

# FIGHT CLUB: THE CITY VANISHES?



# OUTLINE

- Discussion Question
- Summary of the Issues
- Schizophrenia:
  - Evidence -- Tyler's appearance
  - Definitions
  - (According to Fredric Jameson)
- Simulation (According to Jean Baudrillard)
- From **Fight Club** to **Project Mayhem**
- Historical Notes
- Ending: The City Vanishes?
- Q & A –about the support group, cave, soap, fight club, The narrator and Tyler, Marla & us...
- Reference

*We have front row seats **for this theater of mass destruction.***

*The demolitions committee of Project Mayhem wrapped the foundation columns of **a dozen buildings** with blasting gelatin. In 2 minutes, primary charges will blow base charges and **a few square blocks will be reduced to smoldering rubble.***

*I know this... because Tyler knows this. ...And suddenly, I realize that **all of this** the gun, the bombs, the revolution... has got something to do with a girl named **Marla Singer.***



Really?

# G4 & Kate's Discussion Questions

1. G1 How does the Narrator “meet” Tyler? Why is his personality split into two? Why is penguin the narrator’s power animal?
2. G6 What is the relationship between Marla and the narrator/Tyler? How does she influence him? Is Marla one facet of the narrator’s personality with his dissociative identity disorder?
3. G2 Are there good purposes behind Fight Club (boxing)? How does Fight Club evolve into Project Mayhem? Why do the space monkeys obey Tyler?
4. G5 In what ways are the support group a solution to the narrator’s problems? Why does he fail?
5. G7 How do you interpret the ending? It is realistic? Do you think the narrator successfully rids himself of his alter identity, or does Tyler live on? Why the director places a flash of male sexual organ when the buildings are collapsing?
6. G3 schizophrenia: of Fight Club & Enemy
7. homosexual undertone?!

# CAPITALIST SOCIETY & GLOBAL FLOWS

Home was a condo on the 15th floor of **a filing cabinet for widows and young professionals.**

00:30 We are by-products of a lifestyle obsession. ...What concerns me are **celebrity** magazines, television with 500 channels, some guy's name on my underwear. Rogaine, Viagra, Olestra. Martha Stewart.

Everything's a copy of a copy of a copy. ..., **it'll be the corporations that name everything...**

Urban Segregation

Credit Card & Bank (Flows)

