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*THE SOCIAL AND THE PERSONAL: CONSUMERISM
AND IDENTITY LACK IN PALAHNIUK'S FIGHTCLUB*
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1. INTRODUCTION

This essay presents an analysis of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* and is divided in two parts, in line with the two main topics developed in this study: the social contract and the narrator's split personality.

In the first part of this dissertation I am going to focus on *Fight Club* using the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau's work *The Social Contract* and the role played by the *status quo* in the construction of modern societies. Palahniuk's *Fight Club* and Rousseau's *The Social Contract* are connected in several ways. Firstly, *Fight Club* is a text that induces to a social rebellion because of the rupture in present society of what Rousseau termed the *social contract*. In order to develop this idea I am going to explain the basis of the social contract to show how it has been broken and in which ways *Fight Club* is a reaction against this. Secondly, within Palahniuk's story, Tyler Durden's fight club is created by following the steps provided by Rousseau's *Social Contract* to build a new society; to elaborate on this point I am going to detail Rousseau's instructions and try to demonstrate that the construction of fight club follows such instructions in an attempt to restore the social contract. Fight club also relates to Rousseau's notion of the creation of civil societies and the appearance of inequalities in them due to the status quo. Tyler's social experiments of fight club and Project Mayhem want to reverse such process of inequality explained by Rousseau. In addition, Tyler's projects in *Fight Club* seem to expand and become a social rebellion against capitalism and our current consumer society even if this rebellion is condemned never to be fulfilled. Characters try hard to escape from the trap of consumerism; however, escaping consumer society proves to be impossible, as the rebels can only reverse the process of production/consumption. Therefore, this essay will try to prove that although they are projects that stand against the system, fight club and Project Mayhem end up being very similar to everything the rebels despise.

In the second part of this study, the contrastive analysis between Tyler Durden's actions and rules and Rousseau's notions on the social contract is going to be complemented with reference to the psychoanalytic framework and to some notions provided by Jacques Lacan. More precisely, I am going to resort to some of Lacan's notions regarding the process of the child's development to explain the narrator's trauma and try to understand his behavior. The absence of the father, leading towards the growth of an unresolved oedipal complex, seems to be one of the main causes of collective trauma in *Fight Club*. In the case of the narrator, this trauma results in mental illness and a psychotic condition. Romance is the main element that triggers his dissociated personality: the narrator suffers an inability to relate to a woman, Marla, and then his mind creates his alter ego Tyler Durden to fulfill his desires and fight his fears. Identity and the notion of reflection, important issues in Lacanian theory, are also strongly present in the novel. The narrator desperately looks for a reflecting and helpful look in the other so as to create and maintain a satisfying identity because his present one is collapsing, and he expects to find his new identity through one of the easiest ways American society provides: with the help of different support groups. Personal identity is undermined and exposed by many social factors in our present society, and the novel attempts to relocate human relations as one of the main missing elements to counterattack present chaos.

2. ROUSSEAU AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

The following quotation condenses Rousseau's main contention in *The Social Contract*:

The articles of the social contract will, when clearly understood, be found reducible to this single point: the total alienation of each associate, and all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as every individual gives himself up entirely, the condition of every person is alike; and being so, it

would not be to the interest of any one to render that condition offensive to others. (62-63)

That is to say, people renounce their freedom by associating themselves with others and by so doing, they gain protection from the association. They have reciprocated duties and rights that they have to fulfil. In the social contract both parts, persons and society, are necessarily equal, and the authority has no right to take advantage of the reduced freedom of any of the citizens. In Palahniuk's *Fight Club* the social contract has clearly been broken: although people continue to perform their social duties, the American Government and society in general have completely forgotten their own. This fact leads to the growing exploitation and discontent of the ones who are at the bottom part of society while the ones at the upper part grow bigger and richer. In this way, *Fight Club* is a rebellion against the breakup of the social contract. According to Giroux:

As the laws of the market take precedence over the laws of the state as guardians of the public good, the state increasingly offers little help in mediating the interface between the advance of capital and its rapacious commercial interests, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those noncommodified and nonmarket spheres that create the political, economic, and social conditions vital for critical citizenship and democratic public life. (3)

The Government no longer protects individuals nor treats them in equal terms, yet it rather takes side with the market. *Laissez faire, laissez passer* is the predominant motto; a liberal economy self-regulates society and its citizens are abandoned to its lack of mercy and inequality. The underprivileged, as a result, do not feel they are guarded by society and its Government and feel cheated. Eduardo Mendieta states that "*Fight Club* stages the drama of a social etiquette of trust that has turned into a social etiquette of servility. When faith in the others does not operate to coordinate social cooperation, but to impose submission" (48); and

therefore, “men cannot but feel betrayed, and they in turn betray society. They opt out of the social contract of trust that sustains that society” (51).

