



Postmodern Fragmented Self: Schizophrenia and Masculinity Crisis in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*

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Abstract

This paper deals with the relationship between the death of the subject and postmodern schizophrenia in late capitalist society from Fredric Jameson's point of view. Also, it explains how this relationship between the death of the subject and schizophrenia leads to the crisis of masculinity in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. In the postmodern era, late capitalism leads to the death of the individual subject, which leads to depthlessness and fragmentation. Jameson asserts that the idea of postmodern depthlessness appears in two phenomena: schizophrenia and pastiche. For Jameson, postmodern schizophrenia has nothing to do with the clinical meaning. It is a social and cultural process rather than a state of mind. He defines it as the breakdown of signifying chain and temporal unification. In *Fight Club*, Palahniuk introduces an example of postmodern schizophrenia and the masculinity crisis generated by capitalism. The protagonist has schizophrenia because of capitalist society. His schizophrenic state of mind resembles the postmodern crisis of temporality in which he lives in a perpetual present, so he cannot formulate a unified sense of identity. He creates an altered personality to help him resist his chaotic state of mind that extends to his society. Consequently, he engages in self-destruction and invents an anarchist group to destroy capitalism. At the end of the novel, the protagonist cannot escape the schizophrenic state of mind since schizophrenia is a psychological response to the condition of postmodernism.

Keywords: Postmodernism, schizophrenia, masculinity crisis, Fredric Jameson, temporality, *Fight Club*



Late capitalist society generates anxieties about personal and social identity. Thus, commodification and technological changes cause fragmentation of both identity and society. Such fragmentation leads to the end of the belief of a unified and coherent ego. Robert Dunn asserts, "The triumph of commodity society threatens inherited modern conceptions of individual, casting doubt on previously accepted notions of personal and social identity" (1998, p. 4). For postmodernists, identities are ambiguous, fluid, and fragmented because of capitalism. Bryan Taylor states that the postmodern models of identity replace the traditional image of modern individuals. He adds that personal identity is not the organizer of communication anymore. Instead, discourses construct the narratives that help us understand the self, other, and world (2005, p. 117). Thus, postmodernists are skeptical of the modern free and content individual. They insist that a combination of social, economic, and political forces and discourses constructs the subject. These social, economic, and political discourses, described as capitalism in the postmodern era, enhance the sense of fragmentation and fluidity of postmodern identity.

Capitalism destroys any relationship between individuals, which causes an identity crisis in the postmodern era. Capitalism turns people into commodities and commodities into subjects. Consequently, individual and social identities lose the sense of unity and linear movement; they become fragmented. The experience of non-linearity and fragmentation changes the structure of postmodern novels. In this sense, literature reflecting late-capitalist temporality is characterized by the loss of historical consciousness. The narrative of such literature lacks linear development; it does not reflect the past, present, and future. Fredric Jameson explains this fragmented temporal aspect of postmodernism as "emblematic of disappearance of certain relationship to history and the past" (Andres, 1987, p. 31). In other words, late capitalism is the leading cause of fragmentation, time distortion, and non-linear temporality in postmodern novels. Thus, postmodern narratives lack the sense of narrative center; they do not follow an organic temporal logic, which leaves them fragmented and non-linear.

Accordingly, capitalism creates a new space, enhancing the sense of fragmentation, so the postmodern individual becomes schizophrenic and decentered. They cannot represent themselves because the capitalist society emphasizes instability, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. Jameson states, "we are sick and tired of the

subjectivity as such in its older classical forms" (1991, p. 151). In this sense, the postmodern culture, which expands through the social realm of multinational capitalism, provides a new space of fragmentation and schizophrenia rather than unification. Thus, postmodernism claims the death of a unique and distinctive individual. In postmodern culture, Jameson remarks that the postmodernists focus on synchronic rather than diachronic issues and the category of space rather than time (1991, p. 5). Therefore, the individual subject has disappeared because of multinational capitalism. This disappearance generates the depthlessness of postmodernism, which leads to schizophrenia, specifically in literature.

As postmodernists believe that the subject is fragmented rather than unified or rational, they claim the death of this unified subject. Patti Lather asserts that what is dead in postmodernism is the unified and monolithic subject capable of fully conscious and entirely rational action (1992, p. 103). Such death of a unified rational subject leads the postmodern individual to lose its depth with the loss of reality. The subject has no feelings such as alienation and isolation. That is to say, it has no depth to deal with self-representation. Jameson declares the end of individualism. He states that the old individual subject related to the concept of unique individual and individualism as an ideology is dead (2001, p. 25). In this sense, the subject becomes a fragmented being who has no core identity. In a word, the individual subject has no fixed identity. Jameson explains that feelings such as anxieties were dominant in modernism. Postmodernism replaces such feelings with a schizophrenic mentality, which turns into free-floating instances without logical or temporal organization (Andres, 1987, p. 30).

