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Masculinity and violence in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se bude věnovat úspěšnému románu Chucka Palahniuka Fight Club, který bývá pokládán za určitou generační výpověď. V úvodu práce student stručně nastíní historicko-literární kontext díla a zvoleného autora do něj zasadí. Charakterizuje tzv. "generaci X" a vysvětlí teoretický rámec, v němž své analýzy ukotví (gender studies, masculinity, apod.) a případně další pojmy, které budou pro jeho práci zásadní (např. disociativní porucha).

Jádrem práce bude analýza zvoleného díla, v níž se student soustředí především na způsob zachycení "generace X" a jejich specifik a problémů, dále na identitu v souvislostech genderu, na obraz maskulinity a násilí. Pozornost bude rovněž věnovat literárním prostředkům, které autor používá. Své závěry bude vhodně ilustrovat primárními texty a konzultovat se sekundárními zdroji.

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Bennett, Robert. "The Death of Sisyphus: Existentialist Literature and the Cultural Logic of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*." *Stirrings Still: The International Journal of Existential Literature* 2.2 (2005): 65-80.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis is concerned with Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, which is often regarded as a testimony of Generation X. The theoretical part of the thesis provides a historical and cultural context for the book analysis with an emphasis on masculinity, toxic masculinity and violence. Furthermore, this part also deals with identity questions as well as with a mental illness dissociative identity disorder, about which *Fight Club* rose public awareness. The analytical part of the thesis analysis Palahniuk's viewpoints on masculinity, violence as well as identity and it investigates what literary devices he uses to inexplicitly manifest his thoughts and ideas.

KEYWORDS

Fight Club, masculinity, toxic masculinity, violence, Generation X, dissociative identity disorder

NÁZEV

Maskulinita a násilí v díle *Fight Club* Chucka Palahniuka

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá dílem *Fight Club* Chucka Palahniuka, jež je často považováno za výpověď generace X. Teoretická část práce poskytuje historický a kulturní kontext pro následnou analýzu díla a soustředí se na témata maskulinity, toxické maskulinity a násilí. Dále se zaměřuje na otázky identity a na disociativní poruchu identity, která se díky publikaci díla *Fight Club* dostala do povědomí široké veřejnosti. Analytická část práce se zabývá analýzou postoje Palahniuka při odpovědích na otázky týkající se maskulinity, násilí, identity a zkoumá jaké literární prostředky autor používá při implikaci svých myšlenek a nápadů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Fight Club, maskulinita, toxická maskulinita, násilí, generace X, disociativní porucha identity

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on analysing masculinity, violence and identity in a popular transgressive fiction *Fight Club*, which was written by Chuck Palahniuk and published in 1996. There have been published hundreds of short articles, reviews as well as academic papers which were written by literary experts and amateur enthusiasts that talk about *Fight Club* in great detail. However, not one of them provides a detailed answer on how accurately Palahniuk captured the identity and masculinity crisis of Generation X in *Fight Club*. This thesis will provide an image on what it meant to be an American in the 80s and 90s and how Palahniuk's *Fight Club* characters reflect on this image.

The initial spark that ignited my interest in this novel was caused by realizing how much the topics of identity crisis, consumerism and masculinity with which Generation X, as well as *Fight Club*, dealt with are relevant nowadays. Identity crisis and loss of masculinity is a huge problem for men today and it goes hand in hand with increased suicide rates, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, in 2018, American “men died by suicide 3.56x more often than women.”¹ The second aspect that fuelled my interest in analysing these topics was that society considers them to be taboo and only a small number of contemporary literature authors address them to such an extent as Palahniuk does.

This thesis is divided into two major parts, the first part is theoretical which will provide a historical and cultural context of Generation X. Furthermore, it will also characterize manhood and present an image on what's the masculinity ideal using the work of Sharon R. Bird and Timothy Beneke, two American contemporary authors with expertise in homosociality, identity crisis and hegemonic masculinity. With masculinity and the need of proving manhood in mind, the subchapter that follows will focus on violence describing what forms violence can take. This section works principally with the World Health Organization data and research. The last subchapter of the first part works with statistics and research made by the American Psychiatric Association and Cleveland Clinic and it will provide an overview of dissociative identity disorder.

The second part of this thesis is practical, first, it will provide a short overview of the novel complemented with quotes from selected literary critics and then it will analyse *Fight Club*'s main characters point of view on masculinity, violence and the struggles of their generation. To understand causes of the identity crisis of the main character, this thesis will also analyse the importance of a father and mother figure and it will determine if these relationships

¹ “Suicide Statistics,” American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics>

could account for the loss of manhood and identity crisis. Furthermore, this thesis will scan for any religious subtext and determine if there are any connections between the main characters and Christianity. This subchapter will be followed by an analysis that will determine how realistic are Palahniuk's depictions of dissociative identity disorder. The last subchapter of the practical part will answer in detail what narrative style and literary devices Palahniuk used in *Fight Club* to convey his thoughts and ideas.

1. Historical and Cultural Context

Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* is often regarded as a certain generational testimony which captured Generation X, its specifics and problems. This chapter provides historical and cultural context for the novel. To understand Generation X, from which Chuck Palahniuk comes from and which is portrayed in *Fight Club*, it is vital to first grasp in what time American men and women from Generation X lived in. Furthermore, because each generation is drastically affected by preceding generations, it is also important to discuss the lifestyle, values and beliefs of the two generations that preceded Generation X, i.e. the "Silent generation" and "Baby boomers". The following chapter of this thesis will discuss certain specifics of these generations. Some of the generation characteristics are oversimplified and generalised to a degree. The reason for this is to enable a reader of this thesis to get a general idea of how most people from these generations looked at different aspects of life as well as in what they believed in. By no means, this chapter wants to claim that everyone from the described generations felt and behaved in the same described way.

1.1 Generation X

Generation X comes after Baby boomers and is followed by Generation Y. According to the document used for this chapter, the people from Generation X were born between early-to-mid 1960s to the 1980.² It is the first generation which has an alphabetical letter in its name. Canadian author Douglas Coupland, unknowingly named this generation after his debut novel: *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991), which became immediately a hit and popularised the term Generation X. This tale tells a story about 3 young people who struggle with their identity in the contemporary society. They hate their jobs and have no desire to get married, build a career or make money. Because this novel provides a very accurate image of how most men and women from Generation X felt, the generation was permanently named after the novel.

The two generations which preceded Generation X had something in common as they were both defined by some important historical events. According to the document of University of Missouri, which focuses on the differences between 20th century generations, the "Silent Generation" preceded the baby boomers and consists of people who were born before 1946. Children from this generation grew up in conditions complicated by the World War II

² "Slide 1," University of Missouri, accessed October 16, 2020, <https://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/documents/ecyl/meet-the-generations.pdf>

and economic downturn caused by the Great Depression.³ They are named the “Silent Generation” because of their cautious, and withdrawn nature.⁴ and according to Sally Kane they inherited a strong-work ethics of their parents and they have respect for authorities.⁵ This generation is followed by Baby boomers who were born between 1946 to the early 1960s, during this time period, the United States experienced a post-war economic boom which led to the birth of one of the strongest generations in terms of new born babies. Baby boomers are free spirited workaholics who want to achieve success and boast with the products and services they can afford. They are bond by the Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations, the Civil Rights movements and the Vietnam War.⁶

Children from Generation X had little or no parent supervision⁷ and they were the first digital natives who grew up having access to computers.⁸ When children from Generation X grew up, they lacked motivation to chase careers as their parents and they did not want to settle and get married being characterized as independent and self-reliant. They had no respect for authorities as they rejected rules and had no trust in institutions. At the same time, they were not involved in any political ideology. They got tired of their low paying jobs working har, they wanted to work smarter.⁹ According to an article published on The New York Times: “All they knew, they were told, was what they did not want — marriage, money, success — and then they shrugged and popped a Prozac.”¹⁰ Prozac helped them to deal with their deep depression, but in no way, it solved everything. For all these reasons, Generations X is often regarded as one of the most lost generations. Chuck Palahniuk in *Fight Club* successfully captured most of the problems Generation X faced. That is also one of the reasons why the novel became a worldwide phenome. However, Palahniuk was not the only popular novelist who successfully reflected the aspirations and dreads of Generation X, there were many others. Among the most

³ University of Missouri, “Slide 1.”

⁴ “The Silent Generation,” The Journal of the Emeritus College at ASU, accessed October 16, 2020, <https://emerituscollege.asu.edu/sites/default/files/ecdw/EVoice6/silent.html>

⁵ “Common Characteristics of the Traditionalists Generation”, the balance careers, accessed October 16, 2020 <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/workplace-characteristics-silent-generation-2164692>

⁶ University of Missouri, “Slide 1.”

⁷ “What Was So Great About a Gen X Childhood?” HuffPost, accessed October 16, 2020

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-was-so-great-about-a-gen-x-childhood_b_7336818?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADmh4VRear9MWNevRMNiRpMeV_BPSJAV0A_T6rNckc4m0FP7ChJTbcR5OS2Yu9cJ12yHQHY6ZPeyUjPr680n9SzFVJx9AHqsAVzZ6Y0uzXIIP9OkbiWGQZQuRDIC11CxRXYE5Yf2mqnZJzII-3efi4zpuG7AogYyK4hAVMn45M

⁸ “The Generation Map,” McCrindle Research, accessed October 16, 2020, https://2qean3b1jld1s87812ool5ji-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/McCrindle-Research_ABC-03_The-Generation-Map_Mark-McCrindle.pdf

⁹ University of Missouri, “Slide 1.”

¹⁰ “This Gen X Mess,” The New York Times, accessed December 10, 2019, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/14/style/generation-xers.html

popular ones, it is important to mention a novel *Less Than Zero* written by Bret Easton Ellis and *The Beach* by Alex Garland.

While at first it looked as if people from Generation X will never fully become adults, they eventually did, and they have proved to other generations that the labels which were given to them were not true. Today, more and more people from the Gen X take over the highest position of leadership in the corporate world. For instance, take Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, Elon Musk the CEO of Tesla or Larry Page, the co-founder of Google. They are all from Generation X and they successfully spread innovation and are the cause of disruption of many industries. According to a research conducted by Salesfloor, Generation X accounts for “31 percent of total US income despite representing a mere 25 percent of the population.”¹¹

1.2. Masculinity

Masculinity is one of the most important attributes which shapes the behaviour of any man or a boy. Amongst the typical manly traits are considered self-sufficiency, lack of emotion, strength, and sexual desire.¹² According to *Men and Masculinities: A-J* editors Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson, manhood is not universal for all men and means something different for a man from America, Africa or Asia. Manhood varies not only depending on culture, but also class, race, ethnicity and age. For instance, “Black masculinity differs from white masculinity, yet each of them is also further modified by class and age.” This means that if two men share at least one of these elements, they will share to some extent similar views on masculinity. It also important to point out that “The experience of masculinity in the contemporary United States is very different from that experience 150 years ago.” The same can also be said about manhood in other countries of the world. Simply put, “Masculinity means different things to different groups of people at different times”. Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson further argue that “American men must also contend with a particular definition that is held up as the model against which we are expected to measure ourselves. We thus come to know what it means to be a man in our culture [...]”¹³

Unfortunately, American men in their twenties and thirties from Generation X could be unsure about their manhood and they might have started to question their manhood qualities. They listened to bravery stories from their fathers and grandfathers how they fought in the

¹¹ “How Each Generation Shops,” Salesfloor, accessed January 11, 2020, <https://salesfloor.net/blog/generations-shopping-habits/>

¹² “What to know about toxic masculinity,” Medical News Today, accessed October 16, 2020, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/toxic-masculinity>

¹³ Michael S. Kimmel and Amy B. Aronson, *Men and masculinities: A-J*, (ABC-CLIO, 2003), xxiii.

