

THE BEATSTER, THE WHITE NEGRO, AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE HIPSTER IN *FIGHT CLUB*

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OUT OF THE CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION of World War II emerged the hipster, a figure variously represented in works such as John Clellon Holmes' *roman à clef*, *Go* (1952) about the group of figures at the center of the Beat Generation; Lawrence Lipton's *The Holy Barbarians* (1959), a sociological study of the lives of some West Coast hipsters; and Norman Mailer's essay "The White Negro" (1957), in which he introduced his titular existential anti-hero. In *Hip: The History*, John Leland traces the origins of Hip to the colonial era when through the institution of slavery Africans and Europeans first began to engage one another, the Africans becoming more Europeanized as the Europeans became more Africanized. Leland identifies as other proto-hipster scenes the New England Transcendentalists, the Lost Generation, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Greenwich Village Bohemians, all superseded by the bi-coastal hipster of the 1940s-60s best exemplified by those cats we call the Beat Generation for which, as Michael Lennon states in his recent biography of Mailer (203), "The White Negro" became the philosophical foundation as Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) represented the fictional and Ginsberg's "Howl" (1956) the poetic.

Despite Mailer's rhetorical identification with the hipster, competing discourses have called his character and his characterization into question. The White Negro is a cultural icon who may or may not have existed in reality as Mailer described him: was he a true composite of certain marginalized characters, or was he merely a projection of Mailer's own racial and sexual fantasies about African-Americans and their relation to white, middle-class

intellectuals like himself? Stanley T. Gutman claims that Mailer himself was “never a hipster” (67), and Robert Solotaroff adds that Mailer’s hipster was an “improbable figure” (89), while Joe Wenke argues that speculation about the existence of the real-life hipster “misses the point” (67) which in his estimation was to create a mythic, Adamic figure who would allow Mailer to “formulate a significant response to the threat of totalitarianism” (68). More recently, Preston Whaley declares that the White Negro is simply a “caricature that does not exist” (41). For their part, Kerouac and Ginsberg disapproved of Mailer’s construction of the hipster as one who embraced violence as a means to achieve existential transcendence. Their version of the hipster, a.k.a. the Beatster, was a figure beaten down and outcast by a conformist, militaristic, materialistic culture and in search of beatific ecstasy. The Beatster was a teahead or junkie, jazz musician or aficionado, artist or intellectual, sexual adventurer or deviant, and Buddhist or spiritual seeker, in many ways mirroring Mailer’s hipster but without the violence. Both the White Negro and the Beatster romanticized (and stereotyped) African-Americans as wise primitives, or, as Wenke puts it, “latter-day noble savage[s]” (74). The White Negro and the Beats saw themselves as people living on the ruins of a civilization, the fellaheen, in Spengler’s terms. In the shadow of the horrors of the Holocaust and of the Cold War threat of nuclear annihilation they shared an apocalyptic vision. And just as Mailer conceived of the White Negro in exclusively and characteristically masculine terms, the Beatster scene was about male bonding based on a shared rejection of square middle class values, even though, as Alan Petigny writes in “Norman Mailer, ‘The White Negro,’ and New Conceptions of the Self in Postwar America,” the 1950s was a less repressed and more liberated decade than we tend to think.

Like Hemingway before him, Mailer explored the meaning of masculinity throughout his life and early career and, following Hemingway, he equated masculinity with physical courage and grace under pressure, all in line with the Hemingway hero and the Hemingway code. Michael Shuman writes that Mailer “became the Hemingway for a new generation of writers, a model of masculine courage, adventurous physical appetite, and singular style” (102). And yet the concept of masculinity both writers shared was even in Hemingway’s day being challenged by urbanization, industrialization, and the feminization of American culture. Mailer voiced his early concern with contemporary notions of masculinity in his apologia for the negative construction of gay characters in his essay “The Homosexual Villain” and in his