On the other hand, Tyler’s project of fight club and Project Mayhem are constructed in a similar manner to the formation of a new people or society as described by Rousseau. As Garrison states:

According to Rousseau, the content of the general will, that is, the practices and beliefs that will guide it in exercises of sovereignty, is first implanted by [...] the Legislator. This individual is not party to the contract, but claims that he has the ability to form the general will of a particular people in a way that will be advantageous for those that are parties to the contract. Once he has completed his act of “founding” a new people, the Legislator departs. (98)

The Legislator in the new society of the underprivileged in *Fight Club* would be its creator, Tyler Durden. He establishes the general rules of the fight clubs but then he lets each club develop in its own way and he even disappears from the society he has created, as we can see in some parts of the novel, for example when the narrator asks for Tyler: “I ask, who made up the new rules. Is it Tyler?” (142). Some of the rules that guarantee the freedom of fight club stress the need for equality: “The new rule is that nobody should be the center of fight club except the two men fighting”; “... another new fight club rule is that fight club will always be free” (142-143). Nobody can be the center of fight club because everyone there is equal by law; the focus is put on the fight between two equals. Tyler accomplishes the creation of a new social contract that provides and restores the equality that the official Government no longer provides. Further in the novel the narrator tries to take control of fight club and stop it: “But I’m Tyler Durden. I invented fight club. Fight club is mine. I wrote those rules. None of you would be here if it wasn’t for me. And I say it stops here!” (179). The narrator tries to be above the very rules of fight club and therefore tries to dissolve the social contract. However, as the

structure of fight club is respectful to Rousseau's ideas, he is expelled from the basement and fight club continues; nobody can or should control or stop fight club. All the more, there are instructions to follow if someone, even the creator, tries to shut down fight club: "The mechanic says, 'You know the drill, Mr. Durden. You said it yourself. You said, if anyone ever tries to shut down the club, even you, then we have to get him by the nuts'." (187).

In *A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind and is it Authorised by Natural Law?* Rousseau explains how civil society was founded and how inequities among people appeared. In primitive times people were free, their needs were covered by nature and they only depended upon themselves. After some time the population grew and the needs to be covered demanded the work of several people. In this way people started to depend on one another, consequently losing their individual freedom. However, according to Rousseau things worsened when property appeared. To maintain the status quo and protect those who had properties, society and the first governments appeared. Since then governments have always served the double function of protecting those who are on the upper levels of the social scale and prevent those in the bottom from ascending in the *scala nature*. The last step in this process of growing necessities is precisely the stage of capitalism and consumerism that we see in Palahniuk's novel. Fight club and Project Mayhem have as ultimate purpose to go back in time to an alleged primitive state in which freedom would be restored when people became untied from their material properties and needs. Tyler's purpose would, then, be to reverse the process described above by Rousseau. Yet, we cannot forget that the path to achieve this goal is the complete destruction of society and social life as we know it, by means of violence and terrorists acts: "This was the goal of project Mayhem, Tyler said, the complete and right-away destruction of civilization" (125).

Capitalism is linked with immorality and criticized throughout the novel. The narrator's job is an example to the point. He works for a well-know car company (whose name is never

mentioned, though), as “a recall campaign coordinator” (31). That is to say, his job consists of initiating recalls when an important problem is found in a car model, which might bring about many accidents and important legal compensations for the victims. He describes his work just as applying the formula: “A times B times C equals X. This is what it will cost if we don’t initiate a recall. If X is greater than the cost of a recall, we recall the cars and no one gets hurt. If X is less than the cost of a recall, then we don’t recall” (30). His job is, then, more about money and profits than really about the people. Money is more important than human lives. It can even pay for the deaths and their families’ suffering: everything can be bought and sold in the capitalist society where the narrator plays only the role of a pawn. In his critique of the film adaptation of Palahniuk’s novel, Giroux argues that “the logic of the market undermines the most basic social solidarities. The consequences include ... a growing sense of insecurity, cynicism, and political retreat on the part of the general public” (4). Along the same line, health insurance companies are also criticized. If you are the victim of a car accident or if you have contracted a disease, once the insurance company has spent the amount of money you had contracted with them, they will let you die, as happens with Chloe in the novel: “here she was, so close to death that her life insurance policy had paid off with seventy-five thousand bucks, and all Chloe wanted was to get laid for the last time. Not intimacy, sex” (19). Corporations are to blame for this situation but the Government is also guilty as it allows this state of affairs to happen and go on. Governments should protect the people from these injustices. However, Social Darwinism reigns and only the fittest or, in this case, the richest will survive.