Vietnam war and in WWII to protect their nation. But unlike them, they had no wars to prove their manliness. They also started to realise how much the society has changed and that it is more materialistic and career oriented than ever before. As a result of society new preferences, the ideal image of a man has changed rather swiftly. It was no longer a strong man that could fight and protect a woman, but a man that conquers in the capitalist world and is financially stable. Reason being women have not felt like they need protection anymore. Firstly, there were not many things against which a man could protect them. And secondly, there was the second-wave women's rights movement, which started during the 1960s and in which women secured a stronger role in the American society. It might be assumed that when women from Generation X grew up, having finally a stronger role, most of them were no longer just housewives, caretakers or silent. It is further stated that women from Generation X could be doing jobs which used to be typical man's job, because in 1964 there was a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender, so it looks a bit as if women did not really need men to take care of them anymore.¹⁴

With this being said, while the second-wave feminism hugely affected women's workplace, family affairs and their sexuality and helped women to gain legal rights, women still felt as if the gender gap was still too narrow and they most certainly have not felt as if men considered them equal. It was only during the 1990s with the third feminism wave when the public view towards women started to turnover. In this phase, women were trying, according to Rampton, to destabilize the notion of "universal womanhood" and had other ambitious targets.¹⁵ It is therefore obvious that the occurrence of wife houses who only lived for their man and family were clearly a thing of past. Women were strong, independent and ready to fight their way through life even if that meant they will have to do it on their own. As Robert Bly puts it: "[...] women, primarily since feminism, have created a situation in which men, especially young men, feel weak, emasculated, and unsure of themselves [...]."¹⁶

It could have been these reasons men started to feel threatened. They have realised how drastically women have changed under the influence of different feminist movements, but men did not. It was at that time when most men from Generation X could have started to doubt their manhood. There were so many women's moments in the United States fighting for their rights,

¹⁴ "Second-wave feminism," Khan Academy, accessed on October 16, 2020,

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/1960s-america/a/second-wave-feminism>

¹⁵ "Four Waves of Feminism," Pacific University Oregon, accessed on October 23, 2020,

<https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism>

¹⁶ Christine James, "Feminism And Masculinity: Reconceptualizing The Dichotomy Of Reason And Emotion," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, (December 1997): 137.

but none for men. Nothing where men could join together and prove their manhood. Nothing, until Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, was published. Here, men meet every Sunday to fight in order to get their manhood back.

According to Sharon Bird, the author of *Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity*, "The masculinity ideal involves detachment and independence."¹⁷ That means, the masculinity ideal does not rely on anyone else but himself, similarly to a self-made man. Furthermore, if one offers help to a masculinity ideal of a man, he is most likely going to reject it as he does not want to look weak in front of others. He also seldom expresses emotions; his behaviour looks emotionless or even robotic. S. Bird also argues that a man is expected to be always detached from his womanly feelings within any male homosocial group.¹⁸ According to a research Bird conducted on a dozen of men who described the least appropriate emotions and behaviours men express within homosocial groups, "[...] were those associated with feminine expressions of intimacy (e.g., talking "feelings")."¹⁹ Men who express these feminine feelings aren't homosocial groups as respected as if they had distanced themselves from such feelings and other members of the male group look down upon them. Bird further argues that:

"This suppression of feminine emotions is more than merely a means of establishing individual masculinity. Emotional detachment is one way in which gender hierarchies are maintained. Expressing emotions signifies weakness and is devalued, whereas emotional detachment signifies strength and is valued (Cancian 1987)."²⁰

This Bird statement hints that to express feminine feelings means for men to express being weak. These signs of weakness are not expected in any male homosocial group and if they are displayed, they can make members of the group feel uncomfortable. By default, there are unwritten rules in any male homosocial group that are expected to be obeyed even without ever talking about them.

1.2.1. Masculine men and their relationships with women

It might be said that most men want to be seen, especially in front of women, as masculine alpha males that fear nothing and are ready to protect their feminine half. Unfortunately, the

¹⁷ Sharon R. Bird, *Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity* (Sage Publications Inc., 1996), 125.

¹⁸ Bird, *Welcome to the Men's Club*, 125.

¹⁹ Bird, *Welcome to the Men's Club*, 125.

²⁰ Bird, *Welcome to the Men's Club*, 125.

unnamed main protagonist of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, who is referred to in this bachelor thesis as the Narrator is not very manly, so he creates an alter ego Tyler, who possess all masculine qualities. Timothy Beneke in his book *Proving Manhood: Reflections on Men and Sexism*, discusses the connection between the masculinity of men and their sexism towards women:

“Compulsive masculinity is inexorably tied to sexism--in proving manhood a man is proving his superiority to women by enduring distress that women supposedly cannot endure. The domination and degradation of women are a basic defense used to bolster men's vulnerable masculinity. Where men are compulsively masculine, they are also sexist.”²¹

This statement applies to all men as they like to take an advantage of any situation when they can prove their manliness to women. What women cannot handle on their own, men are there to handle without showing any signs of hesitation or nervousness. Beneke further adds that, “Part of proving manhood includes being perceived by women as a "real man"”²². Men like to be perceived as the ones on whom women can count on in any given situation and on whom they will turn to if anything goes south. When a man faces a situation in which he is expected to prove his manhood and he fails, his ego and masculinity are being shattered as he becomes uncertain about his role as a man.

Beneke also believes that, “[...] in the realm of sex, manhood is proved through one's capacity to find sexual partners and to remain potent with them.” Being able to find such partners is then often considered by other men as a sign of superior masculinity. “Sex is often dominative for men, and sexual problems are typically seen more as problems of failed manhood than as sexual problems.”²³ Shawn Meghan Burn and A. Zachary Ward further argue on the topic of sex and masculinity that one of the typical masculinity ideology images constructed by the society for men is that a man should always be ready for sex.²⁴

As a consequence, in the case a men suffers impotence, they instantly blame themselves, close themselves and they do not want to address the issue at hand. They are not keen on going to their GP to get help as they feel too embarrassed. This problem challenges their manhood to such extent that the only way how they can cope with it is to act as if nothing happened. That being said, masculinity of men is threatened on several other occasions, including even

²¹ Timothy Beneke, *Proving Manhood: Reflections on Men and Sexism* (Berkeley UCP, 1997), 47.

²² Beneke, *Proving Manhood*, 43.

²³ Beneke, *Proving Manhood*, 43.

²⁴ Shawn Meghan Burnand and A. Zachary Ward, “Men’s Conformity to Traditional Masculinity and Relationship Satisfaction,” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 6, no. 4 (October 2005).

situations when they feel like they dominated in heterosexual sex. According to Timothy Beneke:

“[...] the experience of having sex with a woman offers the greatest potential threat of all to manhood. Being held by a woman threatens many men with a deeply repressed desire to return to the safety of their mother’s arms. Such a desire is felt as threatening because it might entail a loss of the sense of the self as masculine and potentially as an appearance of homoerotic desires.”²⁵

As explained by Beneke, men need from women two things: nurturance and sex, but if both are provided by the same woman, they feel threatened that the woman holds on too much power over the man, for that reason men often “divide women into Maddonas and whores; the Maddona offers nurturance and the whore offers sex- but only at a safe psychic distance. It is as if women offering both sex and nurturance might overwhelm men's sense of their own masculinity [...]”²⁶ Women who look or act like whores are then treated by men differently than Maddonas. When men talk about whores, they use distinctive sexualised language and they address primarily topics concerning women’s sexual attractiveness. They do not care about anything else but their body and sex. They also do not develop any deeper feelings for them. Furthermore, men do not feel like they are supposed to protect the whores as they don’t have with them any other bond than the physical one. On the other hand, Maddonas represent the exact opposite of whores. Men care deeply about their well beings and are ready to protect them with their lives. Seldom, they can create with Maddonas also strong romantic relationships, if that happens, such connections tend to be firm and last longer than with whores. In most homosocial groups, men grade women’s attractiveness on a scale from 1 to 10. The lowest score of 1, men give to women which from their point of view look extremely ugly. The highest score of 10 is given to the most charming and attractive women. Timothy Beneke in his book *Proving Manhood: Reflections on Men and Sexism* discusses this ranking system and consults it with Harry Brod’s beliefs:

Harry Brod makes the point that the process of men grading women's attractiveness is a way men distance themselves from their sexuality. It is a way of "evading their own subjectivity in terms of public sanction of their desires". Grading is a way of bonding with other men while keeping one's desires [...].²⁷

²⁵ Beneke, *Proving Manhood*, 99.

²⁶ Beneke, *Proving Manhood*, 101.

²⁷ Beneke, *Proving Manhood*, 110.

Such behaviour is rather typical for men. As discussed before, they don't want to display their feelings and affections and the grading system is a great way how they can distance from both. In the company of other men, most men tend to objectify women and their attractiveness.

1.2.2. Toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a popular term, which originated with the mythopoetic men's movement during the 1980s and '90s.²⁸ During this time period, the second wave of feminism was ending, and the third wave of feminism was starting to take off. The mythopoetic men's movement can be seen as a reaction to ongoing feminism movements, with the American authors like Robert Bly and Robert Moore as the main advocates. Bly's work was then based on popularizing the idea of Jungian archetypes (based on the ideology of psychologist Carl Jung).²⁹ Carl Jung was a good friend of the Father of Modern Psychology, Sigmund Freud, and they both took a deep interest in the consciousness and unconscious.³⁰

According to Brett McKay from portal Art of Manliness, Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud had similar viewpoints on many psychological questions, that being said, Carl Jung unlike Sigmund Freud believed that not only positive emotions, thoughts and experiences are held in the unconscious, but also the positive ones. Jungians divide the unconscious mind to 2 main levels, the personal unconscious and collective unconscious. The former is created from our personal experiences, this is a place for all our desires, wants and wishes that we create throughout our lives, unlike from the Freud's theory which believes that these desires are always there and that we merely repress them, Jung believed that these wants are suppressed. The latter is formed from our base "animal" instincts that each individual has as they are genetically inherited. For instance, they appear whenever we deal with life or death situations, during which our survival instincts automatically kick in.³¹

As Jungian psychologist Dr. Howlin correctly points out, Jung believed that men also have, the anima, the innate inner feminine side and that women too have the animus, the inner masculine side. Howlin quite thoroughly analysis on his blog an image of a stag. According to him, this "stag" with its large antlers is embodiment of the masculine, displaying strength as

²⁸ Michael Salter, "The Problem With a Fight Against Toxic Masculinity," The Atlantic, accessed on October 22, 2020 <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/02/toxic-masculinity-history/583411/>

²⁹ Joseph Gelfer, *Numen, Old Men: Contemporary Masculine Spiritualities and the Problem of Patriarchy*, (Routledge, 2014), chapter 2.

