

Chapter 4

The Presentation of Self- Identification in the Film

The novel **Fight Club** is mostly known in the United States of America following its first release in 1996 whereas its adapted film is known worldwide in 1999 as a striking film that reminds the viewers of self-identification, evokes them to look at their self-identity, criticizes and also satirizes the lifestyle of people in the postmodern world where self-identity is hardly found. The film adaptation of **Fight Club** was criticized for its violence and aggressiveness although its real message is still about self-identification like the original work. Since all the self-identification issue and literary elements relating to self- identification has already been analyzed in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on cinematic adaptation and techniques that enable the film to present the author's imagination more vividly than the novel does.

The first impression one has about this film lies on its surrealistic presentation, flashback, and complex plot. Moreover, its satire of consumerism and the way people live and think in the late twentieth century also creates black humor that turns out to be visually stunning. The entire story constitutes parallelism with some variations. Repetitions are found throughout the film such as repeated sentences, series of repeated film techniques which become the motifs that hint at some essential keys in the film. The repeated shots, however, have some differences so that the film holds striking coherent parallel of contrasts. For example, the Parker Morris Building sequences baffle the spectator at the beginning of the story but complete our understanding when they appear again as the closing sequences.

This film, in fact, attracts the viewer's attention before the story begins. The opening sequences (the hollow) emerge as nondiegetic technique because they are extraneous from the story world. They, however, lead the viewer to where the story

commences. This nondiegetic means may not be necessary for the whole story but it the feeling of perplexity, uneasiness, and curiosity which prepare them to encounter further puzzle and bewilderment in the film.

David Fincher starts the first shot with something that the viewers do not have any ideas what it should be. It seems to be a hollow object. The camera zooms in deeper and deeper into the dark hole giving the audience uncomfortable feeling because they are forced to follow something they do not know in a mysterious and dark direction. Moreover, the darkness and the various directions the camera takes them intensify their sense of anxiety. After a considerable preparation in this uneasy atmosphere, the camera finally zooms out of the dark hollow and the spectator emerges out of a hair. Then the camera moves to zoom into the gun that they cannot identify at first. After that, the camera zooms out to let the audience see that the gun is in the narrator's mouth. The zoom-out shots relieve the audience tension after the extended trip in the narrator's brain: the first relief is after zooming out of the hair; the second reveals the narrator's face, and the last discloses the gun in the narrator's mouth. The director does not clarify that the hollow object is the narrator's brain but he uses the camera movement to hint what that object is by zooming out of the narrator's head. As a result, the view can assume that it is the narrator's brain.

Film Techniques that Reveal the Narrator's Problems

The cause of all the mischievous and terrorizing activities the narrator has done is identity crisis. In this section, film techniques that display his problems will be scrutinized. The problems are the narrator's insomnia, his consumption behavior, and conflict with Marla Singer.

1. The Narrator's Insomnia

Make-up, facial expressions and movements are the hallmarks in creating the insomnia scenes. First of all, the techniques of make-up: the narrator's dark-ringed eyes and pale face show that he chronically suffers from insomnia. Inertia, restlessness, lifelessness and boredom are mainly presented through facial expressions and movements. Those symptoms can often be noticed in sleepless shots to exhibit the narrator's distress. Before starting *Fight Club* and *Project Mayhem*, he seems to respond inactively to things surrounding him. His boredom in particular is reinforced by his facial expression. For instance, he looks apathetic even though he succeeds in acquiring luxury goods. Even in early scenes when the narrator opens the cupboard to admire his dish collection and his refrigerator, he appears cheerless. Besides his face, his figure expression and movement imply that those commodities cannot fulfill his spiritual emptiness. His lack of enthusiasm is clear when he pays little attention to his boss's speech. The narrator starred by Edward Norton subtly reveals his insomniac symptoms. Notably, his progress of self-identification can be seen through his expressions. While suffering from insomnia, he is indifferent: he hardly responds to anything surrounding him. Moreover, he speaks in a monotone which intensifies his dullness. However, this unemotional tone steadily changes to a more cheerful one. He also looks happier than before. His happiness is seen when he sleeps well again after hugging Bob in support group.

Besides, high angle is employed as a motif to demonstrate a cause-effect pattern: how he suffers and recovers from insomnia. The first scene that introduces his problem is shown in high angle when he is lying awake in his bed with the echo sound: "can't sleep" for three times. This angle enables the audience to see his facial expression so clearly that they can perceive his suffering. This method is used again when he starts to recover from the insomnia. This time the high angle displays a very different gesture: he sleeps well with his mouth open. With the high angle we can

discuss sharp changes in the narrator's development. The high angle which recurs in different situations reveals the narrator's progress: struggling from insomnia, attempting to get away, recovering, and finally returning to confront it.

2. The Narrator's Consumption Behavior

This film is prominent in satirizing consumerism. Fincher keenly utilizes some film techniques to illustrate how materialistic the narrator is and how he is trapped in the consumer culture. Surrealism is one of the outstanding film techniques that reveals his consumption behavior. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze how surrealism is presented. Besides, motifs, close-up shots, and dialogues all together are used to give a vivid picture of the material world the narrator lives in. All these will be explored respectively.