In other words, postmodern culture obliterates the concept of the self due to the fragmentation and fluidity of this self. This kind of fluidity and fragmentation that postmodern individuals experience in daily life expands the sense of depthlessness. Jameson asserts that postmodern depthlessness exposes itself in two phenomena; pastiche and schizophrenia. For Jameson, pastiche problematizes the sense of history, in which the death of the subject opens up a new possibility of historical allusion. Pastiche, therefore, indicates that any individual style can serve as an indicator of the past. Schizophrenia, on the other hand, becomes a psychological response to the condition of postmodernity. According to Jameson, schizophrenia is an essential feature of postmodernism. He claims

that his concept of schizophrenia has nothing to do with the clinical meaning of the word. Also, Jameson remarks that postmodern artists are not schizophrenic in any sense. In this regard, he states that the word schizophrenic is "descriptive and not diagnostic" (2001, p. 27). For Jameson, schizophrenia is the breakdown of signifying chain and temporal unification rather than a mental state. He sees postmodern schizophrenia as a cultural and social process.

Schizophrenic has no sense of personal identity, in which "our feeling of identity depends in our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time" (Jameson, 2001, p. 28). Persons with schizophrenia lack this sense of unified identity because they do not have experience of temporal continuity. Temporal continuity depends on the coherent organization of language in which language has a past and future. In this sense, the sentence moves in time to form a linear and coherent sequence. However, postmodern narrative abandons such linear and coherent experience, which enhances the sense of schizophrenia. Jameson adds that "schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence" (2001, p. 28). In this case, the schizophrenic individual loses the connection to reality.

Postmodernism problematizes the sense of reality. It is the epoch of simulacra, where reality turns into a copy. Therefore, postmodern culture cannot offer a linear temporal narrative form. Accordingly, the experience of postmodern reality resembles that of schizophrenia. Catherine Prendergast remarks that "Reality is thus accessible to postmodern theory through the thought patterns of the schizophrenic" (2017, p. 234). For postmodernists, language does not only express reality but also creates it. Therefore, the perception of time depends on the language. Both postmodernism and schizophrenia are the loss of temporal unification. The schizophrenic experiences temporal fragmentation, in which the schizophrenia as an experience is affected by spatialization of time experience. Postmodern texts no longer hold references to the past and cannot offer a linear temporal narrative form. Therefore, postmodern culture turns out to be a culture of simulacrum in which it has lost its origin, and everything has become a copy.

Postmodern narrative violently distorts the experience of time. The temporal organization and linearity give the story its meaning. However, postmodernism destroys this linearity of narrative because

of capitalism. Lyotard explains that capitalism complicates the experience of time in which "capital is grounded in the principal that money is nothing other than time placed in revers" (1991, p. 66). Moreover, postmodernism criticizes the notion of history as a grand narrative and problematizes the concept of the past. Jameson explains that schizophrenia, like postmodernism, drives by a lack of historicity due to postmodern recycling of the past.

Jameson notes that schizophrenic lives in an endless present when the different moments of the past "have a little connection" and have "no conceivable future on the horizon" (1991, p. 119). Thus, the temporal discontinuity leads to the disappearance of a sense of history. Qingxin Lin explains that "when the one-to-one correspondence between a signifier and signified disappears when the temporal connection is missing, the two features of postmodernism, i.e., "the transformation of reality into images" (pastiche) and "the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents" (schizophrenia) come into the fore" (2005, p. 100). In other words, schizophrenic individual experiences time not as a continuum but as a perpetual present. The postmodern fragmented temporal experience is a reflection of capitalist development. Therefore, this kind of fragmentation, especially the disappearance of a sense of the past or history, expresses the logic of the late capitalism and becomes the main feature of postmodernism. Jameson describes that individuals in late capitalist system lose their capacity to retain the past and live in a perpetual present. This change obliterates traditions of all earlier social formations (2001, p. 27). This kind of change marks a change of production into images and simulacra, which leads to postmodern depthlessness. The result of depthlessness is the death of meaning.

Alastair Morgan describes the state of the schizophrenic person as "A lack of feeling a subject, the alienation from relatedness, the loss of a sense of lived time" (2010, p. 181). This kind of self-fragmentation appears in the individual's sense of alienation, not only from his body but also from his society. Morgan explains that the schizophrenic individual, under the pressure of self-fragmentation, "retreats to an inner world, cut off from others, still longing for contact but unable to feel basic sense of connection" (2010, p. 179). Consequently, such a person loses contact with reality, in which the sense of time is distorted. Moreover, the relationship between the distortion of time and space is obvious in postmodern culture. Tatyana Fedosova remarks that time becomes

"unsteady, diverse, and revisable." Time becomes multidimensional. She adds that "Shifts in time also cause shifts in space which is reflected on M. Bakhtin's theory about chronotope, as a unity of time and space" (2015, p. 81). According to Jameson, we can understand postmodern temporal experience through his concept of "the spatialization of time," in which "time has become a perpetual present and thus spatial. Our relationship to the past is now a spatial one" (Andres, 1987, p. 32). Thus, the mentality of the schizophrenic helps us understand this temporal experience because the person with schizophrenia is bound to the perpetual present.