³⁰ "When Freud Met Jung," All Psychology Schools, accessed on October 22, 2020, <https://www.allpsychologyschools.com/psychology/freud-jung/>

³¹ "The Four Archetypes of the Mature Masculine: Introduction," Art of manliness, last modified May 28, 2018, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/king-warrior-magician-lover-introduction/>.

well as assertiveness, “the stag is alone in the photograph, just like a man will be psychologically alone when he must embrace the energy of the masculine and during his greatest life challenges.”³² The image of the deer and its association with the masculine has been also analysed by many Jungian analysts including Neil Russack (2002) who commented on the animal and Jungian psychology saying that “The deer’s yearly horns are the headdress honoring the regenerative powers of nature. With these horns the deer can stake its territory and claim its space. They serve as both a weapon, and sexual ornament.”³³ Howlin also argues that at first the antlers of the deer are velvet. However, as the deer grows up, they transform into sharp, hard killing tools:

“it further illustrates the stag and specifically his antlers, as an ideal symbol for the masculine: an evolution in the formation of antlers which includes passing through a phase of the soft and feminine (velvet phase), into a solid and refined antler and masculinity.”³⁴

What this means is that Howlin believes men first have to go through their soft feminine phase before they can reach their masculine phase. He also suggests that men have to face their biggest challenges and obstacles on their own, without outside help, by doing so, they will display their masculine traits and qualities.

While Jung provides good insight into masculinity, according to Teich, some of his ideas are need of a revision to be accurate today. In this regard, Teich also agrees with the observations made by John Beebe who reacted to Jung’s book *Aspects of the Masculine*: “Jung’s idea of logos as the masculine principle and eros as the feminine principle has led to premature dogmatizing in some Jungian circles.”³⁵

Similar point of view like Teich also shares Dr. Gary Toub who regularly practises Jungian analysis on his clients and helps men to find their feminine qualities and women their masculine qualities. According to Toub, “many classical Jungian definitions of masculine and

³² “The Back Road (Jungian Psychology in Everyday Life Series),” Dr. Jeff Howlin, accessed on October 22, 2020, <http://www.santacruzpsychologist.com/blog/2012/the-stag-and-the-essence-of-the-masculine-in-21st-century-man/>

³³ “The Stag and the Essence of the Masculine in 21st Century Man,” Dr. Jeff Howlin, accessed on October 23, 2020, <http://www.santacruzpsychologist.com/blog/2012/the-stag-and-the-essence-of-the-masculine-in-21st-century-man/>

³⁴ Dr. Jeff Howlin, “The Black Road.”

³⁵ Howard Teich, “Review: A Dual Masculinity,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 55.

feminine are narrow, outdated, and sexist.”³⁶ One of the examples that he gives is related to the gender class of consciousness. A lot of Jungian theorist identify consciousness as masculine and the unconscious as feminine and Toub sees a problem in this as it makes no sense to him to define whether one is masculine and the second one is feminine.³⁷ He argues that:

“On a practical level it does not make sense, in fact [it] is potentially harmful, to identify women who are powerful thinkers or who are active and creative as masculine, animus-possessed, or unfeminine, as classical Jungian definitions would suggest. Likewise, men who display a great deal of receptivity, passivity, or irrationality should not automatically have their masculinity questioned. Continued use of such classical Jungian definitions seems nowadays to actually muddy analytic work and create more problems than it solves.”³⁸

Chuck Palahniuk has also applied in his novel *Fight Club* the Jungian psychology. The main protagonist of the story, the unnamed Narrator in the book creates in his unconscious an alter ego Tyler who appears whenever the Narrator goes to sleep and is dreaming. When the Narrator is unconscious and Tyler appears, he has access to all memories and experiences, both negative and positive, that also has the Narrator. Tyler is the typical shadow character of the Narrator. He represents the masculine, violent bad-boy who the Narrator creates because he lacks the strength to pursue his sexual desires for Marla on his own.

1.3. Violence

Violence is according to the World Health Organization defined as physical or psychological harm that can result in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation which a person intentionally commits against oneself, another person or a group.³⁹ Physical violence can take many forms among the most brutal ones, we recognize murders, rapes, assaults and abductions. Psychological violence can, on the other hand, be in the form of extortion, harassment and bullying (which can take both psychological and physical form). The after-effects of violence are well known to anyone who experiences violence first-hand. It can be anxiety or depression.⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, as one of the after-effects caused by violence can

³⁶ “Jung and Gender: Masculine and Feminine Revisited,” The Jung Page, last modified October 27, 2013, <http://www.cgjungpage.org/learn/articles/analytical-psychology/147-jung-and-gender-masculine-and-feminine-revisited>

³⁷ The Jung Page, “Jung and Gender.”

³⁸ The Jung Page, “Jung and Gender.”

³⁹ “World report on violence and health,” World Health Organization, Geneva, last modified 2002, 5

⁴⁰ “Effects of Physical Abuse, Pictures of Physical Abuse,” Healthy Place, accessed October 22, 2020, <https://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/adult-physical-abuse/effects-of-physical-abuse-pictures-of-physical-abuse>

be also aggression. Individuals who come in contact with strong acts of violence can develop tendencies to become aggressive and violent themselves.⁴¹

The World Health Organization recognizes 3 main types of violence: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, collective violence. As the type names of violence suggest, self-directed violence is caused by an individual to himself. Amongst the typical self-directed violence is considered self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts as well as suicides. According to WHO, “Interpersonal violence is divided into two subcategories: family and intimate partner violence [...] [and] community violence.”⁴² The former violence is happening primarily in families and partner relationships. The latter violence is committed in communities both by people we know and we don’t know. WHO further argues that family and intimate partner violence “includes forms of violence such as child abuse, intimate partner violence and abuse of the elderly”, on the other hand, community violence “includes youth violence, random acts of violence, rape or sexual assault by strangers, and violence in institutional settings”⁴³. WHO further argues that collective violence is committed by a large number of individuals or states to advance a particular social agenda, it can be for example, crimes of hate committed by organized groups, terrorist acts or mob violence.⁴⁴

No matter what type of violence people experience, it’s safe to say that every individual handle distress caused by violence differently. The most affected by acts of violence are children who come in contact with child abuse during their childhood. According to Child Help, “every year more than 3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States.”⁴⁵ To put this number into perspective, in the USA lives around 300 million people, from which 1/3 are approximately children. The statistics contain only the number of reported children who are being abused every year, which many more cases are unreported. Some victims of child abuse develop psychological disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative identity disorder, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder and explosive behaviour disorder. The World report on violence and health and 1999 WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention distinguish four types of child maltreatment: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and psychological abuse; neglect.⁴⁶

⁴¹ “Aggression and Violence,” accessed October 22, 2020, <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/aggression-violence>

⁴² World Health Organization, “World report on violence.”⁵

⁴³ World Health Organization, “World report on violence.”⁵

⁴⁴ World Health Organization, “World report on violence.”⁵

⁴⁵ “The Issue of Child Abuse,” Child Help, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse>.

⁴⁶ “Preventing Child Maltreatment,” World Health Organization, Geneva, last modified 2006, 10

The unnamed main protagonist of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, who is referred to in this bachelor thesis as the Narrator, has developed dissociative identity disorder. This illness was caused by the fact that the father of the Narrator has neglected him when he was a child. For this reason, the Narrator has created an alter ego Tyler, who helps him face issues which he cannot handle on his own. Dissociative identity disorder, as well as other psychological disorders, can stay with the abused child for his or her lifetime and the typically recognised symptoms may be low self-esteem, aggression and self-injurious behaviour, social anxiety, sudden mood swings as well as disconnecting from own memories, feelings or reality.⁴⁷ In addition, it is a well-known fact that the abused child is more likely in his adulthood to abuse his own children than a child who has lived in a healthy environment during his childhood.

Using the statistics researched by Strauss and Howe (1991), Professor Gary. S. Marshall provides background on Generation X which can help us understand this generation and their struggles with identity and masculinity. According to Gary. S. Marshall, "A third more Generation X youth are in jail compared to Baby Boomers"⁴⁸. He further adds that "through the 1980s approximately five thousand children under age eighteen committed suicide, the largest number and proportion ever recorded for that age bracket"⁴⁹. Taking these data into consideration, they shed light on how much more men and women from Generation X were struggling in their lives and how harder it was for them in comparison to other generations, particularly the baby boomers, to find their place in the society.

2. Dissociative identity disorder

Dissociative identity disorder, which is also known by its old term multiple personality disorder is a mental disorder which according to Cleveland Clinic "involves disruptions or breakdowns of memory, awareness, identity and/or perception." A person with dissociative identity disorder, or DID for short, has at least 2 personalities. People with DID can also have a different perception of their body, so they can look in the mirror and see there a person that does not look like them. As if they were in someone else's body.⁵⁰

The main and most prominent personality of the body is known as the host and his other personalities as alter personalities or alters. While the main character in Chuck's Palahniuk's

⁴⁷ "Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)," Cleveland Clinic, accessed January 12, 2019, <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9792-dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder>

⁴⁸ Gary S. Marshall, "Theory and Generation X," *Journal of Public Administration Education* 3, no. 3 (September 1997).

⁴⁹ Marshall, "Theory".

⁵⁰ Cleveland Clinic, "Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder),".

Fight Club has only 2 distinct personalities, according to The Recovery Village, on average a person with DID has from 13 to 15 different personalities.⁵¹

The reason why people with DID have memory gaps is a result of the fact that they very often do not recall what their alters did, they don't have access to those memories. Each alter has usually its own memories and experiences and they differ from the ones that the host has.⁵² People with dissociative identity disorder can be described as dissociated and disconnected from their feelings, thoughts as well as identity. Minor dissociations can occur even in the life of mentally healthy individuals, who do something on autopilot and don't think that much on what they are doing.⁵³

As a good example can serve when an individual starts driving his car to his old workplace, despite the fact he already works elsewhere. While he quickly realizes that he is on the wrong road, a person with major dissociations would not realize it at all and could even enter the building and he would have wondered why is everyone staring at him so awkwardly. Whilst minor dissociations are absolutely normal and can occur if someone is not fully focused on what they are doing. Major dissociations can severely disrupt an individual's everyday life. They are, however, not only typical for people with DID but also for people with other dissociative disorder and mental illnesses.