Surrealism as a cinematic technique, makes the narrator's materialism lucid. First, in a medium shot, he is seen sitting in the bathroom reading a furniture catalogue. After that the camera zooms in to expose the narrator ordering furniture from the catalogue and throwing it on the floor where it is zoomed in again. Then the audience is taken into the catalogue as if it were a real room. The empty room is quickly filled with furniture along with the description and the price underneath exactly like those manifest in catalogues. This sequence cleverly establishes the narrator as a real materialist who tries to complete his life and identify himself with expensive commodities. His words even emphasize his consumption behavior : "I would flip through catalogs and wonder "what kind of dining set defines me as a person?... I had it all. Even the glass dishes with tiny bubbles and imperfections, proof they were crafted by the honest, simple, hard working people of...wherever"(I,4³). Obvioulsy, the narrator's life is governed by physical objects and their pursuit.

³ Roman numeral represents each part in the screenplay; Arabic numeral, the pages in each part.

Moreover, the narrator's lifestyle here is portrayed as rather feminine. He spends most of his leisure time collecting furniture rather than doing "masculine" recreations such as going to the gym or playing sports. He himself even admits that male roles have changed, "We used to read pornography. Now it was the Herchow Collection" (I,4). The narrator's crucial problem, the lack of identity relates to his confusion about male roles. As discussed in Chapter Three, since today's women have more and more opportunities to act like men, the latter feel intimidated and suspect that women are intruding "the men's realm". Many men are perplexed with women's increasing active roles. They are no longer sure about their "proper" roles. At the same time, their masculinity is unconsciously replaced by femininity. Men's frustration of women's growing power is shown throughout the story. Fincher satirizes this point by making the narrator interested in the furniture or kitchenware catalogs more than reading pornography. This exposure of the narrator's new inclination both in actions and words

Notably, the narrator has a deeper, more serious problem about identity than this gender confusion. Fincher uses repetition techniques in focusing on a Starbucks coffee cup to indicate that the narrator has totally allowed his self-identity to be taken over by material. The appearance of Starbucks coffee cup recurs to mock mass consumption. The Starbucks cup becomes a motif when it emerges in numerous shots. To describe his boring lifestyle and the middle class's mass consumption, the camera slowly zooms into a trash bin full of newspapers, Starbucks cups and fast food garbage. This shot represents the narrator's view of his outside world. This zoom reveals the narrator's point of view toward most people's consumption behavior. With innumerable Starbucks franchises all over the world, this brand of coffee is consumed by many simply because it is popular. A Starbucks cup, therefore, represents conformity which eradicates individuality. To emphasize the collective identity Starbucks imposes on most people, the narrator also says, "when deep space exploration ramps up, it will be corporations that name everything: The IBM Stellar.

The Microsoft Galaxy. Planet Starbucks” (I,3). Fincher emphasizes the influence Starbuck has on people again when the narrator’s boss walks to the narrator with a Starbuck cup in his hand in the medium shot.

To focus and satirize the narrator’s materialism, a close-up shot is placed on the sign of his condominium which says :

PEARSON

TOWERS

A Place To

Be Somebody

3499

This sign suggests that to be someone who is socially recognized, one has to own a condominium unit, a way to identify oneself. Ironically, most of those who live here hardly have their own identity as they spend most of their time paying attention to their material possessions rather than exploring their own mind. The narrator is an outstanding example. He lives in PEARSON TOWERS, but still confronts an identity crisis: he does not know who he is. Fincher pointedly presents a close-up shot focusing on the phrase: “A Place to Be Somebody” to magnify the contradiction between one’s assumption and reality.

The dialogues between the narrator and Tyler also emphasize the narrator’s materialism and consumerism. He tells Tyler at the bar how miserable he is about the condominium explosion and how important to him those commodities are in his apartment. Here, a medium shot is utilized to allow the viewers to see the narrator’s expression after his condominium is exploded and at the same time, it allows the viewers to see Tyler’s response to the narrator’s materialism. While the narrator looks upset and sad when telling Tyler how much those luxury goods mean to

him, Tyler looks indifferent. Their dialogue reveals their contrasting characteristics. At the same time, Fincher satirizes the consumer culture through Tyler's perspectives toward it :

Jack⁴ : There's always that. I don't know, it's just ...when you buy furniture, you tell yourself : that's it, that's the last sofa I'm gonna need. No matter what else happens, I've got that sofa problem handled. I was so close to being complete.

Tyler : Shit, man, now it's all gone.

Jack : All gone. (I, 25)

From their conversation, it can be seen that people are lured by the advertisement that makes things more important than their necessities. Tyler asks the narrator what a duvet is. Instead of saying a blanket, he says it is a comforter. This shows that advertisement makes a blanket sounds more valuable than its function:

Tyler : Do you know what a duvet is?

Jack : Comforter.

Tyler : It's a blanket, just a blanket. Now why guys like you and I know what a duvet is? Is this essential to our survival? In the hunter-gathered sense of the word? No. (I, 25)

From this dialogue, some of Tyler's characteristics are revealed although the viewer has not been acquainted with him yet. Here, the contrast between these two characters is made : while the narrator is consumerist, Tyler is down to earth; he is not obsessed with materials.

⁴ Jack is just a name used to refer to the narrator throughout the screenplay so that it will be easier for the script readers to recognize him.

3. Conflicts with Marla Singer

Marla is the only female character that plays an important role throughout the entire film. Unlike a typical heroine, who is beautiful, blonde and elegantly dressed, Marla has a black wavy hair, black eyes, wears second-handed clothes and has no jobs, but leading her life by selling stolen clothes. In the film, she is seen as a horrible figure and a sex object that the protagonist does not want to be near because he is afraid that she will threaten his male identity.

