Fight Club: Misleading Admiration

Chuck Palahniuk’s novel, *Fight Club,* portrays how the struggle for men to express themselves is almost impossible with challenges such as consumerism, capitalism, or a plain nine to five job. The actions of the narrator in the start of the novel shows that he’s static, passive, and a simple cog in the wheel of a giant corporation. The order and monotony of modern life forces him to suppress the id in himself which causes him to be unhappy. While on a business trip, the narrator’s meets Tyler Durden, who is completely free, rebellious, and represents the person whom the narrator wishes he could be, which is ironic considering it’s revealed later in the story that they are both the same person. In the novel, the power of admiration affects the narrator’s relationship with Tyler first by becoming friends, but then falls under submission to Tyler, and eventually must be find a way to break out of his situation.

Near the beginning of the story, the narrator meets Tyler at a nude beach in LA. They exchange phone numbers and quickly become friends are the narrator is forced to move in with Tyler when his house burned down. In contrast, the narrator and Tyler are polar opposites. The narrator explains how he loves “everything about Tyler Durden, his courage and his smarts. His nerve... Tyler is capable and free, and I am not” (pg. 130); thus, he asks him to deliver him “from being perfect and complete.” (pg. 31). Their friendship is further established when they both decide to create fight club with the intention of helping other men feel like men again by beating each other up. The ennui of the narrator’s life causes him to release Tyler in his head, and they become friends due to the narrator’s admiration of this more perfect version of himself.

After having Tyler teach the narrator a lesson on what it’s like to hit rock bottom, the narrator quickly becomes a loyal sidekick to Tyler, letting that personality rule over him. Tyler and the narrator start to work on Project Mayhem, with the intention of reform and lead society to equality. By recruiting men from fight club or just off the streets, Project Mayhem starts springing into action. The narrator starts to follow Tyler’s bizarre orders such as bringing back 12 driver licenses or blackmailing the Pressman Hotel. During this phase, the narrator’s loyalty continues to increase as he’s doing all these weird tasks without hesitation, well, considering that “the fifth rule about Project Mayhem is you have to trust Tyler.” (pg. 89)

Things start to go suspicious while the narrator flies around the country for his job. People all over different bars and pubs mistake the narrator for Tyler. The narrator soon figures out that Tyler is just a figment of his imagination and begins to realize that he has been a part of everything Project Mayhem has done, including illegal activity, murder, and trying to remove the testicles of a police commissioner. His admiration for Tyler Durden goes away and at this point he begins to oppose Tyler’s ideals as he says, “I have to take care of Tyler Durden” (pg. 147); Unfortunately, the only way to end Tyler, was to shoot himself.

Throughout the story, Tyler tries to free the narrator of his societal-programmed persona and to eventually become a hundred percent Tyler Durden. However, towards the end of the story, the narrator remained strongly opposed to Tyler’s goals and eventually “killed” Tyler, as he saw this as Tyler trying to take over his mind, even though he never realized that Tyler was his real personality, and the one he perceived himself as was the fake. Although many people will probably never encounter a split personality in their lifetime, everyone has someone to look up to. Fight Club shows that one’s admiration of a perceived “hero” can blind and lead one towards the wrong path, a path of destruction.