Among some of the symptoms, which can indicate a patient has DID are deep depression, mood swings, behavioural changes, anxiety, self-harm as well as suicidal thoughts. Most people with DID have difficulties with leading a normal fulfilling life. This is usually determined by how severe one's symptoms are and how much they affect their everyday life. Nearly all patients who have DID were in their childhood abused, either emotionally, physically or sexually. The trauma was so severe that they could not handle it on their own so they created someone who could help them cope with it. Very often, they don't have a memory of this childhood trauma. When they grow up, they can lead a normal life as anyone else, until an episode of DID gets triggered. The trigger can be anything from a bad memory to a major life change like losing a close person or getting a new job. At such time, an alter re-occurs to help the host deal with the situation.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Dissociative Identity Disorder Facts and Statistics?," The Recovery Village, accessed January 14, 2020, <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/dissociative-identity-disorder/related/dissociative-identity-disorder-statistics/>.

⁵² Eric Eich, Dawn Macaulay, Richard J. Loewenstein and Patrice H. Dible, "Memory, Amnesia, and Dissociative Identity Disorder," *Psychological Science* 8, no. 6 (November 1997): 419.

⁵³ "What Are Dissociative Disorders?," American Psychiatric Association, accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/dissociative-disorders/what-are-dissociative-disorders>.

⁵⁴ Cleveland Clinic, "Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)."

Alters can differ in age, race as well as in gender. The age of alters can change with the age of the host, but it can also remain constant. In rare occasions alters are not even humans, but they are demons, robots, animals, fictional characters or other non-human beings. While alters can take many forms, the most common ones are so-called alter protectors, who as the name suggest, are there to protect an individual who is being abused. For example, a child that is maltreated can create as an alter ego another child or an animal that protects him against treats that he cannot endure on his own. Other very common alter is a persecutor. This alter also acts as a protector, but if for instance, other alters or the host disclose that they were abused, the persecutor will try to punish them. This alter can be a danger to himself as well as to people around him.⁵⁵

Some alter types can attempt suicide to kill the host or other alters. And because they believe that is not their body, they are not aware that if they kill the host or one of the other alters, that they also die. How frequently each alter takes over the main host depends mostly on the role of the given alter. Each alter has its own specific role and if the situation does not require it, the alter will not be activated. That means, that a person with DID can have alters who appear every day or every week and some alters that appear once a year or even less frequently. Usually alters that appear less frequently have very limited memories because as mentioned before, they don't have access to memories of other alters or the host.⁵⁶

Each alter can have a different set of skills and abilities. So, an individual with DID can have one alter who can speak in a different accent, one alter who is good at math, one alter who is good at sports etc. Furthermore, each alter has its own personality and behaves in a different way. That means the host can have a very shy, introvert, placid personality, but one of his alters can be extrovert, confident and very sociable. Such alter can take over the main host, if the situation requires it, e.g. talking to a beautiful woman, managing work meeting etc.⁵⁷

Episodes which people with DID experience differ in what is their perception of their alters. Some patients have no awareness of their alters, some have awareness only of a few of them and some have awareness of all of them. Patients who are aware that their alter is in power describe their DID episodes like an out-of-body experience, which feels very similar to

⁵⁵ "Alters in Dissociative Identity Disorder (MPD) and DDNOS," Trauma Dissociation, accessed on October 22, 2020, <http://traumadissociation.com/alters>.

⁵⁶ Trauma Dissociation, "Alters in Dissociative Identity Disorder."

⁵⁷ Cleveland Clinic, "Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)."

watching a movie. They are the main character, but they have no power to change or do anything their alter is doing.⁵⁸

According to the American Psychiatric Association, more than 70 percent patients who were diagnosed with DID have at least once in their lives attempted a suicide. While this an outrageous number, there are still, unfortunately, no medications that would treat this mental illness. With this being said, there are some powerful drugs that can help with anxiety and depression, which as mentioned before, are one of the most common symptoms that patients with DID share. There is also one other option how to treat DID that can be far more effective than any drug, which is psychotherapy. A patient with DID and his psychologist analyse when alters appear and what might be the initial trigger element. They discuss if a patient experienced any past trauma, especially during childhood as alters in most cases start to develop in children who were maltreated. These alters appear to protect a child from painful emotions and they work like a coping mechanism.⁵⁹

Because of the nature of DID, it is considered as one of the most mysterious mental illness, which causes controversiality among all psychologists and therapist. Some mental health specialists even doubt the existence of DID and they suspect that patients who were diagnosed with DID were merely misdiagnosed. That can, of course, happen rather easily as DID shares similar symptoms with a borderline personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and other mental illnesses.⁶⁰ There are two main reasons why DID is so hard to diagnose, the first one is because one alter can display symptoms of one mental illness, but when other alter or the host takes over, these symptoms disappear and new ones appear. And the second reason is, that while Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* in which the main character has DID heavily boosted the awareness about this mental illness, it is still one of the least know disorders by mental health specialists. WebMD states that it takes on average about 7 years before a patient is correctly diagnosed with DID and can get proper treatment.⁶¹

According to Inquiries Journal, a study was conducted in which 425 doctoral-level clinicians had to diagnose patients and decide whether they have DID or not, one-third of the clinicians believed borderline personality disorder was more appropriate diagnose.⁶²

⁵⁸ "The Personality System," Understanding Multiple Personality Disorders, Nurse Learning, accessed on October 22, 2020, <https://www.nurseslearning.com/courses/nrp/NRP-1618/Section%205/index.htm>

⁵⁹ American Psychiatric Association, "What Are Dissociative Disorders?"

⁶⁰ The Recovery Village, "Dissociative Identity Disorder Facts and Statistics?"

⁶¹ "How is dissociative identity disorder diagnosed?" WebMD, accessed on January 12, 2020, <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/qa/how-is-dissociative-identity-disorder-diagnosed>.

⁶² "Dissociative Identity Disorder: Overview and Current Research," Inquiries Journal, last modified September 2020, <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/525/dissociative-identity-disorder-overview-and-current-research/>.

Furthermore, this study also showed that “38% [from 425 doctoral-level clinicians] believed that DID either likely or definitely could be created through the therapist’s influence [...]”⁶³

While DID is not very known mental illness among the general population, *Inquiries Journal* states that clinics reported that from 0.5 to 1.0% patients have DID, this number is, however, even significantly higher in the general population and *Inquiries Journal* further argues that it ranges from 1% to as much as 5%.⁶⁴ That means in the United States alone, there are about 1.6 million to 3.2 million people who were diagnosed with DID.⁶⁵

3. Fight Club Analysis

3.1. Fight Club Review

Fight Club is a satirical novel which was published by Chuck Palahniuk in 1996. This bachelor thesis analyses the main themes of the book, which include but are not limited to masculinity, identity crisis, violence and dissociative identity disorder. Because, this part of the thesis is practical it will contain a lot of citations from the book which will be then analysed. *Fight Club* is written in the first-person narrative and revolves around the life of an unnamed protagonist to whom is referred to in this bachelor thesis as the Narrator. Let’s start with some overview.

Literary critics do not agree on what was the reception of *Fight Club* at the time of its publication. While Sam Jordison from the *Guardian* leans towards the fact that at first it was only a “debut novel from an unknown writer with an initial print run of 10,000 copies”⁶⁶ J. Trudeau, argues that “*Fight Club* was well received at the time of its publication”⁶⁷. Despite this slight controversy, they both agree with the fact that it was the movie adaptation that drastically boosted the popularity of the book.

The film adaptation was in 1999 directed by David Fincher starring Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, and Helena Bonham Carter.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that the movie version is very similar to the book, there are some scenes which differ drastically. One of such scenes is for instance at the end of the story. In the novel, the Narrator shoots himself, kills Tyler in the process and then wakes up in a place which he thinks is heaven. In the movie, the Narrator shoots himself in

⁶³ *Inquires Journal*, “Dissociative Identity Disorder.”

⁶⁴ *Inquires Journal*, “Dissociative Identity Disorder.”

⁶⁵ *Inquires Journal*, “Dissociative Identity Disorder.”

⁶⁶ “First rule of Fight Club: no one talks about the quality of the writing,” *The Guardian*, accessed January 02, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/dec/20/first-rule-about-fight-club-no-one-talks-about-the-quality-of-the-writing>.

⁶⁷ Craig Barnes, “Chuck Palahniuk 1962-,” in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. by Lawrence J. Trudeau. (MI: Gale, 2014), 253.

⁶⁸ “Fight Club,” *IMDb*, accessed on October 23, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0137523/>

the attempt to kill Tyler, but no one dies and after that starts an epic scene in which the Narrator holds hands with Marla whilst they watch buildings around them explode. Apart from the movie adaptation, *Fight Club* also has its own theatrical and comic book adaptation.⁶⁹ The comic book adaptation has also a ten-volume series comic book sequel called *Fight Club 2: The Tranquility Gambit*, which takes comic book fans to a story 10 years after the events of the first novel.⁷⁰

Now, let's look at what is so special about the novel and what people think about it. There are thousands of *Fight Club* reviews made by literary experts as well as amateurs who have read the novel. As a base for contrasting different opinions about *Fight Club* will be used a book called *Contemporary Literary Criticism* which collects critical receptions of literary critics who comment on the work of the world's most known novelists and creative writers.

The first reception cited in the book by Barnes is an opinion of Monica Drake. Apart from other remarks, she claims that "The power of Chuck Palahniuk's writing comes from the truth that lies behind his hard-edged sentences and the mechanics of his twisting plots. And he's not afraid of big ideas."⁷¹ Palahniuk is indeed one of the novelists who likes to write about materialistic absurdity, identity crisis or meaningless social norms, all topics that other writers often avoid. Palahniuk also uses in his book complex and nonlinear narrative style which makes reading *Fight Club* not exactly a cakewalk.

Another literary critic who reviewed *Fight Club* and whose contribution is cited in the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* is Lars Bernaerts who examined Palahniuk's use of a "narrative delirium" structure in *Fight Club* as a means of immersing readers into the "narrator's delusional world."⁷² With this very critical opinion, however, does not agree Peter Mathews who "[...] argues that literary critics who condemn *Fight Club* for its violent, heteronormative themes and cult of philosophy often overlook the novel's ironic critique of the violent worldview espoused by its characters."⁷³

Since *Fight Club* is not popular only among professional literary critics, we ought to discuss also opinions of two enthusiast amateur readers and critics. The first one was published by an amateur reader which goes by the nickname Sean Barrs on one of the biggest book review portals GoodReads:

⁶⁹ "FIGHT CLUB 3 #10," Dark Horse, accessed on October 23, 2020, <https://www.darkhorse.com/Comics/3003-731/Fight-Club-3-10>

⁷⁰ "The Tranquility Gambit 1: Keep The House Fires Burning," Fandom.com, accessed on October 23, 2020, https://fightclub.fandom.com/wiki/The_Tranquility_Gambit_1:_Keep_The_House_Fires_Burning

⁷¹ Barnes, "Chuck Palahniuk, 1962-," 254.

⁷² Barnes, "Chuck Palahniuk, 1962-," 254.

⁷³ Barnes, "Chuck Palahniuk, 1962-," 254.