According to Salomon Resnik, in a psychotic crisis, the transition from space to time is not worked. He explains, "A spatial act becomes structured in time through the experience of separation. If the transition from space to time is not worked out 'in time,' it may become explosive" (2018, p. 180). Thus, the constancy of time-consciousness depends on the ability of identity to maintain its perception over time because our experience exists only across time. In this respect, the feeling of being a unitary subject is a consequence of the continuity of time-consciousness. Therefore, it becomes problematic to apprehend any experience related to the time if we are only aware of what is given in punctual now, as in schizophrenic cases. The person with schizophrenia cannot coherently unify the past, present, and future.

Furthermore, Lacan argues that the existential feeling of time as temporal continuity is an outcome of language. Therefore, he considers schizophrenia a system of damaged linguistic function. According to Lacan, the originality of the self depends on the mirror stage in which we recognize ourselves in reflecting or mirroring the Other. Therefore, the failure to reflect ourselves in the mirror of others indicates that we do not coherently exist as social beings. In the Lacanian symbolic order, people are not social beings if they cannot see themselves reflected in the Others. This relation between the self and others creates the Symbolic Order, which provides us with the transcoding scheme that enables us to speak within a common conceptual framework. Thus, the language increases the subject's sense of alienation in the Symbolic Order, in which it forces him to deal with objects in the world and Others. This dealing with the external world and others leads to further alienation in which language excludes the subject from the signifying chain.

For postmodernists, schizophrenia is a breakdown of signifying chain that reduces the schizophrenic experience into

unrelated pure material signifiers or a sequence of the present unrelated moments. Jonathan Redmond explains, "The rupture in the signifying chain occurs when the subject is unable to signify aspects of their existence along the axes of metonymy and metaphor" (2013, p. 2). This breakdown of signifying chain underlies many language problems in psychosis, such as loss of association and the breakdown in syntax. Thus, the fundamental symptom of schizophrenia is the absence of association. In schizophrenic experience, the one-to-one relation between signifiers is interrupted. Dunn states that the textual instability "could be read as a decline of reason and withering of unitary identity in society fragmented by technologically based process of signification, consumption, and power" (1998, p. 6). This kind of instability in language reflects a real fragmentation and destabilization of social and cultural relations and forms of identity.

Jameson remarks that the subject's exclusion from the signifying chain leads to the "slippage of signifieds" (1988, p. 94). This slippage leads to a fixed relation between the signifier and the signified, or what Jameson calls the animal language. This fixation, according to Jameson, is a "vicious circle and the storm of the norm itself, of the symbolic order, is not that of a happy end but rather of a perpetual alienation" (1988, p. 98). This dilemma of the Symbolic Order produces the contemporary fragmentation in both the psychic life of the subject and the text itself. Thus, the failure to enter the Symbolic Order is a malfunction in language and directs to fragmentation and schizophrenia. The malfunction of language depends on the breakdown of the signifying chain. Jameson elaborates that Lacan's conception of signifying chain is based on "the proposition that meaning is not one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified, between the materiality of language, between a word or name, and its referent or concept. Meaning on the new view is generated by the movement from signifier to signifier" (1991, p. 26). In this sense, the signified becomes a linguistic malfunction; therefore, the sentence loses its fluidity. Thus, personal identity becomes free-floating and schizophrenic.

The failure to enter the Symbolic Order indicates the failure to form a stable identity. In this sense, one of the significant features of the schizophrenic person is the lack of identity in which identity is split into two or more parts. It appears as a self-estrangement, in which the schizophrenic individual has no authentic self. The schizophrenic person struggles to accept his/her identity. In other

words, people with schizophrenia lack a basic sense of unity. They feel separated from their bodies, which become worthless. R.D. Laing remarks that schizophrenia is a condition of "ontological insecurity" (1990, p. 39). The ordinary self feels that his/her identity is unified and autonomous. Contrastingly, the person with schizophrenia feels that "his identity and autonomy are always in question" (Laing, 1990, p. 42). So, the external world acts as a threat to the schizophrenic individual.

According to Laing, schizophrenic persons "feel more unreal than real," as if they are dead rather than alive. As a result, they attempt to defend themselves by creating a "false self" (1990, p. 69). An attempt to protect their true genuine self leads them to lose any sense of reality. Therefore, the outside world becomes increasingly distorted. However, for postmodernists, schizophrenia is not merely a psychological problem but a socio-political one. It becomes a means to resist the political consciousness of capitalism. Morgan remarks that "the lifeless life of schizophrenia is not only a pathological aberration, but must be thought in relation to a wider societal sense that there is a deadened life at the heart of capitalist modernity" (2010, p. 183). Schizophrenia, then, is not only an individual experience but also reflects the experience of loss of vital reality in a whole society.