Fincher uses continuous editing to represent the narrator's conflicting relationship with Marla. In Marla's first intruding scenes, the narrator's frowning face with suspicion is presented in a medium shot when he hears the footsteps off screen and stares out of the room, anticipating someone. Here, spatial continuity or the 180 system technique begins to play the crucial role. A cut takes the audience to the door and then the empty space. Then the sound of footsteps is heard louder and a mysterious shadow appears on the wall in a long shot. Another long shot is applied again for Marla's first appearance to display her whole body. She appears on the right side of the frame. Dark light is used to show contrast between the white door and Marla's black clothes. The high key which contrasts with the low key in this shot gives her a mysterious appearance enhanced by her sun glasses. The cut then moves us to see the narrator's reaction to her approach. He seems frustrated with her coming. Then, another cut is employed to give a medium shot which allows the audience to view this woman more clearly. As she moves toward the room, a close up shot is used while she is smoking and saying, "it's cancer, right?" (I, 9)

Here, front lighting is used for the viewer to reveal her face more clearly. It contrasts with her black costume and her sunglasses. She indifferently asks if this is a cancer group. She does not seem to care about other people. She does not care if her smoking will harm others who already suffer from cancer. Furthermore, a long shot is used to exhibit Marla's back on the right corner. This shot lets the viewers

see the others, especially the narrator's reaction toward her coming. The group members particularly the narrator, were surprised by her unexpected appearance. Top light is shown only on the narrator and his partner and another couple. Seen in a close-up shot in a distance, the narrator appears on the left, then a high angle shot shows that he is lying in bed thinking about shouting at Marla.

A medium shot allows the spectators to see the characters' actions and the relationship between and their environment. When the narrator and Marla argue about attending the tuberculosis support group, behind them are cancer patients hugging each other and crying. This scene emphasizes that both Marla and the narrator are fakers. While others in the support groups suffer from their illness and are worried about their death, the narrator and Marla are arguing which groups they want to join which seems to be a non-sense and points to their being self-centered.

Half tracking is used to emphasize the narrator's dissatisfaction with Marla. This device is correlated with spatial relation between one shot and another. It is employed after the narrator who appears on the left frame is looking at something off-screen. A half-track moves from the right side of the narrator's face to behind his head. Consequently, this technique allows the audience to see Marla who is off-screen in the preceding shot. From this shot, the spectators can see that the narrator stares at Marla with displeasure.

A half-tracking shot is utilized again from the front where the narrator is doing meditation, then the camera moved past his shoulder. While closing his eyes, he says that if he has a tumor, he will name it Marla. Marla is at this point off-screen. The audience, then, see Marla sitting in the distance. This technique highlights the person who makes the narrator unhappy, Marla, the person of great influence in the narrator's life. After her first emergence at the testicle cancer group, she seems to appear in most support groups the narrator attends. She, therefore, is like unwanted cells growing on the narrator's body. She is with him almost everywhere he goes although he does not want her to be around him.

Panning reveals the narrator's discontentment with Marla as well. In one of the support groups, the camera pans from the left, behind the black man's head, to the right where the narrator is sitting. When the camera starts to pan behind the black man's head, Marla is seen in the distance. With a short focal-length shot, we see Marla in the distance, smoking in the same room with the narrator and other members. It suggests that nobody wants her in that room as she is excluded from the group although she is there. Some reactions toward Marla are revealed. Through the panning frame of the head of the black man at the beginning of this shot, we can perceive his negative point of view toward Marla who is seen in the distance. The camera, then, moves to a close up shot so that Marla's face is clearly seen. The black woman who sits behind Marla shows that she dislikes Marla's smoking especially in the room where others suffer from cancer.

The narrator's dissatisfaction with Marla is seen more when the camera quickly pans from the left where Marla sits to the right where the narrator sits and staring at her with anger and displeasure. This feeling is emphasized more when the black man who sits next to the narrator turns left to look at the narrator as if to agree with him and then turns to sourly look at Marla. Marla, however, does not seem to care what other people think about her. She does not care whether others will accept her in the group or not. She attends the support group just to serve her own need: she thinks going to a support group is cheaper than doing other activities. Unlike Marla, the narrator does not seem to know what he really wants. He seems to be less confident than Marla. Consequently, Marla's self-confidence might be another reason to threaten the narrator's male identity.

Most of the narrator's problems are presented in the early scenes so that the audience will be able to understand why he encounters his identity crisis. However, some of his problems such as his conflict with his dark side still continues until the end of the story. Most film techniques to reveal the protagonist's problems are suitable for each problem. Among those techniques, surrealistic presentation of the

narrator's consumption behavior is remarkable since it becomes one of the most memorable moments in the film.

Film Techniques that Reveal the Self-Identification Process

The ways the narrator uses in searching for his identity are so unfamiliar that they tremendously amaze the audience. Fincher emphasizes the narrator's bizarre means by utilizing some surrealistic techniques such as the subliminal scenes and other well selected means to exhibit the narrator's self-identification process. Some of these techniques are so subtle that they have to be viewed again and again to see what is concealed beneath the scenes. This section, thus, will reveal what those techniques are in each stage and how they are applied to fortify the protagonist's progress.