“This is not a happy book. It possesses no bright spark and like *American Psycho* it left me feeling thoroughly defeated after reading, and that’s because there is so much truth in these pages. Hard truths. Gut-wrenchingly agonising truths. Truths that might make you question your own existence because they are just so cynical in their viewpoint. It’s all a bit of a mind fuck. And if we’re to talk about the power of words, about how words can affect you and make you perceive something new, then these words certainly are powerful in their terribleness.”⁷⁴

While this review was made by an amateur reader who fancies Chuck Palahniuk’s work, it still provides solid points on what the novel is about. Chuck Palahniuk is not afraid to use strong language or discuss taboo topics that other writers successfully avoid. *Fight Club* is not a happy, cheerful, light reading book. It is a novel that makes a reader think about the meaning of life, structure of the society we live in or about one-self-identity. The second review was made by Bob Wake, a blogger from Culture Vulture:

“A story like this has nowhere to go but to extremes. The three-way relationship with Marla becomes increasingly sadistic. And fight club itself escalates into a terrorist cell that begins bombing office buildings... After 200 pages of brutal social satire and take-no-prisoners physical violence, *Fight Club* opts for a conventional "surprise" ending that undermines any appreciation one might have mustered for Palahniuk’s integrity as a writer of dark-edged fiction.”⁷⁵

Bob Wake’s viewpoint has certainly some bits of truths as well. *Fight Club* contains so much violence and terrorist-like acts that if the novel or its film adoption which enormously boosted the popularity of the book were to come out only a few years later, they could have never seen the light of day. Reason being the September 11 attacks when al-Qaeda hijacked 2 American planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center complex and what followed. A novel and a movie in which the main character provides a detailed guide on how to make napalm and who also planted a bomb into The Parker-Morris Building would certainly risk a rejection of public.

3.2. Masculinity

One of the main themes of *Fight Club* is toxic masculinity and also masculinity in general. According to Suzanne Del Gizzo, whose remarks on the novel will be used to improve this analysis, the novel shows that masculinity could be understood as an indicator of individualism.

⁷⁴ Sean Barrs, “Fight Club,” review of *Fight Club*, by Chuck Palahniuk, Good Reads, Accessed January 02, 2020, <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/2760760358>

⁷⁵ Bob Wake, “Fight Club – Chuck Palahniuk,” review of *Fight Club*, by Chuck Palahniuk, Culture Vulture, Accessed January 02, 2020, <https://culturevulture.net/books-cds/fight-club-chuck-palahniuk/>.

The “hypermasculinity” of *Fight Club* is then a way of rebellion against “feminized dominant culture”.⁷⁶ Something which resulted from the previously mentioned waves of feminism. The masculinity is also related to consumerism and society. The novel might be seen as suggesting American society wants men to think that to be a man means to lead consumeristic life centred around buying expensive clothes, furniture and going to gyms. But it is shown that the society does not really know what a real man looks like and that it has nothing to do with what we wear or how our bodies look like. “The gyms you go to are crowded with guys trying to look like men, as if being a man means looking the way a sculptor or an art director says.”⁷⁷ It has to do with how we think. The main protagonist of *Fight Club*, the Narrator, leads the sort of life that the American society wants him to. He is a white-collar hard worker who takes no risks in life and does everything his boss tells him to. However, despite the fact he follows all the guidelines which the American society has prepared for him, he feels disconnected from his manhood identity. Del Gizzo suggests that it is a consequence of his trauma which did not result from a war, but it is rather an outcome of consumerism.⁷⁸ This is, based on the introduction in the first part of the thesis, a typical image of how most men from Generation X felt, they were fed up with leading consumeristic life and just like the Narrator, they were too in the search for their masculinity. All the problems, the Narrator’s insomnia, for example was then, according to Del Gizzo, caused mainly by this consumer system which dehumanize people.⁷⁹

The main character goes to a support group called *Remaining Men Together*. Here men with testicular cancer gather to talk and cry. They represent the crisis of masculinity in America. It may be seen on the fact that soon after the Narrator’s first visit in this support group, a DID episode is triggered in the Narrator who creates an alter ego, Tyler Durden. Tyler has all the qualities that the Narrator lacks. He is a masculine confident sex symbol who fears no one and is not afraid of physical violence. Tyler leads his life according to his set of rules and unlike the Narrator, Tyler respects no authority and is not accountable to anyone. Tyler believes in the freedom to make your own choices regardless of what people around will think. According to him, it does not matter whether these choices meet some social standard or whether they are bad or good. However, it is important to face any consequences head-on, no matter what those will be. He wants to make people realise what they should do is to live their life the way they want it, not how society wants them to.

⁷⁶ Suzanne Del Gizzo, “The American Dream Unhinged: Romance and Reality in “The Great Gatsby” and “Fight Club”,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 6, (2007-2008): 73.

⁷⁷ Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 50.

⁷⁸ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 75.

⁷⁹ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 75.

Tyler then blows up the Narrator's apartment and makes him reject everything in what the Narrator believed in, that means money, physical safety, government, everything. Along with the Narrator, Tyler establishes *Fight Club*, a place where American men can reclaim through blood and sweat their raw manhood. While the society has hundreds of rules how the Americans should look, dress or behave, Tyler's *Fight Club* has only a few rules. The first rule is that "You don't talk about fight club" and the second rule is that "You don't talk about fight club." But let's break this rule for a while and talk about it. "Most guys are at fight club because of something they're too scared to fight. After a few fights, you're afraid a lot less."⁸⁰ Fighting at fight club does not solve anything, but it makes everyday problems look smaller.

Tyler believes that only through violence and pain we can be reborn and live our lives to the fullest. Violence is depicted in the novel as something necessary in order to prove one's masculinity. Del Gizzo even argues that "the violence and self-violence is inherent in all acts of self-invention or self-making".⁸¹ In the later part of her paper, Del Gizzo also suggests that violence is related to the American Dream as she states that a "creative destruction" fuels the "American commitment to progress".⁸² The fight club is in a sense something like a training camp that prepares men for war. Men are at each other's throats as if it was the last thing they are going to do. "A lot of best friends meet for the first time at fight club."⁸³ The same sorts of friendships are being built by soldiers who fight in a war. Men from Generation X needed something like this. Without a war, the male characters from *Fight Club* felt, according to Del Gizzo, abandoned by history.⁸⁴ The Narrator shares his viewpoint in the novel on what his generation struggles with and why he and Tyler had to start a fight club. "We don't have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we do, we have a great war of the spirit."⁸⁵ This Narrator's statement perfectly summarizes how Generation X felt, unlike their fathers or fathers of their fathers who had to fight in the Vietnam war, or WW2, they had no wars, nothing where they would prove their manhood, nothing that would define their generation.

Due to the fight club's popularity amongst men, Tyler establishes a so-called Project Mayhem which is for the most loyal fight club members. All members of the Project Mayhem had to go through a test to prove themselves worthy in Tyler's eyes. Just like fight club has rules, so does Project Mayhem. These include: no questions, no lies, no excuses and most

⁸⁰ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 54

⁸¹ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 81.

⁸² Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 91.

⁸³ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 54

⁸⁴ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 90.

⁸⁵ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 149

importantly that you have to unconditionally trust to Tyler. There are no names in Project Mayhem, every follower is called a space monkey.

As the first homework assignment, each space monkey has to bring 12 driving licenses of random people. The Narrator has to follow this order as well, so as one of his first victims he chooses to threaten Raymond K. Hessel, a 23 years old minimum wage shop worker. The Narrator takes his driving license, reads out loud where he lives and points a gun at him. Then he asks him if this is what he always wanted to do. Raymond answers that he wanted to be a vet, but that means too much school. The Narrator replies: “You could be in school working your ass off, Raymond Hessel, or you could be dead. You choose. [...] I’d rather kill you than see you working a shit job for just enough money to buy choose and television.”⁸⁶ This situation clearly showed how far the Narrator is willing to go in order to make someone else chase their dreams and not waste their time leading consumeristic lives and working 9-5 jobs that they hate.

3.3. Identity analysis

One of the crucial aspects of the novel is also the problem the narrator has with his identity. It was pointed out by Del Gizzo that he is unable to establish his sense of self. His identity is created only by objects he owns.⁸⁷ Del Gizzo in her article even suggests that these commodities work as a replacement for knowing himself.⁸⁸ The narrator’s identity will be further analysed in the following subchapters.

3.3.1. Absence of a father figure

The Narrator and Tyler share nearly no personality traits and behaviour. That being said, they have certainly one thing in common. That is, they both hate their fathers and lack any good memories of them from their childhood. Tyler never knew his father and the Narrator knew his for only about six years but does not remember anything. This fact has a huge impact on both characters throughout the book. It basically shapes their very existence and is one of the main reasons, why fight club is even established. But it is not only Tyler and the Narrator who lack the father-figure in their lives, but also most men who participate in the fight club: “What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 154-155

⁸⁷ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 75.

⁸⁸ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 86.

⁸⁹ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 50

The Narrator hates the fact that his father left him behind when he was just a child and he wants to be nothing like him. This is reflected in his life and his life choices, for instance, when the Narrator was deciding what to do after high school. “My father never went to college so it was really important I go to college.”⁹⁰ Which indicates it was more than an easy and certain decision for him. Their relationship is not very typical and depicts the grudge that the Narrator still holds for his father, despite the fact he is already an adult. Such unhealthy relationship most sons and fathers don’t have. What is usually typical, is that sons want to either follow in the footsteps of their fathers or at least they do not want to go directly against their fathers' beliefs. However, that is not in the nature of the Narrator character who is dedicated to doing everything that is in his power to stand up against everything his father did.

Interestingly enough, if the relationship which the Narrator has with his father is compared with the one that Tyler has with his father, it is safe to say that they are nearly identical. The first fight they had together, the Narrator asked Tyler what he had been fighting. Tyler said, his father. If the Narrator had been asked this question as well, he would have given Tyler exactly the same answer. Not only that the Narrator and Tyler have an almost identical relationship with their fathers, but the Narrator also sees in Tyler his own father. This statement is proven if the relationship which Tyler and Marla have is being observed. “Except for their humping, Marla and Tyler are never in the same room. This is familiar ground. This is exactly how my parents were invisible to each other.”⁹¹

This brings to the Narrator the bad old memories of his childhood. He is again that 6 years old powerless child who is just taking messages back and forth between his estranged parents.⁹² Looking at this particular situation from the psychological point of view, the mother-father relationship is very important to the healthy development of a child and can greatly affect the type of relationships the child is going to have with other people throughout his life. According to Joffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford Wilcox, one of the biggest impacts a father has on his child is indirect and is largely affected by the quality of the relationship with the mother of their children.⁹³ This statement should not be particularly surprising as children observe their parents and how they behave towards each other almost every single day. It is the single most intense relationship a child recognizes which is not directly with the child.

⁹⁰ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 50-51

⁹¹ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 65-66.

⁹² Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 66.

⁹³ Joffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford Wilcox, *The Importance of Father in the Healthy Development of Children* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006), 11.

Furthermore, Rosenberg and Wilcox note that “Fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect and deal with conflict within the relationship in an adult and appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they are to treat women.”⁹⁴ However, what the Narrator remembers about his father is basically only the fact that he and his mother were invisible to each other. That means the Narrator is predetermined to treat women in a similar poor way. This is one of the very first hints in the book hinting towards the fact that Tyler and the Narrator are actually the same person. Reason being Tyler behaves exactly the same as the father of the Narrator did and he behaves in such a way because he is the Narrator who is predestined to some extent to the same behaviour as his dad.