Like Jameson, Gills Deleuze and Felix Guattari define schizophrenia in terms of cultural aesthetic and social situations related to capitalist ideology. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they consider schizophrenia a procedure that describes the condition of social and cultural aesthetics rather than a state of mind. They remark that schizophrenia is "the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines, universal primary production as the essential reality of man and nature" (1983, p. 5). They see the schizophrenic tendency as a revolutionary tendency of capitalism in which all society had become a great social factory. Therefore, they ask: "Is it correct to say that in this sense schizophrenia is the product of capitalist machine" (1983, p. 33). They answer that capitalism as a mode of production produces "an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear, but which nonetheless continues to act as capitalism's limit" (1983, p. 34). Thus, postmodern schizophrenia is a production of culture in multinational capitalism that depends more on technology, media, and machines than on the experience of the individual ego.

Accordingly, Deleuze and Guattari believe that the desiring machine of capitalism leaves the subject not at the center but on the periphery and with no fixed identity (1983, p. 20). Marc Roberts asserts that desire and capitalism represent the schizophrenic tendency that dissolves the established identities (2007, p. 120). Thus, the incapability to experience a unified identity or produce the pronoun "I" is essential in schizophrenic conditions. The link between the desire production and capitalism produces the schizophrenic experience, in which the subject becomes without a fixed identity. In multinational capitalism, the death of the individual subject generates the process of schizophrenia. Therefore, postmodern schizophrenia becomes a cultural mode and ceases to be morbid content.

For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia is a revolutionary process. They criticize the capitalist society, which blockages the flow of people's desires. They believe that people need them to find liberation. Angela Woods notes that schizophrenia is the central conception vehicle for Deleuze and Guattari, which they see as an "articulation of a radically decentered, desiring, and revolutionary form of non-subjectivity." They understand desire in terms of production and production in terms of desire (2011, p. 146). The connection between desire and production produces the body without organs. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they suggest that "the body without organs" is a deconstruction of the self. It is the schizophrenic self. They state that "the body without organs" is non-productive, in which it is a production of a particular place and a specific time. They add, "The body without organs is not the proof of an original nothingness, nor is it what remains of a lost totality (1983, p. 8). In this sense, the body without organs, like a schizophrenic, feels disconnected, dissatisfied, and empty.

Accordingly, the late capitalist mode of postmodernism creates a schizophrenic self in which it is not only free from anxiety but also liberated from every other kind of feeling. The postmodern subject becomes fragmented, decentered, and schizophrenic. In *Fight Club* (1996), Chuck Palahniuk reflects the crisis of late capitalism's death of the individual subject. His protagonist is aware that he lives in a society where people are less valued than things. Therefore, his emotionless way of describing himself indicates the death of his unique self. He always refers to himself as "I am Joe's Raging Bile Duct. I am Joe's Grinding Teeth. I am Joe's Inflamed Flaring Nostrils" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 59). By this, he reflects Jameson's



idea that the postmodern individual does not only devoid of feelings but rather such feelings "are free-floating and impersonal" (1991, p. 15). Consequently, the narrator turns out to be schizophrenic.

Throughout the protagonist's schizophrenia, Palahniuk constructs a critique of contemporary society. The narrative of *Fight Club* portrays the unnamed protagonist unconsciously creating an alternative self, who is, unlike his true self, able to fight the capitalist ideology. The unnamed narrator names his altered ego Tyler Durden, who invents the fight club to resist the social fragmentation of capitalism. This schizophrenic state of mind leads him to destroy his world. The appearance of this altered personality increases the narrator's sense of fragmentation. As a person with schizophrenia, the narrator's identity is split into two different identities. He is entirely unaware of the action of another identity that not only destroys the narrator's life but also invents an anarchist group to destroy the whole society.

In *Fight Club*, Palahniuk represents the effect of contemporary society on individuals. In late capitalism, commodities and production interrupted and distorted our lives. The protagonist's furniture, which he purchased from IKEA, is more significant than his life. He resembles an ideal American citizen who seeks to fulfill the American dream by buying different objects to satisfy his demand to be a successful American. However, this American dream turns the narrator's life into a nightmare. He describes the situation:

It took my whole life to buy this stuff.

The easycare textured lacquer of my Kalix occasional tables.

My Steg nesting tables.

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 of 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 (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 37)

The narrator describes the crisis of capitalist society, where everything turns to be an object, and the object becomes more important than people. The narrator cannot protect his authentic self in such a society, so his alternative self manages to destroy his apartment as an act of resistance against capitalist society. He declares that "The liberator who destroys my property," Tyler said,



"is fighting to save my spirit. The teacher who clears all possessions from my path will set me free" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 98).