1. In Support Groups

Attending support groups is the beginning of the narrator's self-identification process. Although the narrator attends several support groups, the testicle cancer group is the first and crucial group that makes the narrator recover from insomnia. This group is suddenly introduced to the audience after the camera shifts from the opening sequence to Bob who has big breasts like women's hugging the narrator. Here, a close-up shot reveals the narrator's reaction. With the close-up he is not prepared for Bob's hug and does not know how to respond. This is followed by another close-up shot on the name of the group: "Remaining Men Together" which indicates that the group members, the cancer patients, come to comfort and reassure each other that they are still men. Then, the close-up shot shifts to focus on men hugging each other with one facing the camera crying and pans to the left revealing other men doing the same. Another close-up shot shows Bob crying and saying,

“We’re still men,” and the narrator in Bob’s arm reassuring Bob, “Yeah, men is what we are” (I, 2). The next close-up shots reveal other men talking to each other and then they are cut back to show Bob and the narrator hugging each other again in a medium shot. Half-tracking is used from Bob’s right shoulder to his left shoulder. In this shot, the viewers see the narrator leaning peacefully against Bob’s breasts.

From the above, the issues of male identity and masculinity are raised. The name “Remaining Men Together” indicates that men in this support group lack male identity that can mark them as men like others. After their testicles are removed, they, like Bob, have big breasts. Moreover, they are crying freely in this group, a behavior not socially acceptable for men who, according to the social code of behavior, are supposed to be strong all the time. But in this support group men do not have to be afraid of expressing their real feeling or being themselves because there are only men here. The frequent use of close-up shots in “Remaining Men Together” sequences reinforces male identity crisis.

Since the whole story is told in flashback, the viewers do not know at first what men in the testicle cancer groups have done before hugging and crying. This group is seen again after the doctor suggests that the narrator see the real pain at the testicle cancer group. While the narrator is entering the group for the first time, a long shot is used to cover the entire environment, a gym, with the basketball net seen in the background. The audience can also see some men sitting. Then the camera moves to a medium shot to show a man telling his problems: becoming addicted to support groups makes him recover away from insomnia.

The narrator loves going to the support groups because he feels he is accepted and belonging to the group. In the Tuberculosis group, a long shot is taken to show the members walking toward the narrator who stands in the middle of the circle in order to hug and comfort him. To emphasize that he is accepted by the members, he says, “If I didn’t say anything, people always assumed the worst” (I, 7). Fincher wants to poke fun at society nowadays. People hardly concern about others because they are

obsessed with their possession. As a result, one will care for others only when they are facing death. Support groups, however, cannot make him happy for too long because of Marla's intrusion.

Music also underscores the characters' feeling. When the narrator suffers from insomnia, a slow tempo is heard. The first time the narrator hugs Bob at Remaining Men Together group, the song with a very high pitch is played. Together with the dark atmosphere in Remaining Men Together's room, this song creates the feeling of depression, disappointment and gloom as those suffering testicle cancer patients gather in the background. When the narrator's insomnia is gone after hugging Bob, a moderate tempo is heard. It expresses his relief, happiness and liveliness. This moderate tempo continues to emphasize the narrator's happiness when he is hugging Bob with his eyes closed. But it stops when Marla appears at the testicle cancer group as if to signify that the happy moment is gone.

2. The Narrator's Dark Side

The development of the narrator's alter ego or dark side which he names Tyler is remarkably presented through several film techniques. Following are dissections of the film to examine each step Tyler advances and film techniques in presenting him, starting with Tyler's attempt to offer the protagonist a way to identify himself, encouraging him to do mischief, gradually controlling a large part in the narrator's life and eventually tussling to exist.

Tyler, starred by Brad Pitt, is portrayed as a typical hero: smart, handsome, and unmistakably masculine-looking. His appearance epitomizes his fundamental personality of being rebellious and completely nihilistic. He prefers violence to peace, self-destruction to self-improvement, for instance. This contrast to convention is intended to make him a striking anti-hero.

Initially, Tyler is only made noticeable through subliminal scenes. Since the narrator knows that one's dark side is associated with evils, he is reluctant to accept his dark side and to let it play an important role in his life. Fincher hints at the narrator's hesitation by making the narrator's dark side, appear in a flash before the narrator decides to let this emerge. Subliminal scenes are used four times before the narrator meets his alter ego. First, Tyler's silhouette flashes through near the copy machine in the narrator's office where he is complaining about his boring work and insomnia.(see in picture1) Next, Tyler lurks behind the doctor who refuses to help the narrator and advises that he go to see the real pain at the testicle cancer group instead. (see in picture 2) This scene reveals the narrator's increasing need of Tyler. That is while the narrator appears superior to other members in feeling less painful than them as his doctor seems to suggest, the narrator is in fact more painful than before. While he is comforting other people, he is desperate for help. This time his need is so apparent that Tyler appears more active, more noticeable in his attempt to induce the narrator to follow the dark path to free himself from suffering.

In his third appearance, Tyler stands beside the speaker in the testicle cancer group and put his arm around the speaker's shoulder as if to tell everyone in Remaining Men Together that gathering together here cannot help them to find their real happiness. (picture3) Before this, Tyler appears every time the narrator needs help and asks for help from someone, but here, he appears while the narrator is comforting a crying member. Tyler appears again when this crying man and others want some help. It seems he tries to tell them that retreating to support groups cannot help them to solve their problems. Tyler's last appearance in this alter-ego creating stage is in the scene after Marla's intrusion in the support groups. (see in picture 4) Tyler appears in a flash on the sidewalk while the narrator is looking at Marla walking in the distance. This appearance between the narrator and Marla is supposed to reveal the narrator's unconscious argument to feel it is better not to have women's involvement

After trying to solve his problems by himself, the narrator realizes that his own way does not really help. He finally lets Tyler in his life. This acceptance is suggested in Fincher's projecting of Tyler in full for the first time as the narrator passes his alter ego on the escalator. Then the narrator really gets to know Tyler in person on the plane when Tyler sits beside him. Here, it is the narrator's first time to open his mind to his dark side. He is impressed by Tyler's point of view. After this, Tyler does not appear in a flash anymore. In all, the subliminal scenes of Tyler are made to emphasize the interplay of the narrator's conscious and subconscious minds. This surrealistic method effectively presents a picture of the emergence of human subconsciousness.

