

The idea of the destruction of the modern day American male due to capitalist and consumerist thought and the vital role that woman have played, is the most dominant and consistent theme running through Chuck Palahniuk's 'Fight Club.' Even from the beginning of the novel, it seems to have an anti-capitalist and anti-feminist tone. The only solution to this epidemic in the eyes of Tyler Durden, the protagonist, is destruction and the return to the primal. Throughout the novel, capitalism is condemned with special attention given to materialism of modern day society. Fight Club illustrates the consumer culture in which the twentieth century male exists in and how it has led to the destruction of the individual and in essence individuality.

The main character of the novel, the Narrator, an unnamed "thirty year old boy" who is employed in the recall division of the Federated Motor Corporation is the personification of the modern day American male raised in a capitalist society. He is a person that clearly defines himself through the possessions he owns. "The people I know used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their IKEA furniture catalogue". (Palahniuk, 43) The transition to a capitalist mentality is clearly depicted in this quote by the Narrator. It appears that the reference to the IKEA catalogue has an important role in describing consumerist thoughts and the role of capitalism in everyday life. Even with our free time we are still heavily sedated with capitalist ideologies and behaviours. The Narrator also says, while looking through the IKEA catalogue, "What kind of plates define me as a person". Here it is evident that it is not the character of the individual and attributes that define him as an individual but what possessions the individual owns most accurately does.

"We all have the same Johannesov armchair in the Strinne green stripe pattern." (Palahniuk, 43) The Narrator's life is identical as everyone else's; everyone in the capitalist society has the same possessions and with it comes a loss of individuality. Thus, the Narrator is not given a name adding to the idea of the loss of individuality; he is referred to as the every man, the IKEA man. To further express his capitalist nature, the Narrator says, "The Vild hall clock made of galvanized steel, oh, I had to have that." (Palahniuk, 43) Brand names have replaced personal qualities with product logos; the modern day man cannot be anything of significance without these certain products in his grasp. The Narrator obtained his possessions one at a time. In reality, he was shaping his personality to be the kind of person who would own the things he had.

Tyler Durden appears to be the personification of anti-capitalism. In one quote, he says, "You are not your car. You are not your bank account..." He wants to stray away from material possessions and wants society to think as he does about consumerism. To display this, Tyler lives in a run-down house, has no large amounts of possessions or money and wears cheap clothing. For the Narrator, even after he has gone to live with Tyler, the Narrator continues to present what he owned to the outside world as himself. He tells the detective who called, "That was not a bunch of stuff that got destroyed, it was me." Of course, the Narrator immediately adds to himself "I'd like to thank the Academy," but the fact that he identifies himself to what he owns tells that he hasn't changed at all. For readers of Fight Club, the Narrator is the common modern day individual.

The other aspect leading towards the destruction of male is the female. It seems to be that the novel has a very anti-feminist approach. "What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women." (Palahniuk, 50) This quote clearly identifies women as the cause of the destructive and violent nature seen in Fight Club. "Blood, tears, bruises; violence seen in the fights can be attributed to men raised by women in modern day life," Tyler later states, wondering if another woman is really the answer we need. Men have been so feminised by his upbringing that the only way he can do this is to create an alternate personality. This is clearly expressed in the personality of the Narrator. Even for Tyler, who is the revolutionary figure that seems to be outside the influences of modern day society, has the effect of feminisation. In the movie and as described in the novel, Tyler wears a red jacket, rose coloured sunglasses and a pink robe. Traditionally, the colour red is very feminine and worn predominately by women. Tyler's robe seems to prove that even the most violent of men can't escape his feminine side. For the strongest and most uninfluenced people, as Tyler seemed to be, feminism has affected the way men are brought up in present American societies.

Women are viewed, for the most part, as one of the major obstacles standing in the way of men's freedom. The only major female character in the novel, Marla, is portrayed as a strung-out female that is a constant pain in the Narrator's side. She detests life and does not care for herself at all. Besides Marla, women are given a bad name on several occasions, most notably in the support groups the Narrator joins for testicular cancer, where most members detail stories of how their wives left them at such a bad time. The novel displays an investigation of the modern male. Late the Narrator explains Marla like this, "And suddenly I realize that all of this the guns, the bombs, the revolution, has something to do with a girl named Marla Singer." Marla as represented as the modern day female, has the cause of chaos and destruction. Marla's appearance and actions even strengthen this fact. The Narrator's lack of masculinity is present throughout the whole novel. Marla Singer seems to be more dominant than he is. He confronts Marla with the problem. In the confrontation he realizes that Marla is

stronger than him. He has it all planned out, he is going to tell her off, and she just takes it. The actual situation is far from this vision. She calls him on what he is doing. She walks away while he is still speaking. She completely dominates him. The situation ends when she asks him what his name is. Even when the two discuss the support group days in which each of them had rights to specific days, the Narrator was pushed around to give what was best for Marla.

This feminist personality of the Narrator has added to his destruction and loss of individuality. As a solution to this problem, fight club was created. Only men are allowed and it is about releasing their most primal male urges. They get a great release from beating one another. This part of them has been repressed by society and when they have the opportunity to let this out, they are overcome. Only in Fight club, are men actually free. With the days of shopping malls and stores, Fight club is the only domain men have to connect and become real individuals. By rejecting objects they are trying to connect even further to their male primal selves; to the man that existed before society put constraints on them. Consumerism is directly linked to feminism. The woman's domain: shopping and the domestic world dominate today's society and not a week goes by where men are forced to shop in huge malls because of women. For this reason, feminism and capitalism are entirely linked. Fight Club is the man's struggle to gain control over his life.

As with everything in life, there are many obstacles in the way of people's goals. To release the control of feminism and consumerism and to regain manhood, Fight Club was created. Fight Club let men live by liberating them and allowing them to express their primal nature. The twenty first century male still struggles with these issues, where consumer culture gives life value through what is bought and owned and not by the individual. What aids this destruction of the male along with capitalism is strengthened feminism in society. Fight Club portrays what sickens society today and what has caused it to be in the state it is in now. As society's priorities have become closer with material things, people are finding themselves more distracted and more alone with their material goods. This has caused the destruction of man. The novel is clever in its use of symbolism and words to detail its point to the reader. What Fight Club shows is the break down of modern day society and the only solution to this problem is drastic change and measure. Can Tyler Durden be our saviour? Time will only answer this question.