Consumerism

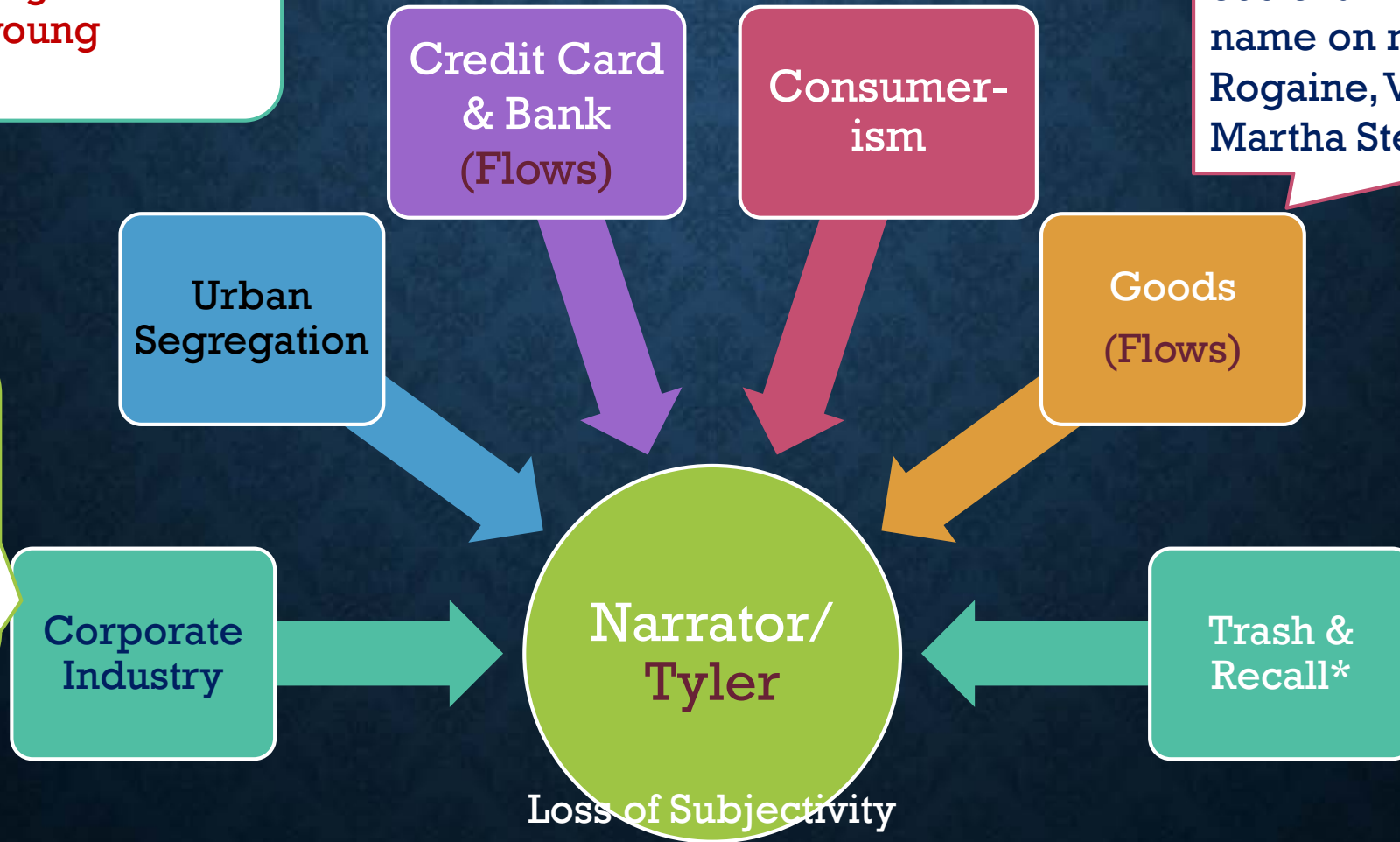
Goods (Flows)

Corporate Industry

Narrator/  
Tyler

Trash & Recall\*

Loss of Subjectivity



# “REACTIONS”

From Desire for Freedom to Anti-Social Violence



*Everything's a copy of a copy of a copy*

# COMMODITY SOCIETY: A COPY OF A COPY...



Work and  
consumption  
provide us  
with uniform  
identities

Photocopier →  
Cell phone???

# SINGLE SERVING



1. When traveling → people are always in transit
2. w/ single-serving friends



# IKEA NESTING INSTINCT

- Identity defined by commodities



# MEANINGS OF THE SUPPORT GROUP???

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-- To release/relieve  
himself

Where people listen

-- To be able to cry

# POWER ANIMAL IN THE SUPPORT GROUP SESSIONS



**The support group scenes:**  
in the style of  
Black comedy –  
Highly stylized and w/  
incongruous elements (of  
death, real pain, fun and  
pretentiousness)  
**Are their real functions  
presented—or ignored by  
the narrator?\***



# SCHIZOPHRENIA: TYLER'S APPEARANCE

- First as **subliminal appearances** (flash appearances in the doctor's clinic, at the group therapy place, and at the end, too—next slide)
- **Appears as a person** at the airport; on hotel TV, until finally on the Narrator's side
- At the fire scene, the Narrator calls Marla first, and then Tyler, suggesting that both are a kind of **solution**.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES

## NARRATOR--> JACK & TYLER

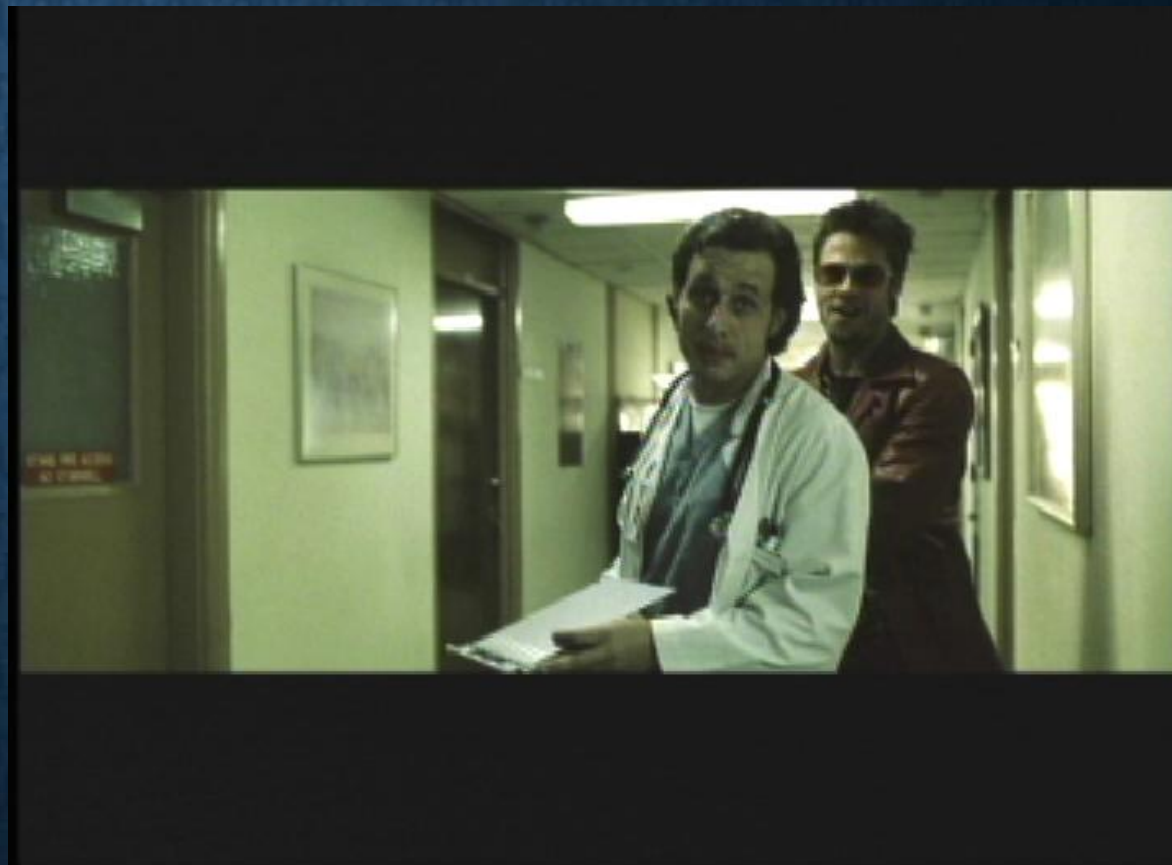
### Self-externalization and fragmentation

- (Living w/ Tyler) I'm Jack's medulla oblongata 延髓
- (Call from the police officer) I am Jack's cold sweat.
- (Questioned by his supervisor) I am Jack's... complete lack of surprise.
- (Beating himself up in the office) I am Jack's smirking revenge.
- (More fight club formed) I am Jack's wasted life.
- (Becoming violent after threatening the police chief investigator) I am Jack's inflamed sense of rejection.
- (Tyler disappears) I am Jack's broken heart.