Apart from the subliminal scenes, lighting is also used to convey and emphasize the narrator's dark side. Lighting is used in this film to convey the narrator's split personality and his shadow. The first instance of this is the scene in the dark room where the spectator can see only the narrator's bloody face and the back of his shadow. It is the director's intention to open the story with the mystery. The viewer does not have any clue what happens to the narrator and who the other man is:

Jack (V.O) : People are always asking me if I know Tyler Durden.

Tyler : Three minutes. This is it : Ground zero. Would you like to say a few words to mark the occasion?

Jack : ...i...ann....iinn..ff...nnyin....

Jack (V.O) : With a gun barrel between your teeth, you speak only in vowel. (I, 1)

This technique will keep the viewers wonder what is happening. To find out the answer, the audience has to follow the entire story.

The use of low-key lighting is very effective since it reinforces the narrator's split personality. Notably, Tyler appears only at night. Since Tyler

dominates the narrator's life, most of the scenes are covered with low-key lighting to emphasize the narrator's dark side. The process that the narrator uses to find his own identity also takes place at night or in the dark atmosphere. The support groups begin at night (about 7 p.m.), Fight Club, which is a secret club, is situated in the basement and begins at night as well. The activities in Project Mayhem are also done at night time because those activities are considered mischievous.

The audience learns more about Tyler through the narrating technique in the documentary film: the narrator tells the viewer about Tyler's job while he himself is involved in the situation to give more information. He tells the audience about Tyler's job while he appears in the front of those scenes and Tyler at the back. This kind of narration is inserted to create humor and to imply that he knows very well what Tyler does at night because it is he himself who does those night job.

At the same time, medium shots, and camera angles emphasize Tyler's dominance over the narrator and hints that Tyler is the same person with the narrator. Moreover, the narrator sometimes speaks after Tyler. For example, when the narrator has his eyebrow stitched at the hospital, a medium shot is used to reveal Tyler sitting at the back telling the narrator what to say to the nurse:

Jack (voice over): Sometimes Tyler spoke for me.

Tyler : He fell down some stairs.

Jack : I fell down some stairs. (II, 8)

In this shot, the narrator is lying on the bed and Tyler is seen at the back by the focal length, indicating that he is unimportant in the scene. The narrator, however, listens to him and says what he tells him to say. Using the focal length to make Tyler looks far away from the narrator signifies that he controls the narrator's life: he emerges from his subconscious.

The low-angle (cinematically displaying the subject's superiority) and high-angle (cinematically displaying the subject's inferiority) produce great effect in showing Tyler's power although they are rarely found in the film. While arguing with Marla in the kitchen, the narrator hears some noise and follows that noise to the door. He, then, opens the door and sees Tyler downstairs. Here, high angle is used when the narrator is looking down the stairs and listening to Tyler. In this high angle, the viewer also sees Tyler look up to ask the narrator if he is talking about him. The high-angle is used again when the narrator speaks after Tyler, indicating that Tyler holds some power over the narrator. The low and high angles are used twice in the continuous shots to highlight the relationship between the narrator and his dark side. Following the noise the narrator hears behind the door signifies that the protagonist is influenced by his dark side. From these shots, it can be interpreted that Tyler is not really visible. He is just the narrator's imaginary friend or his dark side since Tyler is only seen by the narrator. Tyler's invisibility is underlined when Marla cannot hear Tyler's voice and has no idea who the narrator is talking to:

Tyler (harsh whisper): You're not talking about me, are you?

Jack (To Tyler) : No.

(To Marla) : What?

Tyler (still a whisper) : What are you talking about?

Jack (to Tyler) : Nothing.

(to Marla) : Nothing.

Marla : I don't think so.

.....

Tyler (whisper) : This conversation...

Jack : This conversation...

Tyler : ...is over.

Jack : ...is over. (III, 19)

Besides being a close friend, Tyler is depicted as the narrator's lover and rival. This relationship can be easily overlooked. Yet, it can be observed through the narrator's figure expression. This homosexual relationship is shown when the narrator treats Tyler as someone more than his close friend. He is jealous of Mister Angel who looks like a woman when Tyler pats Mister Angel's head after exiting the hotel. Noticing this, the narrator stares at Mister Angel and later on, he strongly pounds on him in order to destroy his beautiful face (see picture 5-9). Additionally, the narrator's jealousy of Tyler is expressed when he is smiling as Bob is praising Fight Club's inventor. After realizing that the person whom Bob admires is not him but Tyler, he suddenly stops smiling and looks disappointed (see picture 10-15).

Facial expression and movements also give the important key in the film: the narrator is the same person with Tyler. When Marla asks the narrator to come in his house, he refuses and tells her that Tyler is not here. For her, the narrator and Tyler are the same person. She is, therefore, confused and disappointed when the narrator ignores her. This scene implies that Tyler and the narrator lie to her that he is not home and does not let her in. Consequently, facial expression and movement together make the film much more comprehensible and effective.

