

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion and Suggestions

Having self-identity is crucial for humans because it brings one self-worth and makes one's life meaningful. On the contrary, if one lacks his/her self-identity, one will feel worthless and bored which lead him/her to an aimless life. Consequently, it is important for everyone to explore his/her true self. Many people, nowadays, face identity crisis because they hardly realize their own need. They are mostly shaped by social values and consumer culture. They feel secured to follow social norms so that they will be accepted by the society without trying to explore their true self. Since consumerism has a great impact on people's lives in the late twentieth century, most of them are trapped by materialism. They identify themselves with materials they own without being aware that those commodities cannot give them real happiness. Chuck Palahniuk, an American author of the late twentieth century, pays special attention to the issue of self-identity as illustrated in his novel **Fight Club** (1996). He presents this issue through the protagonist, the nameless narrator. He also suggests ways to search for identity in an unusual presentation which makes it an outstanding novel that presents self-identity in an unconventional way. Its theme and story line are recreated again in the adapted film of the same title by David Fincher in 1999. The film adaptation received sharp censure for its violence and sexually explicit expression. Yet, its cinematic rendition makes **Fight Club** known worldwide. This study, therefore, investigate the theme and presentation of self-identification in both media and comparatively evaluate them.

## **Background of the Novel and the Film**

The chaotic situations in the twentieth century, as well as materialism, consumerism, violence and rebellious movements bewildered and feel alienated from society. They, therefore, confront with identity crisis. During this period, Nietzsche's concept of nihilism and Freud's psychoanalysis of unconsciousness theories all relates to human instinct influenced people to rebel against social and old set values. Many American realized their problems and attempted to search for their own ways to fulfill their emptiness. The prominent examples of a search for identity were the Beats Movement in the fifties and the Hippies in the sixties. Perceiving the twentieth century's problems, Chuck Palahniuk, the author of **Fight Club**, criticizes society and suggests the readers some self-identification process. He employs black humor, irony, fragmentation, the crucial literary techniques in the postmodern period, to present his novel in an unfamiliar way.

## **Self-Identification As Presented in the Novel and the Film**

In analyzing the narrator's self-identification, three main topics: identity crisis and his conflicts and identification process are examined. The narrator's identity crisis comes from three major conflicts: inner, interpersonal and social conflicts. Among these three factors, the inner conflicts seem to have the greatest impact on the narrator. His relationship with his dark side embodied by Tyler Durden has developed throughout the entire story. Tyler offers the narrator new approaches to achieve his identity. He introduces the narrator to violence: fighting, doing mischievous activities, and destroying civilization. Violence helps the narrator to assert his male identity and masculinity at first. He becomes lively again after long depression. The identity crisis caused by his social conflict comes from his clinging to a false identity modern people derive. It lures him from exploring his inner self. As a

result, he has never known his true need. He forgets to listen to his own voice. His false identity is reinforced again with social values. He is grown up to follow life-pattern as others do: studying, going to work, marrying and having his/her own family. The narrator has, however, not finished his life-pattern yet. He is very discontent with it because he cannot fully express himself nor can he really wants to. He stops at the stage of working. He, then, realizes that he has to search for his self-identity before it is too late.

The narrator searches his self-identity in striking ways. He starts his process with going to support groups. This first method only gives him the sense of belonging. Although he has a collective identity, he still confronts spiritual emptiness. He, thus, decides to let his dark side, Tyler lead him to self-identification. With Tyler comes the turning point in the narrator's life. After knowing Tyler, the narrator often has outrageous activities and mischief. Tyler offers him to regain his identity by inventing Fight Club where men are able to express and assert his male identity and masculinity. Engaging in violence of fighting relieves his tension from social constraints since he cannot do this wild activity in his normal life or elsewhere except in Fight Club. He feels free. Tyler furthers his mischief by establishing Project Mayhem. At this stage, the narrator realizes that Tyler is not his answer and decides to eliminate him. Even though the narrator does not find his self-identity at the end, he learns more and knows himself much better. From **Fight Club**, the result of the process for self-identification is not the main concern. In fact, the inner self that the narrator discovers at each method is the most valuable thing of all.

### **Outstanding Presentation Techniques**

The prominent literary techniques in **Fight Club** are its complex plot structure, flashback, repetition, black humor and surrealism. Even though **Fight Club** is full of puzzles, the author gives some hints to the readers through flashback and

repetition. As the readers might be confused when the narrator talks about someone or some stories without introductions as if the readers already knew them, flashbacks are utilized to disclose these mysteries. Repetition is another hint hidden between the lines throughout the story which also unravels the essential secret of the entire story. Black humor and surrealism support each other. As surrealistic techniques can make black humor striking while surrealism is stunning because of the satirical black humor.

For the film, camera movements, lighting, figure expression, the use of subliminal scenes, flashback and surrealistic techniques are outstanding. Fincher well selects these techniques to reinforce the theme of self-identification. Dark light in most scenes gives the audience the feeling of mystery and depression. The latter mood occurs to the aimless narrator so many times during the film since he is aimless and does not know what to do in his life. All the above mentioned techniques, besides, make the appearance of narrator's dark side or Tyler's more vivid. The director also realizes the film's complication and tries to make it more comprehensive and interesting. At the same time, he still maintains the complex the plot structure so that the film appears exceptionally striking.

### **Evaluative Comparison of the Novel and the Film**

These two media have some similarities. Both contain the same main message of the story which relates to self-identification theme. Some techniques used in the novel are also employed in the film. Self-Identification as presented in the film, however, is more effective than that presented in the novel, since film techniques are able to increase the viewers comprehension more than those in the novel.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

Besides Palahniuk's **Fight Club**, other four works relating to self-identification: **Invisible Monsters**, **Survivor** and **Choke** should be analyzed to reveal how the novelist develops his theme and presentation of self-identification.