# TYLER'S FLASH APPEARANCE

- 5 times before we clearly see him on the moving walkway at the airport.
- In the first 4 appearances, he flashes on screen for a single frame (1/24 of a second) and only when the Narrator has insomnia:
  - at the photocopier at work;
  - in the corridor outside the doctor's office when the Narrator learns about the testicular cancer support group;
  - at that group's meeting;
  - as the Narrator sees Marla leaving a meeting but doesn't follow her.
- He can also be seen as a waiter in the presentation video of the hotel (he is the furthest waiter on the right). (IMDB movie trivia)

# TYLER'S PRESENCE

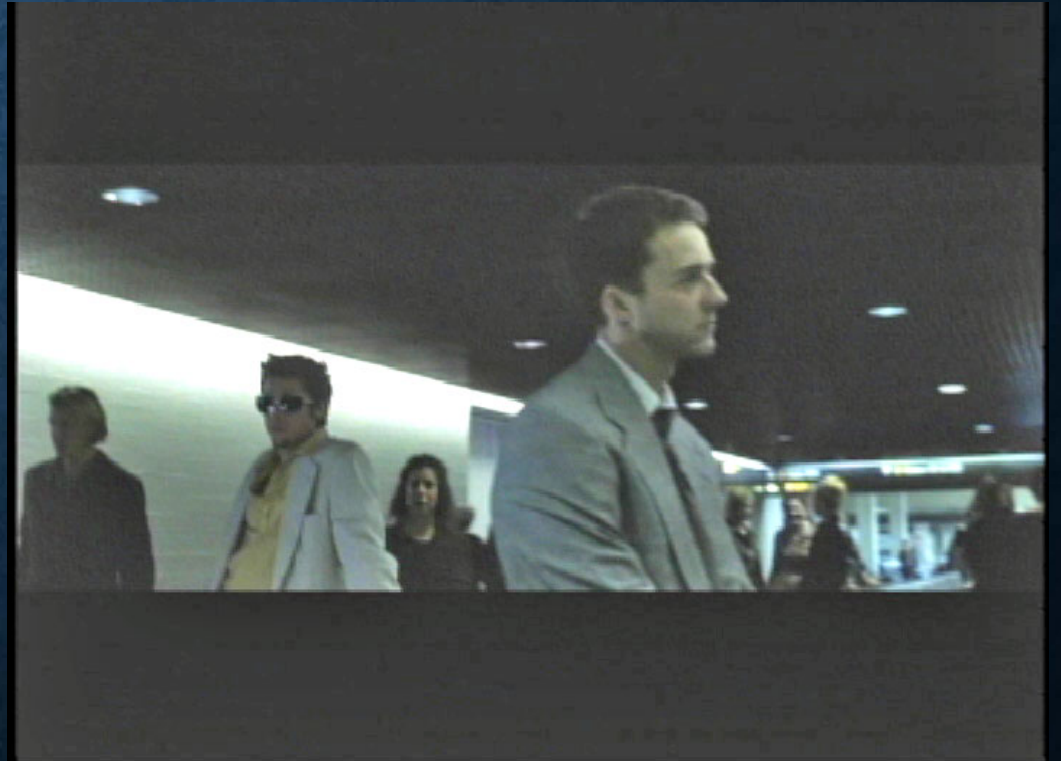


# TYLER'S PRESENCE

## Support Group



## Airport



# SCHIZOPHRENIA



# EVIDENCE OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

## 1) Tyler ignored by the others:

- When Tyler and the Narrator are on the bus, the long-haired guy pushes past Tyler without a word, then says "excuse me" as he pushes past the Narrator.
- When Tyler and the Narrator hit the first car with baseball bats, Tyler hits first, but the alarm is triggered only after the Narrator hits. (IMDB)

2) Tyler and the narrator talk to each other when no one else is around; Tyler sometimes speaks for the narrator.

## 3) Marla's Responses

- a. After Tyler's sex with Marla, Marla meets the Narrator happily, winking at him.
- b. She asks the Narrator for help twice (once with pills and the other to examine a lump in her breast).
- c. When the narrator says Tyler is gone, she looks hurt.