Palahniuk narrates the story to highlight the fragmentation of self and society because of capitalism and consumerism. The influence of capitalism causes the end of individuality for the narrator and other men in the fight club. The capitalist society takes over the capacity of humans to understand reality by turning humans into commodities. Palahniuk emphasizes this idea throughout the novel. For example, Tyler and the narrator make expensive soap with recycled fat from liposuctioned bodies. Tyler and his group, who calls them "a space monkey," steal fat that is sucked from the bodies of rich people to make expensive soap that the same rich people will buy. Palahniuk questions the capitalist society's role in creating its individuals' identity crisis. Tyler believes that the only way to overcome the fragmentation of this world is to destroy it. Therefore, he engages in an anarchist movement to "break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 113). Therefore, at the beginning of the novel the unnamed narrator appears with Tyler Durden at the top of a building that will demolish in ten minutes. This building represents the capitalist ideology in Tyler's mind, so he attempts to destroy it.

Late capitalism increases the sense of the death of meaning and unique self, which is the main cause of the temporal distortion and fragmentation in postmodern texts. In *Fight Club*, Palahniuk's schizophrenic narrator reflects late capitalism's temporal dilemma. The novel reflects the postmodern temporal fragmentation. There is no reference to the past or future, only the present, which enhances the sense of fragmentation and non-linearity. The narrator's mind is fragmented like his world. He cannot distinguish between reality and dream, or past, present, and future. In this sense, the narrator's schizophrenic mind complicates the structure of the novel. The novel begins with Tyler Durden pressing a gun into the mouth of the nameless narrator, whom we discover later that they are the same person. With the gun in his mouth, the narrator explains his relationship with Tyler and how they met. He explains how they formed a fight club that later turned out to be an anarchist group called Project Mayhem in their attempt to erase history. The novel ends with the narrator in a mental institution after shooting himself in an attempt to kill Tyler.

However, the narrator does not tell the story in the form of a flashback. Palahniuk represents a postmodern text by highlighting

the breakdown of temporal unification. Postmodern texts do not have a real relationship to the past because they represent the postmodern culture of simulacrum. This kind of culture no longer holds a reference to the past and cannot offer a linear temporal narrative frame. In postmodern culture, everything turns into a copy without reference to the origin. In *Fight Club*, this kind of culture leads to the protagonist's insomnia, which he explains as an experience of everything being "a copy of a copy of a copy" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 21). This reflects a postmodern culture where everything is a production without essence.

The narrator's insomnia does not only reflect the postmodern culture but also indicates the un-linearity of the text. The narrator's world falls apart because of insomnia, so he cannot distinguish reality from dream. The narrator states that "[A] telephony was ringing in my dream, and it's not clear if reality slipped into my dream or if my dream is slopping over into reality" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 127). Francisco Collado-Rodriguez remarks that "the society of simulacra has deployed to take over the human capacity to apprehend and understand reality" (2013, p. 7). In this sense, the narrator's reality is merely a copy where "You can't touch anything, and nothing can touch you" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 84). This experience reflects the narrator's relationship with the past and present. Insomnia intensifies the sense of the continuous present that is isolated from any relationship to the past or future.

Moreover, insomnia increases the narrator's schizophrenic state. In insomnia, Tyler lives and acts, but we – as the narrator – do not know about Tyler's actions; we know only about the consequences of his actions. The narrator creates the personality of Tyler while he is asleep to escape from his everyday life, but Tyler takes over his life. The phrase "I know this because Tyler knows this," which the narrator repeats more than one time, complicates the narrative temporal framework because we do not know when and how the narrator does the action. For example, we do not know how and when the narrator invents the fight club or when and how the fight club turns to be Project Mayhem because the first role of both the fight club and Project Mayhem is that the members do not speak or ask questions about them. Thus, by creating a schizophrenic narrator, Palahniuk emphasizes the idea that the postmodern individual cannot connect to any point of time except the present.

The narrator fails to construct a coherent identity because he attempts to develop it through a historical consciousness within the postmodern present. Postmodernism loses its relationship with the past. Friday describes the postmodern situation as a "perpetual condition." Therefore, the narrator's schizophrenia is a reaction to postmodern temporal distortion, in which linear historical narrative is impossible. Krister Friday remarks that linear historical narrative depends on negotiation between "temporal sameness and temporal difference, perpetually oscillating between the two." So, he describes *Fight Club* as "primarily expression of the present and for the present, and its condition, and its identity" (2003, p. 3). Postmodernism focuses on the present rather than the past and space rather than time. Palahniuk creates a narrator who tries to locate his identity in a temporal sequence in the novel. Consequently, the narrator suffers a loss of personal identity, which leads to schizophrenia. Because personal identity has a constitutive relationship with historical narrative, the narrator fails to create a coherent historical narrative and unified identity.

Furthermore, the narrator's schizophrenia reflects the postmodern idea of history. Tyler wants to "blast the world free of history." He attempts to create a new world by destroying the history of human civilization. He wishes to burn the Louver and destroy Mona Lisa. He states: "This is my world, now. This is my world, my world, and those ancient people are dead" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 112). As a result of this dilemma with history, Tyler creates a terrorist group and calls it Project Mayhem to deconstruct society. Such narrative indicates that the unnamed narrator cannot develop an individual identity within the postmodern present. In his novel, Palahniuk comments on the postmodern death of individuality by creating the schizophrenic temporal experience of contemporary society that interrupts the coherent development of personal identity.

