcends human imagination in the sense that “it will be to man, as man is to ape.” (Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra 254) Eventually, this ambiguity in the definition of the ‘Superman’ philosophy leaves room to doubt about whether the narrator did reach the ‘Superman’ or not after achieving the last ‘child’ phase at the end of the novel. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that the process that one must undergo to achieve this philosophy successfully detaches the individual from consumerism as demonstrated in this dissertation through the main protagonist of Fight Club. Hence, even if the narrator did not manage to become a ‘Superman’ at the end of the novel, the different stages that he had to achieve in order to reach it, eventually detached him from consumerism by making him a free individual who no longer feels enslaved by the postmodern capitalist consumer ideology.

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