Another important technique is elliptical editing near the end of the story which can condense time in various scenes. Elliptical editing is the fade out. When the narrator starts to disagree with Tyler, a fade out is used to suggest their quarrel. The screen is darkened, then, gradually lightened to reveal the narrator lying on the bed, hearing Tyler's voice off screen and then faded out. While the screen is still dark, Tyler's voice is heard again along with some noise and the screen is slowly lightened. After that in a medium shot, Tyler is sitting in the dark talking to the narrator who lies unconsciously on the bed. Attached shadow employed here effectively establishes him as the narrator's dark side. Next, another fade out shows Tyler continuing his talk. The camera switched back to the narrator lying on the bed. The light is darkened again and Tyler still appears in the shade shaking his head. After

that he walks to pat the narrator's head saying "Feel better, champ" (97), picks up his briefcase and walk out of the door. As seen from above, the emergence of Tyler has its beginning, peak and decline. A message hinted here is that one should keep a good balance of his different sides of personality. "Good", regular life brings tedium. If one does only good deeds his/ her life might be boring because of the regular pattern. One, therefore, should allow himself/ herself for a little mischief to give some color to life experience (see picture 16-51).

Surprise and excitement quickly intensify as all the perplexity subsides toward the end of the story. Even though the plot remains complex throughout the film, all enigmas scenes are unraveled when the narrator knows he is Tyler, and those of Tyler's advent in the hotel sequence. Chasing Tyler across the country, he finds out that Tyler is himself. A zoom-in device explicitly shows the shock on the narrator's face as a Fight Club member, the wounded bartender tells him that he is Tyler Durden :

Man's voice (from behind Jack) : Welcome back, sir. How have you
been?

Jack : Do you know me?

Wounded bartender : Is this a test, sir?

Jack : No, this is not a test.

Wounded bartender : You were in here last Thursday.

Jack : Thursday?

Wounded bartender : You were standing exactly where you are now,
asking how good security is. It's tight as a drum, sir.

Jack : Who do you think I am?

Wounded bartender : Are you sure this isn't a test?

Jack : No, this is not a test.

Wounded bartender : You're Mr. Durden. You're Mr. Durden. You're the

one who gave me this.

180 systems are employed for the narrator's meeting with the wounded bartender. Both of them stand in the opposite direction in medium shot. A reverse shot displays the narrator's reaction to what the wounded bartender says. This shot allows the viewer to see his reaction flow smoothly. The shock on his face rapidly grows when the camera is slowly zoomed into the narrator's expression (see picture 52 -61). Fincher carries on the tension by making the narrator call Marla to reassure him that he is Tyler:

Marla : You fuck me, then snub me. You love me, you hate me. You
show me your sensitive side, then you turn into a total asshole.

Is that a pretty accurate description of our relationship, Tyler?

Jack (v.o) : We have just lost cabin pressure.

Jack : What did you just say?

Marla : What is wrong with you?

Jack : What did you just called me? Say my name!

Marla : Tyler Durden, Tyler Durden, you fucking freak, what's going
on? I'm coming over. (IV, 13)

During their conversation, a zoom-in is exploited again to enhance the feeling of astonishing. The camera gradually zooms in as Marla is talking on the phone with the narrator and saying his name. The camera then shifts to the narrator, amazed, holding the phone. (see picture 62-76) The pressure goes on when Tyler unexpectedly reappears after Marla confirms the narrator of his being Tyler. The source of all complexity, Tyler, unfolds the secret himself, "You were looking for a way to change your life. You could not do this on your own. All the ways you wished you could

be...that's me! I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I'm smart, capable and most importantly, I'm free in all the ways that you are not" (IV, 15).

During his conversation with the narrator, flashbacks are often inserted because the narrator is recalling his past while listening to Tyler. In the flashbacks, all the situations are shot in a fast pace. All the memories that the narrator recognizes reinforce that Tyler is just his imaginary friend : some activities that the narrator and Tyler do together appear again but this time there is only the narrator doing those actions alone. Tyler goes onward to reveal the mystery:

Tyler : People do it every day. They talk to themselves. They see themselves as they like to be. They don't have the courage you have, to just run with it.

.....

Tyler : Naturally you still wrestling with it...Sometimes you're still you...

.....

Tyler : Other time you imagine yourself watching me.

.....

Tyler : Little by little. You're just letting yourself become...Tyler Durden!
(IV, 16)

.....

After listening to Tyler for a while, the narrator says something that he misunderstood and Tyler corrects them. Their dialogue also helps the audience to comprehend what has puzzled them:

Jack : But you have a house- -

Tyler : - - Rented in your name.

Jack : You have jobs, you have a whole life- -

Tyler : - - You have night jobs, because you can't sleep - - or stay up and make soap. (IV, 16-17)

Resuming

Jack : Marla...You're fucking Marla, Tyler.

Tyler : Uhm...actually you're fucking Marla, but it's all the same to her.
(IV, 17)

Fincher uses a shot/reverse shot to display the dialogue between the narrator and Tyler. This device also emphasizes that Tyler is only the narrator's double by revealing that he sits on the bed as if talking to someone but nobody is seen on the opposite side in the picture⁷⁸. The long shot of Tyler and the narrator sitting in the hotel before the scene in picture 78 and close-up shot of Tyler in the picture 79 and the long shot of Tyler and the narrator in the picture after the scene in picture 78 strengthen Tyler's invisibility. Then the camera cuts back to see him talk with Tyler: seeing Tyler sitting on the opposite side. Tyler's presence in this shot signifies that he is visible only to the narrator.(picture 79-80) The director selectively applies several film techniques here: subliminal scenes, figure expression and movement, continuity editing and dialogues to make the overall presentation of the narrator's split personality vivid to the audience.