According to Jameson, postmodernism focuses on synchronic issues rather than diachronic ones. Unlike modernism, postmodern experiences are categorized by space rather than time. Therefore, postmodern texts do not have a unified temporal narrative framework. Consequently, postmodern texts become a "heap of fragments," which indicates the loss of history and individual identity. This idea is the most central in Palahniuk's novel. The narrator says: "We are God's middle children, according to Tyler Durden, with no special place in history and no special attention" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 130). This description clarifies postmodern temporal distortion, in

which the focus is on space rather than time. Tyler describes his generation as "middle children," which refers to spatial position more than a temporal issue. They lose their connection to the past, which is a symptom of the loss of history. The loss of history, the source of an identity crisis, is the central theme in postmodern literature.

In *Fight Club*, Palahniuk introduces a postmodern individual who fails to communicate with his community, himself, and others. He experiences a schizophrenic state of mind that leads him to destroy his world. This situation leads him to insomnia. The doctor advises him to see people who suffer deadly diseases in support groups. The narrator becomes addicted to these groups, but he never gives his real name. He remains nameless to the readers, but later we discover that he gives the members of the support groups the name Tyler Durden. James Gills states that "the narrator nameless is significant, his identity is fragmented throughout the text as he grasp on reality falls to pieces" (2013, p. 24). Moreover, his refusal to give his real name in the support groups reflects his inability to establish a healthy relationship with others. Like others with schizophrenia, he feels insecure when dealing with others, so he considers others a threat to his autonomous self.

The unnamed narrator fails to relate to his name. This failure is an aspect of his identity crisis. The person's name is crucial in identifying his relation to others because naming recreates human connection. Wilfried Ver Eecke remarks, "As the name is signifier which by definition defines obligation and right of a person, it is necessary that an individual is certain of his name. It is by identifying with his name that he becomes a part of the human world" (2011, p. 22). In this sense, to enter the human world of signification, the individual must be definite to his name as a first step. Consequently, the failure to be part of this world complicates the individual's relationship with others and reality. Also, it problematizes his sense of identity. Therefore, the narrator becomes addicted to these support groups because he fails to connect with himself and society.

Nevertheless, these support groups cannot help the narrator's interpersonal relations. Therefore, his altered personality invents the fight club to help the narrator achieve his revolutionary consciousness. He explains that communication is not desirable in the postmodern world. What is possible is self-destruction. He declares that "Maybe self-destruction is the answer" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 43). By creating an alternative self, the narrator attempts to

protect his true self, which leads him to lose any sense of reality. Then the outside world becomes increasingly distorted.

Moreover, the narrator's failure to communicate is the source of his suffering, which leads him to violent actions toward himself and his society. For Tyler, what is possible in fight club is suffering because he believes that suffering and destruction are tools to destroy society, which becomes unreal because of capitalism. The protagonist engages with other men in violent fighting. However, the fight club increases the sense of fragmentation in the narrator's mind. Later he recognizes that self-destruction is not enough to achieve wholeness. Instead, he invents Project Mayhem to destroy the whole capitalist society. The narrator states:

Tyler said the goal of Project Mayhem had nothing to do with other people. Tyler didn't care if other people got hurt or not. The goal was to teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history. We, each of us, can take the control of the world (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 111)

Fight Club's protagonist is a model of the capitalist effect in the postmodern age. He feels empty, entrapped in his life, and cannot find peace in himself. Consequently, he cannot see the meaning of his life in the capitalist society. Therefore, to find meaning and satisfaction, he engages in self-destruction.

In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the moment of self-destruction in the fight club creates the body without organs. The body without organs is opposite to the humanist understanding of the human body. While the human body functions as one unified organism in which each organ has its role and function, the body without organs is something a human can create by deconstructing the self. Deleuze and Guattari assert that the individual needs pain to construct a body without organs. In this sense, Tyler represents the narrator's body without organs, which the violent acts of the fight club consider the first step toward creating it. Therefore, Tyler becomes a means for the narrator to find new ways to attain pain. In postmodernism, it is essential to differentiate between the body with an organs and the body without it. Jameson remarks that the body with organ "constitutes a visual unity and reinforces our sense or illusion of the unity of the personality." Thus, he refers to it as an "imperfectly reconnected 'desiring machines,' that body is the authentic space of pain" (1991, p. 152). Accordingly, capitalism is a desiring machine that needs a body without organs to maintain and resist. In a word, Tyler Durden represents "the body without organs"

since he is not a physical person. He becomes a means through which the narrator can resist the fragmentation of capitalist society.