In the capitalist system denounced in *Fight Club* everything is related to consumerism. The novel suggests that even sex is replaced by consumerism, the repression of the basic instinct of sex is displaced towards the pure consumption of goods: “The people I know used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their IKEA furniture catalogue” (43). In such a society people are defined by their properties, but this

definition is meaningless: "We all have the same Hohanneshov armchair in the Strinne green stripe pattern" (43). People have what mass media have told them to buy, making them all alike. In Tyler's understanding, consumerism works because it creates false needs that have to be fulfilled: "You have a class of young strong men and women, and they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need" (149). Eduardo Mendieta contends that Project Mayhem's function is precisely to awake men and make them realize that they "have become the disposable and silent servants of an underpaid, insecure, and meaningless service economy. They are the men of a generation whose standard of living will be worse than that of their parents. They have been raised on exorbitant expectations that because they can never be cashed out in social reality turns them into failures" (50). The American Dream, from Tyler's political stand, is thus denounced as a social lie, a creation of the status quo to keep people working in a capitalist system that benefits only a few: "We are the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we'll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars, but we won't" (166). According to Garrison "these comments express feelings of emptiness and anger that seem to be engendered by contemporary American capitalism: Jobs have no meaning. Life is solitary. Product consumption imparts neither virtue nor happiness. The culture lies" (85).

The men in the novel that join fight club and Project Mayhem decide to follow Tyler Durden's command because they have become aware of the false democratic appearances of American society and are trying to fight against the system. In this sense, Mendieta argues that "Project Mayhem aims to make us aware of the ways in which social order is predicated on the code of civility, which can also turn into a code of servility" (49). Members of Project Mayhem initiate a guerrilla war against consumer society but their task is an almost impossible one, therefore Tyler tries to reverse the process of consumerism and take advantage from it. Fight club and Project Mayhem need money to continue their struggle and it is by means of the soap

business that they can finance their activities. They reverse the circle of consumerism making the rich buy an expensive product made out of their own waste: "Our goal is the big red bags of liposuctioned fat we'll haul back to Paper Street and render and mix with lye and rosemary and sell back to the very people who paid to have it sucked out. At twenty bucks a bar, these are the only folks who can afford it. 'The richest, creamiest fat in the world, the fat of the land,' he says. 'That makes tonight a kind of Robin Hood thing'"(150). Marla points out the idea that the soap business follows the typical capitalist pattern of factory production and she calls the narrator "a monster two-faced capitalist" (94). On the one hand, the narrator is trying to fight capitalism because he feels exploited by the system and he wants to free people from the enslavement that they are suffering. On the other hand, he is using the system to earn money creating a factory-like system that produces soap, in this way enslaving the men who have decided to enroll in his project, people that he even calls "Space Monkeys." According to Giles "that Project Mayhem is modeled on the corporate world demonstrates that the narrator has been co-opted by that world and that, ironically, he does not resist it in his fantasy of rebellion" (36). Moreover, the Space Monkeys in Project Mayhem resemble normal people that work in factories as each one of them is only in charge of one task, a small part of the project, and they are also nameless: "the feeling you get is that you're one of those space monkeys. You do the little job you're trained to do" (12). Tyler's Space Monkeys fulfill their tasks and are part of a big organism from which they don't receive much, just the hope of being illuminated and relieved from their miserable lives. Their condition is not basically different from their previous menial jobs and society's promise that if you work hard you could achieve everything you need and be happy. In both cases that fulfillment never arrives and people get trapped in the system. Jesse Kavadlo contends that finally the Space Monkeys' situation is even worse than before they decided to join Tyler's project: "Fight Club rails against consumerism conformity, but its alternative, Project Mayhem [...] takes far more of its members' individuality—names, clothes, hair, identities—than consumer culture can" (11).

Project Mayhem ends up being very similar to any American enterprise that is unaware of its employees and only uses them for its own capitalist profit; consequently, Tyler's revolution finishes up being everything it was supposed to despise.