Apart from the mentioned indirect impact a father has on his child, he also influences his child directly. By a direct influence is understood influence which a father has on his child due to his presence. A father influences his child directly if he is actively taking part in the child’s life. It is scientifically proven that children who have fathers that spend their time with them are, as Rosenberg and Wilcox state, “[...] psychologically and emotionally healthier”.⁹⁵ However, not the Narrator nor Tyler have any substantial memories of their fathers thus they are psychologically damaged right from the beginning of the book. When the Narrator states: “Maybe, we did not need a father to complete ourselves,”⁹⁶ he is indicating they did not feel complete.

3.3.2. Mother figure

It is not known who actually raised the Narrator once his dad left him as it is not mentioned in the book. However, what, is, known is that the men in the fight club were raised by women and thus it can be assumed that the Narrator was most likely raised by a woman as well. Whether the mother-figure was in the Narrator’s life his actual mother or another woman can be only presumed. What is known for sure is that the Narrator is living on his own from the beginning of the book. Unfortunately, his way of living does not make him happy nor complete. He feels trapped in his own life and as a result of his unhappiness he is having sleeping difficulty. He is trying everything he can think of to get a good night sleep, but because nothing seems to be working for him, he joins out of despair a breast cancer support group called *Remaining Men Together* where he meets Bob, a man who looks by his appearance like a big teddy bear.

⁹⁴ Rosenberg et al., *The Importance of Father*, 11.

⁹⁵ Rosenberg et al., *The Importance of Father*, 11.

⁹⁶ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 54.

Bob has huge breasts and estrogenic voice, both of which are caused because of his high testosterone levels. Bob also has no testicles as they were removed by doctors because of the breast cancer he has. The Narrator is in comparison to Bob so small that Bob's breasts are at his eye level. Once the Narrator meets Bob in the support group and says nothing, Bob expects the worst and hugs him as tight as he can. At that moment, the Narrator suddenly feels like he can finally let go and he starts crying. With this cry, he is reborn, resurrected and he feels more alive than he ever did before, that night he finally sleeps like a baby.⁹⁷

Taking into account all of Bob's features, he is basically a man trapped inside a woman's body. So, once the Narrator pushes his head to his breasts, it probably reminds him of his childhood when his mother or other mother-figure was protecting him. He feels again safe, secure and protected from the outside world. Del Gizzo further adds this support group satisfy his deep-seated need for intimacy which his life otherwise lacks as it is shown in the early parts of the novel he is not even used to be touched. It is also suggested that the author of the novel wanted to show that due to the contemporary culture full of consumerism, there is no natural place for intimacy in general.⁹⁸ On the other hand, it is also suggested by Del Gizzo, the violence and the fights are in fact a form of "brutal physical intimacy".⁹⁹ The fights can be therefore seen as a masculine substitution for human contact. It is also proposed by Del Gizzo that this physical intimacy, mainly the violence, gives a clear sense of self in the contemporary society.¹⁰⁰

3.3.3. Religion

Fight Club has also a religious subtext and contains biblical references. The book is neither pro nor anti-Christian, it is pro-Tyler, i.e. Tyler is in the book regarded as a God. Right in the prologue of the novel, "the Narrator tells Tyler that if he wants to be famous, he'll tell them everything, that he's been there since the beginning".¹⁰¹ By this statement, the Narrator basically promises Tyler that wherever he goes, he will say that Tyler is a God. The Narrator says this because at that moment he is afraid for his life as Tyler is holding a gun in his mouth. The Narrator is well aware of Tyler's ultimate goal to change the world. But to do that, he needs someone who will tell the story about the great Tyler once he is gone. The narrator knows this so he continues "Where would Jesus be if no one had written the gospels?"¹⁰² Christians have

⁹⁷ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 22.

⁹⁸ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 77.

⁹⁹ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 86.

¹⁰⁰ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 90.

¹⁰¹ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 19.

¹⁰² Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 15.

gospels which function as records of Christ's life and his teaching, there should be something similar that would describe Tyler's preaching. The Narrator promises Tyler that he is going to be the one who will tell the world about Tyler so his legacy could live on forever and change people's perception about their way of living. People are no longer going to just survive in today's world, they will actually live, just like Tyler preaches. Just like Christians have their churches to go to, Tyler has a fight club, that is his church. He also has his followers and believers, who attend his preaching, the space monkeys. Del Gizzo agrees with this perception and claims that the narrator has god-like qualities and his followers are like apostles.¹⁰³ In this respect, there is not much of a difference between these two religions, at fight clubs, there is "hysterical shouting in tongues, like at church. When you wake up on Sunday afternoon you feel saved."¹⁰⁴

According to the BBC archive, "Christians recognise Jesus as the Son of God who was sent to save mankind from death and sin."¹⁰⁵ However, Tyler's religion is all about human sins. It promotes anarchy, rebellion and violence. Much like Christianity has its own set of rules, so does fight club. The rules on which is fight club and then later on project mayhem build are in sharp contradiction to the 10 Commandments in which Christians believe and follow. According to the old testament, its followers cannot among other things commit murder, steal or dishonour their fathers and mothers. However, the fifth rule of project mayhem tells its followers that they have to trust Mr Durden, no matter what. Taking this into account, Tyler hates his father and does not want to honour his father in any way. If anything, what he would do is fight him. He is also capable of torturing or even killing another person, should it mean they threaten the existence of the fight club. The same is also expected from the participants of the fight club who have to listen and do as their god, Tyler, says.

Another example that points out to the fact that Tyler sees himself as a figure similar to Jesus is supported in the book when Tyler fights 3 rounds with 3 different fight club members. During these fights he takes a big beating, his collarbone snaps, his teeth cut his tongue in half and his teeth are completely shattered. But he does not fight back. "The last thing we have to do is your martyrdom thing. Your big death thing."¹⁰⁶ For Tyler, this is the same thing that Jesus Christ did about 2 000 years ago when willingly took a beating and was ready to be the martyrdom.

¹⁰³ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 78.

¹⁰⁴ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ "God, Jesus and the saints," BBC, last modified August 14, 2014, https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/basics_1.shtml/.

¹⁰⁶ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 203.

In the last chapter of the book, the Narrator thinks he is dead, resting in heaven, but he is not, he is actually in a mental hospital. The chapter starts with the statement, “In my Father’s house are many mansions”. The exact same verse can be found in the King James Bible Version; John 14:2. The current generations could think that the Narrator is now dead resting in heaven in “a very large and [...] expensive house”¹⁰⁷, as that is the today’s definition of a mansion according to the Cambridge dictionary. However, that is according to Professor Howard Snyder a wrong misinterpretation of this verse as “In King James’ day, a ‘mansion’ was a room, not a huge, fancy house”¹⁰⁸. The professor further argues that the first part of the verse, in my Father’s house, does not necessarily mean heaven, but it can be anywhere “where God’s presence is manifest.”¹⁰⁹ However, in this case, the Narrator really does believe he is in heaven and that he is surrounded by angels and seated with God.

“The angels here are the Old Testament kind, legions and lieutenants, a heavenly host who works in shifts, days, swing. Everything in heaven is quit, rubber-soled shoes. I’ve met God across his long walnut desk with his diplomas hanging on the wall behind him [...].”¹¹⁰

The angels working in shifts are nurses who take care of him. Rubber-soled shoes are worn by hospital staff and God with diplomas is his psychiatrist.

3.3.4. Dissociative identity disorder

The disorder has already been introduced in the first part of the paper and there is no doubt the main protagonist of *Fight Club*, the Narrator, also suffers this mental condition. He is lonely, disconnected and isolated from other people. As Del Gizzo puts it, “alienated”.¹¹¹ He hates his job, boss and has no real joy in his life. He feels trapped in his own life, struggling with creating any meaningful connection with other people. Del Gizzo adds he is forgetful, feels alienation and most importantly a splint sense of himself.¹¹² On several occasions, he mentions he would be happy if his plane crashed with him and he died. It would free him from his miserable life. If he had the strength, he would have killed himself. In the second chapter of the novel, the Narrator mentions that he has insomnia and that he hadn’t had a good night sleep for a very

¹⁰⁷ “mansion,” Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed on November 18, 2019.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mansion>.

¹⁰⁸ “Father’s House — Many Mansions!,” Seedbed, Howard Snyder, last modified April 17, 2016,

<https://www.seedbed.com/fathers-house-many-mansions/>.

¹⁰⁹ “Father’s House — Many Mansions!”

¹¹⁰ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 207.

¹¹¹ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 78.

¹¹² Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 73.

long. To deal with it, he visited a doctor who advised him to go to a support group to see how people have to endure real pain. When the Narrator is at the doctor, he says “Three weeks, and everything becomes an out-of-body experience.”¹¹³ And this is exactly the way patients with dissociative identity disorder describe their condition, like an out-of-body experience.

Because DID is usually developed during childhood to those who experience a long-term drama, it’s safe to speculate that’s also the case with the Narrator who was psychologically abused by the neglect of his father. That being said, episodes of dissociative identity disorder need a trigger mechanism and in the case of the Narrator, that’s the occurrence of Marla. “I know why Tyler had occurred. Tyler loved Marla. From the first night I met her, Tyler or some part of me had needed a way to be with her.”¹¹⁴ However, the Narrator could never be with such a strong woman as Marla is. This fact put a lot of stress on him and with the combination of insomnia, it was enough for a DID episode.

Tyler and the Narrator lead mutually exclusively lives as if they were not the same person. They interact with each other and build a bizarre but strong friendship. Generally speaking, people with DID, cannot communicate with their alters and only one alter can appear during a single time. So, the fact that the Narrator and Tyler communicate with each other does not provide an accurate image of patients who are diagnosed with DID. Tyler is a night person who works part-time night shifts as a movie projectionist. Tyler is the devil of the night when violence occurs the most. On the other hand, the Narrator is a day person and works only during the day. This is how they can co-exist in one body. The day is the Narrator’s and the night when the Narrator can’t fall asleep because of insomnia, Tyler takes over. At first, the Narrator does not realise that Tyler exists only in his mind, he discovers this fact at the end of the novel. With the occurrence of Tyler Durden, the Narrator’s normal life is disrupted. Essentially, he quit his job, stops attending support groups and stops living in a house filled with Ikea furniture. The brand is also important as it can be seen, Del Gizzo suggests, as a symbol of social engineering which does not enable people to choose freely.¹¹⁵ Such radical behaviour is not anything out of ordinary for patients with DID. Both the Narrator and his alter ego Tyler have access to the same memories. However, at the end of the novel when Tyler wants to take complete control over the Narrator, the Narrator no longer remembers most things that Tyler has done. That is not very surprising as amnesia is very typical for people with a dissociative identity disorder.

¹¹³ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 19.

¹¹⁴ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 198.

¹¹⁵ Del Gizzo, “The American Dream,” 76.