Tyler is the opposite of the narrator, who believes that Tyler is his savior. Toward the end of the novel, Tyler becomes entirely out of control. He plans to eradicate the whole city with the assistance of his terrorist group, Project Mayhem. Then the narrator finds himself in a catastrophic situation created by Tyler. Tyler attempts to take the whole organism as a body without organs, namely the narrator. At this moment, he realizes that Tyler is his second personality. He states: "Tyler Durden is my hallucination. "Fuck that shit," Tyler says. "Maybe you're my schizophrenic hallucination." I was here first. Tyler says, "Yeah, yeah, well let's just see who's here last" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 168). Therefore, the narrator pulls the trigger to kill Tyler to regain control. The narrator admits that "I'm not killing myself, I yell. I'm killing Tyler" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 197). He tries to kill the fragmentation in his mind to resist the schizophrenic experience of postmodernism, but he fails to do this.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist practices self-destruction against his body and encourages other men in the fight club to destroy their bodies as a resistance to the capitalist society that deprives them of their sense of masculinity. Giles remarks that *Fight Club* is "a satire of excessive American consumerism, an explanation of a fascist ideology, and as either a straight or a satiric depiction of an extreme cult of masculinity" (2013, p. 24). The violent physical activities in the fight club become the narrator's means to connect with others. The narrator aims to destroy the capitalist society to regain his sense of masculinity. Accordingly, there is a relationship between schizophrenia and the idea of masculinity. Angela Woods remarks that "schizophrenia here is *aetiological* linked to a symbolic and to some extent individual *failure* in normative heterosexual masculinity" (2011, p. 121).

The invention of the fight club indicates the masculinity crisis in the narrator's mind. Lisann Anders remarks that "intra-personal suffering is made the point of departure to render an explorative discourse about the crisis of masculinity and the capitalist city" (2020, p. 147). The narrator attempts to destroy himself to escape from his sense of fragmentation. He believes that death is liberation from his fragmented life. He believes that he can find power and freedom by abandoning attachment to physical objects. He states: "I'm breaking my attachment to physical power and possession,

Tyler whispered, because only through destroying myself can I discover the greater power of my spirit" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 98). Ironically, he tries to make himself complete by fragmenting himself.

Andres remarks, "Even though the narrator realizes he is trapped in the dullness of his life and that liberation is achieved through the destruction of the body, he does not take the final step to ultimate freedom, i.e. death" (2020, p. 152). For the narrator, death is the only way to achieve wholeness. His schizophrenic mind complicates the relationship between life and death in which, to create a unified sense of identity, he must destroy both his body and the whole society. Andres explains that postmodernism destroys the image of the new man. She adds:

The postmodern concept of masculinity does not fit the anarchic primal instinct of strength in the primeval hunter, who needs to fight to survive and prove his worth in society. Yet, what the men in fight club are not able to see is these primal and unified ideas of a clear gendered society are in fact, as oppressing and confining as the fragmented world of postmodernism. What a primal anarchic society is missing is structure and security, which allow a certain kind of freedom but simultaneously denies a peaceful, free, and happy life" (2020, pp. 174-8)

These moments of suffering in fight club do not liberate the narrator; instead, they increase his sense of fragmentation. He becomes increasingly unaware that Tyler is taking control, and the narrator grows delusional. He beats himself up and burns himself. Finally, he believes that "Tyler's words coming out of my mouth" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 102).

Palahniuk highlights that the absence of a father's role is the leading cause of both schizophrenia and masculinity crises in the narrator's mind. The father's role in the child's life – or what Lacan calls The-Name-of-the-Father – is significant because it represents the intervention of the Symbolic Order. According to Woods, "The Name-of-the-Father is experienced as the loss of castration upon which the child's entry into language and Oedipal development depends" (2011, p. 111). In other words, the concept Name-of-the-Father reshapes the subject's relationship to language. Consequently, the schizophrenic process arises from a rupture in the Symbolic Order. However, Lacan points to the psychic

mechanism of schizophrenia as "Not repressed but rejected" (Woods, 2011, p. 110). Woods refers to this process as "the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father," which is influential in establishing a psychic structure that may reveal schizophrenic symptoms (2011, p. 112). The Name-of-the-Father is remarkable because it forces the child to see himself as not significant other to the mother. This process may cause disappointment, and the child must reject it to maintain his relationship with the mother. According to Lacan, the failure in this process is the origin of schizophrenia.

The absence of the father's figure extended to include all contemporary American males. It is the source of their masculinity crisis. The mechanic, who is another anonymous male in the fight club, summarizes this crisis:

If you're male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model of God. And if you never know your father, if your father bails out or dies or is never at home, what do you believe about God? (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 129)

This absence is one cause of schizophrenia in the narrator's life. Firstly, He states that "Tyler never knew his father" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 43). Then when he asks Tyler whom he is fighting, the answer is the father. The narrator believes that "Maybe we didn't need a father to complete ourselves" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 47). The narrator declares that he does not know his father: "I knew my dad for about six years, but I don't remember anything. My dad, he starts a new family in a new town about every six years. This isn't so much like a family" (44). In Palahniuk's novel, the father is absent; the narrator confesses that "What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women" (Palahniuk, 1996, p. 44). This absence is the main reason for fragmentation in the narrator's mind and world.