3. BUILDING TYLER DURDEN: THE FATHER'S ABSENCE AND CONSUMERISM

The story gives clear indications of the reasons why the narrator suffers from a mental illness: in his childhood memories there is always the absence of his father. Therefore, He lacks a paternal and masculine figure and is afraid that he cannot fulfill his expected role as a man. When the narrator meets Marla he feels attracted to her but he has to face all his fears: he is afraid he cannot be manly enough but also fears to behave as his father did and abandon her in the future; he does not want to leave a fatherless child and cause her or him a trauma as his father did with him. To explain the creation of this trauma Lacanian theory could be helpful. Lacan reformulates Freud's theory of the socialization of the children thanks to the resolution of the oedipal complex. The child desires to be the mother's complement, the desire for the other. The father intervenes and deprives the child of his desired object, imposing on the child the Law of the Father and producing a mental castration. If the child assimilates this process, the oedipal complex is resolved and his mind will adapt to social life and accept the impositions of the symbolic. Both Freud and Lacan place the resolution of the oedipal complex at the age of six (see Sharpe, web). Madan Sarup summarizes the process as follows: "the Oedipus complex for Lacan is the moment in which the child humanizes itself by becoming aware of the self, the world and others. The resolution of the Oedipus complex liberates the subject by giving him, with his Name, a place in the family constellation, an original signifier of self and subjectivity" (Sarup, 10-11). In *Fight Club* both the narrator and Tyler Durden had not had a proper paternal figure: "Tyler never knew his father" (49). The narrator also confesses in different occasions that his own father disappeared when he was only six years old, precisely

at the moment when the oedipal complex had to be resolved: "Me, I knew my dad for about six years, but I don't remember anything. My father he starts a new family in a new town about every six years" (50). In this way, it is implied that the absence of the father creates a trauma in the narrator; as both Lacan and Freud explained, the lack of resolution of the Oedipus complex lead to mental illness. Yet, the narrator tries to convince himself that the absence of his father did not really affect him: "Maybe we didn't need a father to complete ourselves" (54). Nevertheless, he does feel bad about his father: "I am Joe's Broken Heart because Tyler's dumped me. Because my father dumped me. Oh, I could go on and on" (134); and when he feels abandoned by his father and also by Tyler he approaches the final crisis that ends in his suicide attempt. The narrator has developed an intense fear to be abandoned and rejected: "How could I compete for Tyler's attention. I am Joe's Enraged, Inflamed Sense of Rejection" (60). He is also afraid of being abandoned by Marla, as when he imagines being one of Marla's stories about her ex-boyfriends: "I could imagine myself becoming one of Marla's stories. *I dated a guy once who was a split personality*" (183). As a result of the narrator's trauma, Tyler Durden appears: he wants to be with Marla but he is too afraid to do it, so he develops a split personality.

The narrator dreams of having sex with Marla but it is Tyler who has it: "After melanoma last night, I came home and went to bed and slept. And dreamed I was humping, humping, humping Marla Singer" (59). In this way, the narrator's desire for Marla is evidenced. The narrator explains he has a "nesting instinct" (43). This is something commonly associated to women: they are the ones who traditionally take care of the home to form a family. In this case, the only model to follow the narrator had in his infancy was his mother and he behaves accordingly. Yet the important issue here is that the narrator desires to have a home and a family although his trauma and fears, as explained above, do not allow him. All these feelings are triggered by the appearance of Marla. He feels attracted to her and she is a woman who could give him the possibility of fulfilling his desire to have a family. Nevertheless, he is unable

to connect with her due to his mental problems, solving the situation only in a provisional way by splitting his personality and having sex with Marla through Tyler, his hyper-masculine alter ego: "Marla looks at me as if I'm the one humping her..." (68).