Throughout the novel, there are dozens of hidden hints that indicate they are one person. That being said, Chuck Palahniuk has done a wonderful job of hiding them from the reader. So, despite the fact there are so many hints about the Narrator's multiple personality disorder, the reader sees them clearly only after finishing the novel.

One of the earliest and strongest hints about Tyler and the Narrator being one person is when the Narrator finds himself in a hospital after a night in the fight club and Tyler says to the hospital staff that the Narrator fell down. At that moment the Narrator says "Sometimes, Tyler speaks for me."¹¹⁶ This line could be wrongly misinterpreted, and one could think that Tyler merely advises the Narrator what to say. However, that's not the case as Tyler actually says it for him. Another, even more obvious hint can be observed at a situation when Tyler asks the Narrator not to ever talk about him with Marla, otherwise, he will leave him.¹¹⁷ The Narrator without hesitation promises it. Tyler does this as a precaution so the Narrator would not start a conversation with Marla about Tyler which could result in finding out that Tyler lives only the Narrator's head.

Eventually, the Narrator starts realising that something does not add up. In the search for Tyler, he travels by plane to the Chicago O'Hare International Airport and when he wakes up after the flight, he asks an intriguing philosophical question about oneself identity. "If you can wake up in a different place. If you can wake up in a different time. Why can't you wake up as a different person?"¹¹⁸ Which is exactly what is happening to the Narrator. He flights long distances because of work, wakes up in different time zones, in different places, so why could he not wake up as a different person? However, because at that moment the Narrator still does not know that he often wakes up as a different person, this question is only rhetorical. Del Gizzo also claims these time shifts largely contribute to the troubles with distinguishing his dreams from reality and the problems with perception.¹¹⁹

Once he steps off the plane, he goes to bars where people call him "sir" and welcome him as if he was there before, but he does not remember it. So, the Narrator asks Marla who does she think he is. She answers "Tyler Durden". The Narrator falls asleep in the middle of the conversation with Marla, Tyler wakes him up and asks him why he has been asking about him as he promised not to. Tyler stops pretending that he is another person and says to the Narrator he was wondering when the Narrator would figure it out. "There isn't me and you,

¹¹⁶ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 52.

¹¹⁷ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 72.

¹¹⁸ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 157.

¹¹⁹ Del Gizzo, "The American Dream," 73.

anymore. ‘ We both use the same body, but at different times.’¹²⁰ At that moment, the Narrator finally believes he has dissociative identity disorder.

Having realised that Tyler lives only in his head, he decides to fight him in the most effective and radical way most patients with DID sooner or later fight their alters, that means by committing suicide. The Narrator wants to destroy Tyler grandly, so he takes him on top of the Parker-Morris Building where he planted a bomb. Should the bomb have failed, he also brought with him a gun that he presses against Tyler’s throat. Just before the Narrator is about to pull the trigger, he experiences epiphany moment and he yells “I am not killing myself [...]. I’m killing Tyler.”¹²¹

3.4. Literary devices

This chapter analyses the narrative style and literary devices used in *Fight Club*. While Chuck Palahniuk used in *Fight Club* all three narrative perspective types: the first, second and third-person narrative, most of the story is written in the first-person narrative. The reason why Palahniuk used mostly the first-person narrative is so he would not have to name the main character of the story which would reveal the main plot twist to the reader. By doing so, the reader does not realize that the Narrator and Tyler are the same person not any sooner than by the very end of the novel.

With that being said, Palahniuk also occasionally switches from the first-person to the second-person narrative to create an element of interactivity with the reader. When he does, he wants to take the reader directly to the story and he applies allegory to convey a broader message about real-world issues people face.

“You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you”¹²²

In this case, the change of perspective to the second-person narrative is supposed to make people realize that they might be the ones who buy furniture and other possessions that they don’t really need in their lives. At the same time, it also illustrates how much the Narrator

¹²⁰ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 164.

¹²¹ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 205.

¹²² Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 44.

is disconnected from reality because while he is speaking in the second person narrative, he is the one who buys all that furniture.

Fight Club is narrated in the past and present tense with a non-linear structure. Because the novel is cyclical, the first 4-page short chapter takes the reader to the end of the novel, everything in between are essentially flashbacks or even flashbacks within flashbacks, taking the reader even further in the past.

The novel is narrated by a highly *unreliable* narrator, who is in denial about his own identity. As a result, the Narrator lies to the reader and hides the truth about Tyler until the very end of the novel. The Narrator often deals with a lot of events at once, so the reader gets a feeling as if the Narrator was all over the place. For instance, when Tyler is making a painful mark on the back of the Narrator's hand, the Narrator simultaneously describes 3 different topics about which he is talking about at that moment with Tyler, that means he describes how Tyler is saying to him how he has to live through the pain, how the first soap was made and how certain animals like monkeys were shot into space.

While Palahniuk implements minimalism techniques and uses mostly short sentences with a very few details, there are also times when he uses extremely detailed descriptions, such as when the Tyler explains how to make a lightbulb bomb or what are the three ways how to make napalm. These overdetailed descriptions build authority for the main characters and they make the reader realise that the protagonists know a lot about the subject. Palahniuk often uses very unstraightforward narrative, which occasionally may seem quite illogical for the reader, "Tyler and me at the edge of the roof, the gun in my mouth, I'm wondering how clean the gun is."¹²³ However, in a life or death situation like this, the reader does not expect for the Narrator to think about the cleanness of the gun. Because of this unusual narrative style, even the dullest and boring activities like making soap out of human fat become suddenly entertaining.

3.4.1. Repetition

Palahniuk in *Fight Club* uses a lot of repetition. There are a couple of reasons why he does so and why the repetition he uses is not always the same. The first major reason why he employs repetition is so the reader would realize that some idea or thought is particularly important. This can be observed when he wants to give to the reader a small hint about the main plot twist: "Everything is so far away, a copy of a copy of a copy."¹²⁴, which hints towards the fact that

¹²³ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 13.

¹²⁴ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 124.

Tyler is just the Narrator's copy, not a real person. Or when he makes the rules of fight club which everyone has to remember "The first rule of fight club is you don't talk about fight club. The second rule of fight club is you don't talk about fight club." The second reason why *Fight Club* contains a lot of repetitions is so Palahniuk could create an ever-evolving story. For instance, after the Narrator reads Reader's Digest, he finds out that the authors of these articles talk about human organs as about themselves in the first person. From that moment, he refers to himself as Joe: "I am Joe's Cold Sweat."¹²⁵ "I am Joe's Blood-Boling Rage."¹²⁶ "I am Joe's Hard drive."¹²⁷ The Narrator keeps repeating similarly short, but powerful phrases in which he shares his emotions and feelings like fear, rage, love or desperation. It almost seems as if the Narrator's name could be Joe, but this claim is never supported in the book.

What is, however, established is that the Narrator represents an average Joe who symbolizes an average white-collar middle-class American worker who goes to a 9 to 5 work. It is, therefore, quite possible that the Narrator thinks about himself in the same way. The idea that the name Joe is associated with an average Joe is supported in the novel when the Narrator tries to recruit new fighters to fight club "The idea is to take some Joe on the street who's never been in a fight and recruit him."¹²⁸ Palahniuk managed through the short lines which were cited above (reference no. 69, 70, 71) use symbolism, repetition, a stream of consciousness and a metaphor all at the same time.

3.4.2. Symbolism

Because the narrative style of the novel is not straightforward, many important themes of the novel are not explicitly stated, and major themes of the book are hidden in the use of symbolism and other literary devices. For that reason, the most essential symbols and their meanings will be now reviewed and examined.

Space monkeys are symbols of blind obedience. This name is used whenever is referred to Tyler's most loyal followers and project Mayhem believers. They don't have names as they cannot be defined by their old lives and by their family names. They are stripped of their past and set free from the social standards they had to follow. Tyler took away from them their jobs, names, clothes. They are Tyler's foot soldiers who do his bidding and don't ask questions. They are Project Mayhem's test subject, just like were all monkeys that the humankind sent into

¹²⁵ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 184.

¹²⁶ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 96.

¹²⁷ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 205.

¹²⁸ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 119.

space. “Think about the monkeys shot into space. Without their death, their pain, without their sacrifice, we would have nothing”¹²⁹

Soap in its nature symbolizes purification and cleanliness, but when Tyler and his space monkeys make out of human fat soap bars, his intentions are to cleanse the upper class from their materialistic beliefs. What, however, rich people do is that they pay to go to liposuction clinics to get rid of something that they basically buy afterwards. This symbolizes the hypocrisy of people that blindly buy anything just because they can.

Scars, bruises and similar marks symbolise in *Fight Club* both pride and shame. The ones that are symbols of pride and self-respect are made intentionally and willingly from fights or from the Tyler’s mark which is called the Tyler's kiss. The Tyler’s kiss is a prove that Tyler’s followers were burned with chemicals and that Tyler made them live through the pain, so they would finally feel fully alive. Once the pain from the Tyler's kiss became unbearable and they hit the bottom only then they could be reborn knowing that they have done something in their lives worthwhile. On the other hand, other marks which the main characters don’t bear intentionally symbolise shame. Two of such examples can be observed when doctors think that the Narrator’s birthmark is a new type of cancer and he is afraid that they will say he is gay or when Marla instantly thinks that a lump, she has found on her breast means she has breast cancer.

Penguin is the Narrator’s power animal and another symbol. It appears during his support groups sessions and it symbolizes that the Narrator is grounded in an existential crisis and just like a penguin cannot fly because it is one of few flightless birds, neither can the Narrator to get out of his miserable life.

These are the most important symbols displayed in the novel, but because Palahniuk loves for the reader to make his own conclusions, there are also dozens of more symbols in which he shares his thoughts and ideas about the society, existentialism, Christianity and humanity itself. If Palahniuk does not use symbols to manifest his thoughts on these subjects, he uses other literary devices like irony for example. This literary device also greatly helps him inexplicitly convey his thoughts.

3.4.3. Irony

In *Fight Club* Palahniuk uses all 3 major irony types, that means dramatic, verbal, as well as situational irony. While there are a number of occasions when Palahniuk uses each irony type,

¹²⁹ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 78.

the most prominent dramatic irony of the novel is when the Narrator is unable to interpret his situation correctly. The audience has in this case superior perception and unlike the Narrator who is in denial about his split personality, the audience knows that Tyler lives just in the Narrator's head. This dramatic irony in which the audience knows more about the situation than the leading character creates intense suspense during which the reader is eager to read about how the Narrator reacts to this discovery when he finally finds out the truth.

When verbal irony is being used, the characters say something in contradictory to what piece of information they want to convey. Palahniuk expects the reader to decode the hidden meanings based on the knowledge that the reader has about the main characters. As an example, let's look at argumentation that the Narrator uses to support his innocence when a police officer starts to question him to find out the truth about bombing the Narrator's apartment, "I loved my life. I loved that condo. I loved every stick of furniture."¹³⁰ However, because the reader knows that the Narrator hates everything about his life, he knows that this statement is merely ironic utterance.