In this sense, Anders explains that we can understand Palahniuk's novel on societal and individual levels. Members of various fight clubs engage in activities that aim to destroy their bodies and the city, "which in turn is supposed to create freedom and individualism." Thus, schizophrenia and fragmentation become means to resist socio-political issues in American society. Andres adds, "Their involvement in Project Mayhem as an act against capitalism and its oppressive nature is supposed to give the members a purpose in life as a communal group" (2020, p. 148). The loss of center is essential in postmodernism, so postmodern individuals attempt to find compassion and humanity through violence and brutality.



To conclude, postmodernism criticizes the notion of the unified subject. For postmodernists, identity is contradictory and fractured. It is decentered and fragmented mainly because of capitalism. Capitalism creates a new space, which enhances the sense of fragmentation, so postmodernism obliterates the notion of self. The postmodern individual loses its depth with the loss of reality. In other words, the postmodern subject becomes schizophrenic and decentered. Therefore, postmodernists claim the end of a unique and distinctive individual. In this sense, schizophrenia becomes a psychological response to the condition of postmodernism. It has nothing to do with the clinical meaning of the word. Postmodern schizophrenia is a cultural and social process more than a state of mind. It is the breakdown of signifying chain and temporal unification.

Postmodern literature represents the state of fluidity, fragmentation, and schizophrenia. In *Fight Club*, Chuck Palahniuk introduces a protagonist who experiences a schizophrenic state of mind that leads him to destroy his world. His schizophrenic state is a reaction to postmodern capitalism and the crisis of postmodern temporality. The narrator cannot distinguish reality from dream or past from the present. He attempts to develop a coherent identity through a historical consciousness within the postmodern present, but as a person with schizophrenia, he fails because he dooms to live in a perpetual present. As a result, he suffers a lack of unified identity and loses association with reality. He creates an altered personality that leads him to attempt to destroy himself and his capitalist society.

In postmodernism, schizophrenia is not merely a psychological problem but a socio-political one. Throughout the schizophrenic experience of the protagonist, Palahniuk introduces the crisis of masculinity in the capitalist society, which leads to the violent action of the protagonist and other members of the fight club. He emphasizes that the crisis of masculinity is related to schizophrenia and that the absence of the father is the crucial cause of the narrator's fragmentation. Accordingly, the individuals experience a sense of fragmentation and lose the ability to connect with reality and themselves because of capitalism. In multinational capitalism, the death of the individual subject enhances the experience of schizophrenia. Thus, postmodern schizophrenia becomes a cultural style rather than a psychotic content.



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الذات ما بعد الحداثة مجزأة: انفصام الشخصية و أزمة الذكورة في نادي قتال تشاك بالانيوك

إعداد

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المستخلص:

تتناول هذه الورقة العلاقة بين موت الذات وانفصام الشخصية ما بعد الحداثة في المجتمع الرأسمالي المتأخر من وجهة نظر فريدريك جيمسون. كما أنه يشرح كيف تؤدي هذه العلاقة بين موت الشخص المصاب والفصام إلى أزمة الذكورة في نادي قتال تشاك بالانيوك. في عصر ما بعد الحداثة ، تؤدي الرأسمالية المتأخرة إلى موت الذات الفردية ، مما يؤدي إلى انعدام العمق والتفتت. يؤكد جيمسون أن فكرة عدم العمق ما بعد الحداثة تظهر في ظاهرتين: الفصام و pastiche. بالنسبة لجيمسون ، لا علاقة لفصام ما بعد الحداثة بالمعنى السريري. إنها عملية اجتماعية وثقافية وليست أ الحالة الذهنية. يعرفها بأنها انهيار سلسلة الدلالة والتوحيد الزمني. في Fight Club ، يقدم Palahniuk مثلاً على انفصام الشخصية ما بعد الحداثة وأزمة الذكورة الناتجة عن الرأسمالية. بطل الرواية مصاب بالفصام بسبب المجتمع الرأسمالي. تشبه حالته الذهنية الفصامية أزمة ما بعد الحداثة للزمنية التي يعيش فيها في حاضر دائم ، لذلك فهو شخصية تساعد على مقاومة حالته الذهنية الفوضوية التي تمتد إلى مجتمعه. وبالتالي ، فهو ينخرط في تدمير الذات ويخترع مجموعة أنا ركية لتدمير الرأسمالية. في نهاية الرواية ، لا يستطيع بطل الرواية الهروب من الحالة الذهنية الفصامية لأن الفصام هو استجابة نفسية لحالة ما بعد الحداثة.

الكلمات الافتتاحية:

ما بعد الحداثة ، الفصام ، أزمة الذكورة ، فريدريك جيمسون ، الزمنية ، نادي القتال.