Tyler's invisibility comes after the protagonist realizes that Tyler is just the imaginary friend he creates to fulfill his need. The reverse shots are practiced to demonstrate the fighting scenes between the narrator and Tyler. At first the audience see the narrator fighting with Tyler after attempting to stop Tyler from mischief at the parking lot of Parker Morris Building. The camera then switches back to the security monitor displaying that the narrator is fighting alone: Tyler disappears in this monitor. Without any explanation, the viewers can conceive that Tyler is not the real person. Notably, Fincher exploits reverse shot to unveil the mystery of Tyler and his

relationship with the narrator. It is very effective to unfold the narrator's dark side by presenting Tyler's invisibility with the contrast scenes.

Flashback is applied when the narrator recalls his past activities. In utilizing flashback to unfold the secret and to recall the narrator's past, the absence of Tyler and the replacement of the narrator in the preceding scenes play the central role to reinforce that it is the narrator himself who has done all the mischief. The invisibility is revealed in various techniques depending on the situation he recalls. For example, in long shot, the narrator is seen fighting with himself in front of Lou's Tavern Bar. This device helps the audience to see clearly that nobody else is there except the narrator himself. The camera shifts to medium shot in which two men standing in front of the bar and pointing to the narrator as they do not understand what he is doing. The narrator again is seen sitting on the footpath as if talking to someone and handing a bottle to that person who is invisible to the viewer. The director selectively applies film techniques: subliminal scenes, figure expression and movement, camera movement, continuity editing and dialogue to make the overall presentation of the narrator's split personality more vivid to the audience.

3. Inventing Fight Club

Fight Club is invented almost in the middle of the film. Although Fight Club appears in a few scenes, it gives a vivid picture of violence and aggression. Before its launch, the audience see men fighting in front of the bar. With the narrator and Tyler in the first fight, Tyler asks the narrator to hit him in front of the bar after they meet and drink beer for awhile. What happens in Fight Club, however, is seen after they move from fighting in front of the bar to the basement of Lou's Tavern. The basement is covered with dark light as it occurs at night only.

In Fight Club, a long shot under dim light is taken so that the audience can see a lot of men gathering in the basement, and then a close-up shot allows the

audience to see the right side of the narrator who turns to look at Tyler. In this shot, Tyler is blurred, seen in the distance, then the narrator turns back at the same time and then the audience hear Tyler say “Gentlemen, welcome to Fight Club. While hearing Tyler announces, the camera quickly pans to the right to reveal Tyler standing in the center of the basement, in medium shot. Half-tracking is taken to emphasize Tyler’s dominance in Fight Club as he is telling others Fight Club’s rules. Notably, dark light plays important rules in Fight Club because dark associates with secret and wicked activities. Fight Club is located in the basement where nobody except the members realizes that this kind of club exists. Secrecy is reinforced again with the dark light in the basement. As a result, Fight Club is for the members a place to express their instinct: violence and aggressiveness, by fighting each other without being caught or feeling guilty. Instead, these hostile actions assert their male identity and masculinity and make them lively and proud of themselves.

At this point, the camera switches back to Tyler taking off his belt and men nodding while listening to the rules in close-up shot. Tyler’s reciting Fight Club’s rules is seen with the narrator in the frame under a medium-shot. Neither of them figures in the center of the frame. Here, the focal length is employed. With a short focal length is for Tyler who appears at the right side of the frame and the narrator is seen in a long focal length. The narrator stands still and does not say anything. Through this technique, Tyler is presented as more dominant than the narrator because at this time the narrator already lets Tyler into his life and exercise control over him. As a result, the narrator is seen in distance and Tyler closer.

While Tyler is saying the last rule, he is seen in a close-up shot which then moves to an extreme close-up shot. Then the camera quickly cuts to reveal men fighting. In this scene, the audience hear yelling and cheering as if this were their happiest time in life. These fighting scenes are mostly seen in medium shots which are then cut to a close-up shot to show the fighters’ faces covered with blood and bruises.

Yet, these men are happy to express their male identity and masculinity through violence and aggression.

4. Establishing and Eliminating Project Mayhem

Actually, Project Mayhem is established without the narrator's involvement or knowledge. It arises from Tyler's intention to extend his wildness. At first he recruits a lot of men for some unknown purpose. Those applicants have to stand outside the house for three days without food. If they pass this test, they will be recruited. Tyler extends his power by telling the narrator to watch them:

Jack : What's all that?

Tyler : Right, if the applicant is young, tell him is too young. Old, too old. Fat, too fat.

Jack : "Applicants"?

Tyler : If the applicant waits at the door for three days without food, shelter or encouragement, then he may enter and begins his training.

Jack : Training for what? (III, 20).

Those who pass the test will be accepted and live in Tyler's house doing the work he assigns. They are called space monkeys. A brief shot demonstrates a man shaving his head and Tyler sharply slapping the man head and says "Like a monkey, ready to be shot into space. Space monkey! Ready to sacrifice himself for the greater good. From now on, all those with shaved heads: "SPACE MONKEYS" (III, 21).