Giles also argues that "the narrator's identity is undermined by a profound self hatred and masculine insecurity originating in his Oedipal relationship with his father" (23) and adds that "a simultaneously absent and threatening father lies at the core of the long repressed anger that increasingly engulfs the narrators psyche as the novel progresses" (24). The narrator says that he doesn't remember anything about his father but, in fact, he also says that they keep in touch by means of phone calls: "My father never went to college so it was really important I go to college. After college, I called him long distance and said, now what? My dad didn't know. When I got a job and turned twenty-five, long distance, I said, now what? My dad didn't know, so he said, get married. I am a thirty-year-old boy, and I'm wondering if another woman is really the answer I need" (50-51). As Giles contends, the narrator's father is absent but at the same time threatening and therefore present. The father's absence is reinforced by the long distance calls, he is not physically present, but he is threatening because the narrator feels bound to fulfill his father's expectations. In addition, we notice in the narrator's words that to a certain extent for him women are to blame for his condition, which motivates his misogynistic reactions and comments (Giroux 5). Giles adds other reasons also for the destabilized narrator's identity:

The narrator's job with an exploitive insurance company creates an intense self-hatred in him, and his absent father and cynical boss merge in his consciousness as they come to embody a patriarchal American capitalism that advocates unchecked consumption. While his job identifies the narrator as a servant of the capitalist system, he hates the exploitation and waste associated with it. (24)

The psychological reason why the narrator's father and his boss merge and represent American capitalism should be obviously linked to the notion of authority. In the case of the boss, the idea is further linked to our previous argumentation: for his boss the narrator is just one employee out of many in a corporation based on the idea of total consumerism. In the case of the father, we have to pay attention to the narrator's attitude towards his father and his interpretation of it also in terms of consumerism: "This isn't so much like a family as it's like he sets up a franchise" (50). The narrator sarcastically regards his father as an entrepreneur and he is just one son among many. Reaching this conclusion about his father and his family obviously adds to the narrator's trauma as he is transformed into an object, a perception of his life that therefore weakens his identity.

The notion of reflection is very important in Lacanian theory. Lacan focuses on the so-called 'dialectic of recognition' to contend the necessity of the other in the formation of human identity: "... we get knowledge of what we are from the way others respond to us [...] we are never going to get a stable image. We try to interpret our relation to others but there is always the possibility of misinterpretation [...] one can only see oneself as one thinks others see one. There is an inherent tension, a feeling of threat, because one's identity depends on recognition by the other" (Sarup 14-16). The narrator provides several references to his condition of "being reflected": the first one is his reflection in Bob's t-shirt after crying: "This was all I remember because then Bob was closing in around me with his arm, and his head was folding down to cover me. Then I was lost inside oblivion, dark and silent and complete, and when I finally stepped away from his soft chest, the front of Bob's shirt was a wet mask of how I looked crying" (22). Then, the narrator confesses that his lies are also reflected in Marla's: "In this one moment, Marla's lie reflects my lie, and all I can see are lies" (23). He even describes his blood reflection on the floor after a fight: "... I could look down and there was a print of half my face in blood on the floor" (51). It seems that, as he could not see himself reflected on his father, now he looks desperately for a reflection. According to Vickroy: "His mind works in

an indirect and defensive mode where he describes traces of emotional events that indicate experience but never feelings themselves, as with the mask of his tears that he sees on Bob's shirt, or the mask-like remnants of blood on the floor after a beating at fight club" (68). The narrator recognizes himself through several reflections throughout the book but he also expresses his feelings and mental states through reflection in the other in sentences such as "Hearing this, I am totally Joe's Gallbladder" (58). These expressions come from "a series of articles where organs in the human body talk about themselves in the first person: I am Jane's Uterous" (58), as the narrator explains. In this way he experiences a fragmentation of the self due to his incapacity to express his own feelings and to his problems of self-recognition. Every time he is angry or feeling bad he expresses himself through the displacement of his feelings towards the other, that is to say through "Joe's organs," which creates a very powerful and graphic image of his condition: when we read "I am Joe's Grinding Teeth" (59) or "I am Joe's Blood-Boiling Rage" (69) we can visualize the narrator doing so and feeling very angry.

His necessity to be recognized in the other is also at the back of the narrator's need to go to support groups:

This is why I loved the support groups so much, if people thought you were dying, they gave you their full attention. If this might be the last time they saw you, they really saw you [...] People listened instead of just waiting for their turn to speak. And when they spoke, they weren't telling you a story. When the two of you talked, you were building something, and afterward you were both different than before. (107)