4) Self-Destruction: When the Narrator fights with himself, he says this reminds him of his first fight with Tyler.

5) Alter ego: the Narrator without a father; Tyler, a father who is detached, just asking him to follow the beaten track –two kinds of un-desirable fathers

- (Is this all about you and me?) Etc. etc.



# SCHIZOPHRENIA

- 1) Dissociative Identity Disorder (different from schizoid)
- 2) **the breakdown of time and the signifying chain**—Fredric Jameson (ref. [1](#) [2](#))
- **loss of connection** between
  - past & present (loss of historicity)
  - sign & meaning (loss of meaning)
  - appearance & reality (**simulation—loss of reality**)
  - Authenticity & inauthenticity (loss of a genuine sense of existence)

# BAUDRILLARD: "SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION"

- "everything is a copy of a copy..."
- The 4<sup>th</sup> stage: simulation, everything that is reproduced, bearing NO relation to reality

# 1-2. JEAN BAUDRILLARD: *THE ORDER OF SIMULACRA*

(Baudrillard, 1994, 1-42)

## The Four Phases of Images 圖像符號的四個階段

### Medieval Period (Religious Art)

- The image is **the reflection of** a basic reality;

### Renaissance and Enlightenment (Baroque Art)

- The image **masks and perverts** a basic reality

### Industrialism (Mechanical Reproduction)

- The image **masks the absence of** a basic reality

### Post-Industrial Society (electronic, genetic reproduction)

- **The image bears no relation to any reality whatsoever:** it is its own pure simulacrum → floating signifiers, fragments

# 1-2-1. JEAN BAUDRILLARD: *THE ORDER OF SIMULACRA*

Post-Industrial World of Simulacra 後工業世界的擬象

- ◆ **Simulacra = the hyperreal** (「超真實」), whatever that can be reproduced; "... the generation by models of a real without original or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1994, 1).
- ◆ We are living in a world dominated by **images & signs in mass media, social media, banking system, digital reproduction, and many other orders of simulacra**. It is a realm of hyperreality and simulations where **truths no longer exist**.

*"We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning"* (Baudrillard, 1994, 79)



# **FROM FIGHT CLUB TO PROJECT MAYHEM**

# DEVELOPMENT: MAJOR TURNING POINTS

- 1) 00:30 --Talk w/ Tyler after the condom is blown up: We're, uh, you know, consumers...
- 2) 00:42 --Every week, Tyler gave the rules that he and I decided. "Gentlemen, welcome to Fight Club."
- 3) 1:11 -- "Lou's Tavern. " → picking **fight with a total stranger**.
- 4) 1:17 -- new homework assignments.
- 5) 1:24 -- You're not your job Too young. [starting to bomb, to build an army]
- 6) 1:34 -- **We cook your meals. [threatening the investigator]**
- 7) 1:39 -- just let go. [confrontation in a car]
- 8) In the world I see, ...[Tyler leaving]
- 9) They shot Bob.

# TRACES OF TERRORISM

- The scene where The Narrator's boss ([Zach Grenier](#)) finds the rules of Fight Club in the photocopier and The Narrator points out that whoever wrote it is obviously dangerous and **might one day storm through the building shooting everyone**, proved to be a highly controversial scene for the filmmakers.
- In early test screenings, the scene got huge laughs and scored extremely highly with audiences. However, these screenings happened before the Columbine massacre [The Columbine High School massacre 04/20/1999]. **In all screenings after Columbine**, the scene evoked no laughter whatsoever and scored extremely poorly, with audiences commenting that they felt it was in bad taste. (IMDB Movie Trivia)

# UNABOMER IN REAL LIFE

- An American [mathematician](#) and serial murderer. He is known for his wide-ranging social critiques, which opposed industrialism and modern technology and advanced a nature-centered form of [anarchism](#).<sup>[2][3][4]</sup> Between 1978 and 1995, Kaczynski engaged in a nationwide bombing campaign against people involved with modern technology, planting or [mailing](#) numerous [home-made bombs](#), ultimately killing a total of three people and injuring 23 others. (Wikipedia)