It is noticeable that the narrator obeys Tyler's order without hesitation, just like another space monkey. Tyler seems to be their God. The great emphasis on

Tyler's power lies in the narrator's voice over: "Why was Tyler Durden building an army? To what purpose? For what greater good? In Tyler we trusted" (III, 22). The narrator does not bother to find the answer or the reason for Tyler's actions because he trusts everything Tyler does. Fincher mocks Christianity by making the narrator and dozens of the men trust Tyler rather than God. It implies that God cannot help them going through their problems and male crisis but Tyler can. He makes these men achieve more satisfaction through violence, self- destruction and rebellions. It is as if Tyler created his own kingdom or cult in his own house. He tries to brainwash the space monkeys by teaching them his own philosophy.

Panning through the glass window from left to right displays space monkeys digging the backyard. While the camera slowly pans to the right, Tyler's philosophy is heard off screen, "Listen up, maggots. You are not special. You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake. We are the same decaying organic matter as everyone else" (III, 22). Then the pan moves forward to the right revealing Tyler at the margin of the screen announcing his wisdom. The camera pans further allowing the audience to view Tyler clearly but still at the right side. After that it moves past him to show the narrator standing behind the glass window in the kitchen. He gradually turns around to watch some of the space monkeys working in that room. It can be assumed that this technique exhibit the narrator's eye movement to view the actions in the backyard. Yet, his face does not exhibits any feeling of disapproval because he trusts everything Tyler does although he has no clues what Tyler is doing and plans to do (see picture 82-103). Tyler's appearance at the right side of the frame suggests that he is part of the narrator, his dark side. However, it denotes that it is the narrator who really declares these thoughts since he appears fully on the screen.

Several terrorist activities are seen since this project aims to destroy civilization and history. It intends to destroy every high technology that involves human's history. As a result, history will be destroyed and they will be utterly free. After realizing Tyler and the space monkeys have done too much violence and brought

a lot of troubles to society, the narrator tries to stop them. He finally becomes aware that Tyler cannot give him true self-identity.

After the audience are informed of what happens to the narrator and how the entire difficulties are caused, they are taken back to the beginning sequences. This time most of the puzzles are discovered. The viewers are able to perceive the situation occurring in the previous scenes. For the closing scenes, the director implies that the narrator's problems of coping with women are solved. A long shot shows the narrator and Marla at the back holding each other hands while the opposite building starts to collapse. This can be interpreted that men and women should help each other to confront problems instead of trying to compete with the opposite sex. Here, the narrator seems unafraid of the building explosion because he is more self-confident since his relationship with the opposite sex is healthier.

As seen above, surrealistic techniques including the narrator's consumption behavior, the subliminal scenes, fighting, mischievous and exploding scenes evoke the audience's understanding about the narrator's identity crisis and his self-identification process. Lighting also plays the great impact in this film. Dark light is performed throughout the story to intensify the feeling of depression and mystery. Furthermore, Fincher exploits powerful film techniques to produce motifs and patterns throughout the entire story in order to give the audience some useful hints so that they will be able to recognize important points leading to the keys and the theme of the film. Although the director maintains the complex plot structure, he makes it more comprehensible for the viewers by divulging the secret nearly at the end. The flashback is practiced again nearly the end. The narrator's threatening sequences are seen again after they appear in the beginning of the story. This time they are shown to uncover how the story happens. As a result, disclosing scenes effectively stun the audience after the film ends. However, for most viewers, a lot of details slip from their observation in the first viewing. Several essential techniques signaling the protagonist's dark side can be detected only when one carefully watch again. This

makes **Fight Club** more splendid. The first impression of this film lies on the muddle and the hidden techniques left to be discussed further after the film ends. The unclear film style Fincher produces might arouse the audience's curiosity to watch **Fight Club** twice or three times.

Rebellion as the Way to Self-Worth

Tyler as the narrator's dark side dares to run wild and break free of all the social rules. Tyler's way of life is impressed by the narrator who lives his life by the routine. The narrator does not dare enough to run wild or do what he wants. He, therefore, lacks confidence and feels worthless. Rebelling against the social rules and society is the way to gain the narrator's identity because he can do what he wants and

is not controlled by the society which considered as depression. Tyler is everything the narrator wishes he could be.

Tyler is firstly introduced to the viewers when he is on the plane with the narrator. His points of view are totally different from the others. What consider is good for the society is not really good in his opinion. For example, Tyler tells the narrator about the airline safety cards. The airline safety manuals are zoomed in while Tyler is telling the narrator real purpose of these safety manuals. They prepare the passengers to accept their coming death instead of rescuing them from the plane accident. Fincher wants the viewers to notice what is inside these safety manuals so that they will see the differences later in the film.

Tyler uses violence and aggression as the way to gain male identity and masculinity. Since men in this film are bored with their routine life and aimless because they do not have a chance to do the challenging things that make themselves feels self-worth, Tyler offers the narrator and other men violence and aggression as the way to regain the liveliness that leads to male identity and masculinity. The first way of using violence and aggression is inventing Fight Club where is for men only.

The narrator first fight with Tyler is presented in shot. After their first fight, the narrator and Tyler fight each other more often in front of the bar until many men ask to join in the fight. Since many men attend in the fight, the narrator and Tyler decide to invent Fight Club which is situated in the Lou's Tavern's basement. In Fight Club, the dark light is mostly employed to imply that Fight Club is the secret club that exists only at night and takes place in the secret place. Here, male identity and masculinity are shown through the fight. Fight Club's members are clearly shown by the use of figure expression and movement to express their satisfaction while having and watching the fight.