Palahniuk opts for situational irony in the story more than once, but the principal situational irony is again related to the main plot twist. Reason being, when the Narrator is searching everywhere for Tyler, his expectations are nothing of the same to what will actually happen instead. So, while both the reader and the Narrator expect to find Tyler, perhaps in some fight club, the big novel's revelation comes to light, and they reveal that the Narrator and Tyler use the same body.

3.4.4. Allusions

Fight Club contains also dozens of allusions which refer to famous singers, actors, books and book characters, heroes and other prominent icons originating outside the text. Among some of the used cultural references is a fairy-tale character Cinderella, folk hero Robin Hood, the world's most famous portrait of all time Mona Lisa or the world's most famous doll Barbie. These allusions are known worldwide to nearly all readers, there are, however, also pop-cultural allusions which are not decoded that easily, these allusions were popular in the United States during the 1970s. These include references to John Prine's country song Dear Abby, or to an American documentary wildlife television program Wild Kingdom, or to a popular American novel, drama film and song Valley of the Dolls.

¹³⁰ Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, 110.

4. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to analyse Chuck Palahniuk's viewpoints in *Fight Club* on masculinity, violence and identity crisis and determine how these viewpoints match to what is known about Generation X. This conclusion will now provide with the ideology that Chuck Palahniuk presents in *Fight Club* which applies for Generation X in their twenties and thirties, in his other work his views might differ, but it was not within the scope of this thesis to analyse other publications.

In accordance with the analysis made in this thesis, Palahniuk's viewpoints on manhood are that most men from his generation lack it and that the only way to prove manliness is through acts of violence. Palahniuk depicts violence as something of which people should not be afraid of, they should rather welcome it because that is when they will feel truly alive. According to his ideology, violence is a natural part of our human lives. He also firmly believes in the importance of sacrifice as long as it is justified by the greater good.

Palahniuk is of the opinion that they are a generation of men raised by women and that the biggest war they lead is a war of the spirit. He gathers that the absence of a father figure in the lives of men attending fight club accounts for the fact why they do not feel complete as they had no masculine idol to whom they could look up to. And because they were all raised by their female parent, they all have primarily feminine personality qualities. Another reason why Palahniuk believes that men from Generation X lost their touch with their manhood is because the capitalist-based world no longer required from men to have masculine traits, they were just simply not in such high demand as they were in the past. Palahniuk's believes that the feeling of a loss of a role in society cannot be healed by material possessions. Furthermore, Palahniuk made very clear his viewpoints on contemporary society and its standards. He regards society standards as preposterous and the idea that people chase for careers, money and high social position seems absurd to him. Palahniuk does not like to raise public awareness only about the issues of society, but also in the case of *Fight Club*, about people who have dissociative identity disorder.

Taking into consideration the historical and cultural context of Generation X described in the first part of this thesis and the issues they faced in their twenties and thirties, Palahniuk provided in *Fight Club* a befitting overall image of the identity and masculinity crisis this generation was going through. He managed not only to capture the loss of manhood and identity crisis of individuals from Generation X, but also the ridiculousness of excessive consumerism that these individuals were doing to fill their void caused by their identity crisis. While how

Palahniuk depicted violence in *Fight Club* may seem like an exaggeration, based on the reports of violent crimes committed in the 1990s decade which made known the theoretical part of this thesis, it is indeed true that Generation X was significantly more violent than the generation of the last decade. For that reason, even the excessive use of violence depicted by Palahniuk seems to be all in all depicted accurately. In a couple of regards, Palahniuk also well portrayed dissociative identity disorder. His depiction of the possible cause for DID (childhood trauma), DID symptoms (insomnia, dissociation, inability to recall events, memory gaps) and the trigger mechanism (the appearance of Marla) match to how patients with DID describe this mental illness.

While the Palahniuk's depictions of Generation X are fairly accurate, he failed in one crucial aspect when he was portraying the typical behaviour of patients with DID. In *Fight Club*, the host and its alter often communicate with each other and are present simultaneously. However, patients who were diagnosed with DID can never communicate with their alters as only either the host or one of the alters can be in the power of the body at one time.

Resume

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zejména vyobrazením maskulinity, násilí a krize identity v úspěšném románu Chucka Palahniuka *Fight Club*, který je často pokládán za určitou generační výpověď. Dále se tato závěrečná práce soustředila na vážné psychické onemocnění zvané disociativní porucha identity, které se díky právě publikaci tohoto úspěšného románu dostalo do povědomí široké veřejnosti. Román *Fight Club* patří mezi transgresivní fikce, jež byl publikován v druhé polovině 90. let 20. století.

Tato práce je rozdělena na dvě hlavní části. První část je teoretická a poskytla historicko-literární kontext díla. První kapitola teoretické části se zaměřila na všeobecné, ale zásadní informace o generaci X. Zde bylo objasněno, že generace X na rozdíl od předcházejících generací, které byly definovány velkými historickými událostmi (jako byla například Velká hospodářská krize, anebo válka ve Vietnamu), Generace X žádnou zásadní historickou událost neměla. Dále byl poskytnut přehled, jakým způsobem Generace X na svět pohlížela, tedy že neměli žádný respekt k autoritám, zcela je nezajímala politická scéna a neměli zájem se hnát za kariérami, penězi, ani za uzavřením manželství.

Další kapitola teoretické části se zaměřila na vysvětlení maskulinity a toxické maskulinity. Zde bylo objasněno, že jeden z hlavních důvodů, proč muži Generace X měli pocit, že ztrácí své mužství, stál za tím, že typicky mužské vlastnosti v době kapitalismu nebyly společností tolik vyžadovány jako v předchozích dekadách. Důvod, který za tím stojí je, že se po mužích očekávalo, aby se uměli uhánět v korporátním světě, byly finančně stabilní a měli dobrou kariéru, fyzická síla již nebyla primárním aspektem, který by určoval vysoké postavení ve společnosti.

V souvislosti s maskulinitou a potřebou prokázání mužství se další kapitola zaměřila na násilí a na základě konzultace s výzkumem Světové zdravotnické organizace (WHO) bylo poskytnuto vysvětlení, že násilí na sebe může vzít různé formy a že, jak fyzické, tak i psychické násilí může mít krátkodobý i dlouhodobý vliv nejen na člověka jako takového, ale i na jeho celkovou osobnost. V případě, že je použito násilí na dítěti anebo je péče o něj zanedbána, může být život toho jedince natolik negativně ovlivněn, že si může vybudovat vážné psychické problémy, které s ním mohou zůstat až do dospělosti a které mohou ojediněle vést například jako v případě hlavního hrdiny *Fight Clubu* k disociativní poruše identity.

Poslední kapitola teoretické části se zaměřila na disociativní poruchu identity a objasnila, že mezi nejtypičtější příznaky této duševní nemoci patří výpadky paměti, deprese, výkyvy nálad, změny chování a nespavost. Člověk s disociativní poruchou má vždy nejméně 2

osobnosti, ty se skládají z hostitele neboli hlavní osobnosti plus z alternativních identit neboli z tzv. alterů. Pacient s disociativní poruchou identity může mít například altera, který velmi dobře zvládá vypjaté stresové situace, kterým by hostitel nedokázal čelit. V takovém momentě alter převeze kontrolu nad tělem hostitele a hostitel nemá moc jakkoliv situaci ve které se jeho alter nachází ovlivnit, funguje jako vzdálený pozorovatel (něco jako když sledujeme televizi a vidíme, co se děje, ale nemůžeme situaci ovlivnit). Většina pacientů, kterým byla diagnostikována disociativní porucha identity mají velké obtíže vést normální život a drtivá většina z nich se pokusí alespoň jednou za svůj život spáchat sebevraždu.

Praktická část bakalářské práce se zaměřila na to, jak Chuck Palahniuk zachytil obraz generace X a jaký je jeho pohled na otázky související s maskulinitou, násilím a krizí identity. Palahniukův názor na mužství je takový, že většina mužů jeho generace, generace X, se podle něj cítí, jako kdyby ztratili kontakt se svým mužstvím a jediným způsobem, jak ho získat zpět je podle něj použití násilí. Palahniuk líčí násilí jako něco, čeho bychom se neměli bát, ale měli bychom ho spíše vítat, protože je nedílnou součástí našeho života a umožňuje nám se cítit skutečně naživu. Palahniuk rovněž pevně věří v důležitost oběti, pokud je odůvodněna větším dobrem. I když se může člověku jevit, že *Fight Club* obsahuje až příliš násilí, je pravdou, že generace X měla větší sklony k násilí než generace posledního desetiletí, tento fakt byl podpořen poměřením statistik o násilných zločinech spáchaných v 90. letech 20. století a v roce 2018 (které byly popisovány v teoretické části práce). Z tohoto důvodu se zdá, že i nadměrné použití násilí, které Palahniuk vyobrazil v díle *Fight Club* je odpovídající.

Palahniuk je toho názoru, že jsou generací mužů, která byla vychována primárně ženami a že největší válku kterou jejich generace vedla byla psychická. Podle něho absence role otce v životech mužů, kteří bojují ve fight clubu je důvodem, proč se necítí psychicky úplní, což je následek toho, že neměli žádný mužský vzor ve svých životech, ke kterému by mohli vzhlížet. A protože byli všichni títo muži vychováni ženským rodičem, mají všichni převážně ženské osobnostní vlastnosti.

Další důvod, proč se Palahniuk domnívá, že muži Generace X ztratili kontakt se svým mužstvím je, protože kapitalistický svět po mužích nevyžaduje, aby měli vyložené mužské vlastnosti, zde totiž nad fyzickou silou vítězí peníze a kariéra. Palahniuk se domnívá, že pocit ztráty role ve společnosti nemůže být vyléčen hmotným majetkem. Kromě toho Palahniuk velmi jasně objasnil své názory na současnou společnost a její standardy. Společenské standardy považuje za nesmyslné a myšlenka, že se lidé honí za kariérou, penězi a vysokým sociálním postavením mu připadá absurdní. Palahniuk neupozorňuje pouze na problémy společnosti, ale také jako v případě novely *Fight Club*, např. na vážnou disociativní poruchu

identity. Palahniukovo vyobrazení možné příčiny vytvoření disociativní poruchy identity (drama z dětství), symptomy poruchy (nеспavost, disociace, neschopnost si vzpomenout na různé události, výpadky paměti) a spouštěcí mechanismus (objevení Marly v životě hlavního hrdiny) odpovídají tomu, jak pacienti s disociativní poruchou popisují své obtíže.

Tato závěrečná bakalářská práce došla k závěru, že Palahniuk v románu *Fight Club* poměrně přesně zachytil problémy související s maskulinitou, násilím a krizí identity s kterými Generace X zápasila. Ne tak úspěšně ovšem bylo zachyceno typické chování lidí trpící disociativní poruchou identity. V díle *Fight Club* totiž hostitel i jeho alter spolu často komunikují, vyměňují názory mezi sebou a jsou tím pádem oba v jeden okamžik přítomni současně. Nicméně, pacienti, kteří opravdu mají tuto poruchu identity nemohou se svými altery nikdy komunikovat, protože v jeden okamžik může tělo ovládat buď hostitel, anebo jedna z jeho alternativních identit.

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