# SELF-REFLEXIVE MOMENTS IN THE FILM



- “cigarette burns”
- To refer to its own flash frames of Tyler Durden
- To also refer to the film as fiction (and a waste of life), to be gotten over in order to “start a fight ...prove [oneself] alive” (next slide)

# WARNING

If you are reading this then this warning is for you. Every word you read of this useless fine print is another second off your life. Don't you have other things to do? Is your life so empty that you honestly can't think of a better way to spend these moments? Or are you so impressed with authority that you give respect and credence to all who claim it? Do you read everything you're supposed to read? Do you think everything you're supposed to think? Buy what you're told you should want? Get out of your apartment. Meet a member of the opposite sex. Stop the excessive shopping and masturbation. Quit your job. Start a fight. Prove you're alive. If you don't claim your humanity you will become a statistic. You have been warned ..... Tyler

What does fighting mean?



# ENDING: THE CITY VANISHES?



# WHAT'S THE POINT?

- The loss of Subjectivity/Masculinity AND its solutions
  1. Self-Release, Freedom in Violence & Radicalization
  2. Support group -- How a community (of support or of radicalism) gets built.
- Why the loss?
- The city can vanish for both reasons (**overall commodification and anti-capitalist radicalism**)



**Q & A**



# SUPPORT GROUP

- Why is the scene of support group presented comically?

## Q: ICE CAVE

- In the cancer support group, there were two times that the woman asked Jack to meditate into an ice cave. For the second time why the one appearing in Jack's mind was Marla? And what was the meaning of "slide" said by the penguin and Marla?
- In your opinion, why does Jack have a ice cave? (not a stone cave or... other cave) And why does he see penguin as his power animal?

# FIGHT CLUB

- Meanings of fighting—

Besides joy, what do fights bring to them? It seems that after fighting with each other in the fight club, the next day, they get energy and are eager to fight. Why? Is there any deeper meaning behind of fights between man and man? What are the similarities and differences between people who mutilate themselves (mostly girls) and Jack? Do you think after harming themselves, their worlds are constructed or destroyed?

- For one who is out of sync with society to destroy & rebuild
- to grow up and beyond social constraints, while failing to shoulder responsibilities or make social connections

# Q: JACK VS. ANGEL FACE



## JACK VS. TYLER

- When Jack is cleaning his shirt with the brush, Tyler and Marla are having sex upstairs. When the detective calls and the phone is ringing and Jack pick up the phone, why does the sound made by Tyler and Marla stop immediately?

# JACK VS. TYLER

- Do you agree that Jack is the **superego**, who is well-educated, and keeps the rules of the world, while Tyler is the **id**, who follows the happiness principles, and the one (also Jack) who kills Tyler is the **ego, who can finally deal with the conflict inside himself?** Why or why not. And do you think this process is **Jack's sublimation?**

## Q: SOAP

- What's the significance of the soap in relation to its color, ingredients and also the process of being made (refer to the scene in which Tyler teaches Jack how to make soap and leaves a "chemical burn" [lye] on Jack's hand)?

## Q: ENDING

- At the end of the film, when the narrator and Marla watch the city collapse, a image of a male's sex organ appears in the scene. **Why does the director choose to add a male's sex organ** to the end of the film rather than a female's one?
- Does this grand finale suggest something Socialism/Communism?



# MARLA & US = MODERN PEOPLE?

- Marla -- What role does Marla serve/play in the context of undermining consumerism and capitalism?
- **the narrator's point of view** of his life, that of the modern people?
- Can the same thing also happen to **every one of us living in this depressing and busy world?**



# REFERENCES

- 25 個在《Fight Club》電影中你不知道的小秘密 (or IMDB, Fight Club Trivia)