What the narrator finds in support group is, therefore, a way to build up his identity. As Lacan contends, we can only know ourselves through our reflection in the other, but if there is nobody who pays attention to us, who sees us, then we are invisible, inexistent. In support groups the narrator finds people willing to listen to him and to provide him with an image of

himself. The quotation about also hides the narrator's repressed criticism of the present state of human relations, which have become "commodified and fake" (Casado de Rocha, 113), just a convention in which people take turns to participate in social events and conversations but pay no real attention to the other. However, in support groups, conversations still fulfill the role Lacan allots this activity in the process of identity formation: "Knowledge of the world, of others and of self is determined by language. Language is the precondition for the act of becoming aware of oneself as a distinct entity" (Sarup 9). Besides, this is not the only quotation referred to personal relationships that the narrator makes in the novel. Earlier in the book he speaks about a type of contemporary "friendship" that offers a clear contrast with support groups: "Everywhere I go, I make tiny friendships with the people sitting beside me ... What I am is a recall campaign coordinator, I tell the single-serving friend sitting next to me ..." (31). In this way he compares friendship in his daily life with the rest of stuff he gets when he travels: "tiny soap, tiny shampoos, single serving butter, tiny mouthwash and a single-use toothbrush" (28). Like these things, friendship is a commodity and just a temporal and tiny one, not real in any sense. Giles argues that, "On planes and in airports, he feels that his existence has been miniaturized and destabilized, that everything surrounding him is designed to be discarded, to be thrown away such a throw-away life is the fate of those working in contemporary corporate America" (2013, 29). Marla reinforces the idea that society is full of single-serving things: "What Marla loves, she says, is all the things that people love intensely and then dump an hour or a day after [...] 'The Animal Control place is the best place to go,' Marla says. 'Where all the animals, the little doggies and kitties that people loved and then dumped, even the old animals, dance and jump around for your attention ...' (67). Even other living creatures qualify as single-serving things, as people also do. These pets could be compared to the narrator and his father throwing him away after six years. From Marla's understanding of life, it could be possible that she loves the narrator because he has been dumped by his father and he feels abandoned by everyone.

3. CONCLUSION

In the first part of this essay I have focused on the notions of the social contract and the story's attack on the status quo. Inevitably, these two ideas are associated to capitalism and its results in a consumer society. From a primitive egalitarian society, as proposed by Jean Jacques Rousseau, we have come to inhabit a society full of inequities due to the increasing social needs and the creation of private propriety. Governments and rulers of society have played an important role securing and expanding their properties and, by so doing, increasing social inequities. With the passing of time these differences grew up, causing the breakup of the social contract. In the novel, the creation of fight clubs that might regenerate the social contract became an attempt to restore the balance that has been lost in present society (if it ever existed). The book's relationship with Rousseau's *The Social Contract* is, thus, twofold: Fight clubs rebel against the failure of the social contract between deprived citizens and their Government and corporations but at the same time the clubs borrow from Rousseau's ideas and try to create a new one social contract. However, their political attempt fails again when Tyler decides to continue the space monkeys' activities in Project Mayhem, where people are dispossessed of everything and promised something that they are never to get; the space monkeys finally end serving the needs of Tyler's organization, where their sense of identity also dissolves as they become a nameless army of terrorists dressed in black. Besides, Project Mayhem is not the only thing that fails; the rebellion against consumer society also fails because the capitalist circle production-consumption-production is only reversed: now the rich are the ones who pay to buy their own selves back, symbolized in the soap, and making the poor richer. Yet, in order to do that, Tyler and his army of deprived men have to rely in the capitalist structure that they despise so much.

In the second part of the essay I have focused on the narrator's trauma, resulting in his split personality, a condition explained here according to psychoanalytic and Lacanian theory.

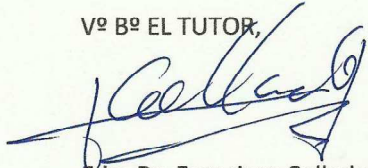
Trauma is mostly related to the narrator's childhood memories and to his father's absence, resulting in the lack of resolution of the oedipal complex. As this complex is not solved, it develops into a mental illness that is triggered by the desire of a romantic relationship. Together with the oedipal complex, key elements for this understanding are the notions of reflection in the other and of language as the tool to define and fix identity.

When we deal with the notion of identity in connection with the two issues studied in this work, Palahniuk's aim seems to be clear: *Fight Club* portrays a consumerist society where the underprivileged have been used up by a system that does not even see them, their social contract is torn. On a personal level, it is also the story of a child abandoned by his father, whose visibility as a man has been always in danger. A society with no human bindings, a child with no father: Palahniuk has marked the search for human feelings and for the restitution of the social contract as the main aims we need to fulfill. If we do not address them in time, Tyler Durden might appear again.

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Vº Bº EL TUTOR,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Collado', is written over a horizontal line.

Pdo: Dr. Francisco Collado Rodríguez