opposition to second-wave feminism, provoking attacks from Kate Millett and others, even though, as Phillip Sipiora writes in his preface to Mailer's selected essays, Mailer "maintained long-term close friendships with feminists including Germaine Greer and Diana Trilling" (xx–iii). During the years after WWII, the Beats, in their attitudes toward marriage, monogamy, and homosexuality, were reinventing what it means to be masculine, an alternative vision to that of the stereotypical, white, middle-class 1950s man who, as Robert Bly writes in *Iron John* (1992), "got to work early, labored responsibly, supported his wife, and admired discipline . . . many of [whose] qualities were strong and positive, but underneath the charm and bluff there was, and there remains, much isolation, deprivation, and passivity" (1). During the 1990s the Men's Movement provided a new yet archetypal perspective on what many contemporary artists see as the crisis in modern masculinity. Bly traces this crisis to the Industrial Revolution and the resulting rise of urbanization and suburbanization when men began to abandon the farm and village to work in factories and offices only to come home tired, unfulfilled, and unresponsive to their wives and children. All this time, of course, mother was a constant presence, so children experienced mother-love but not much father-love. During the 1960s, Bly writes, "the waste and violence of the Vietnam war made men question whether they knew what an adult male really was . . ." (2). At the same time, second-wave feminists were encouraging men to become more sensitized to women's issues and to the feminine or anima in their own natures, a positive paradigm shift and necessary corrective to the limitations of the stereotypical 1950s male, yet Bly argues that these so-called "soft" males, sensitive, nurturing, and politically correct, were and are not happy (2); instead, they were and are enervated, passive, life-preserving but not life-giving.

Another work appearing in the 1990s, Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996), reflects some of the concerns shared by Bly and others involved in the Men's Movement: the absence of positive, nurturing father figures in the narrator's and Tyler's lives, their alienation from and subversion of corporate culture, and their search for authentic values. Palahniuk's narrator and his *doppelgänger* or alter ego, Tyler Durden, in many ways descend from the White Negro and the Beatsters, as well as from their children, the hippies of the 1960s' counterculture, but more particularly from the Youth International Movement figure or Yippie and from the Weather Underground, all proposing alternative visions to the Great Society and, in the case of the

Weathermen, practicing domestic terrorism. Against that background, in *Fight Club*, Palahniuk introduces a new kind of hipster at the end of the twentieth century, the anarcho-terrorist Space Monkey, a character who reflects the modern anxiety about masculinity shared by Palahniuk's predecessors.¹

Palahniuk characterizes the relationship between the narrator and Tyler in ways that recall other male-bonding relationships in American literature: especially that of Sal Paradise (Jack Kerouac) and Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady) in *On the Road*, the narrator paralleling the sensitive, intellectualized Sal, Tyler the adventurous womanizer Dean. In a statement that echoes the first line of Ginsberg's "Howl," "I saw the greatest minds of my generation destroyed by madness," Tyler sums up his own generation this way: "I see the strongest and the smartest men who have ever lived . . . and these men are pumping gas and waiting tables . . . they want to give their lives to something. Advertising has these people chasing cars and clothes that they don't need. Generations have been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need" (149). At the beginning of *Fight Club*, before the narrator manifests Tyler from his unconscious, he defines himself according to his function in the corporate hierarchy, calculating the cost of defective vehicle recalls, and according to what he owns, having furnished his apartment like a model from an IKEA catalogue. Still, he is unfulfilled. Soon after the narrator fantasizes Tyler into existence, Tyler destroys his condo along with all of his possessions, an important step toward his liberation, for, as Tyler says, "It's only after you've lost everything . . . that you can do anything" (70), a declaration that recalls Bob Dylan's line from that counter-cultural anthem "Like a Rolling Stone": "When you ain't got nothin', you got nothin' to lose" and like the character in Dylan's song and Beatsters everywhere, the narrator has to lose it all before he can hit bottom.

Bly's "soft" male paradigm persists into the new millennium and shapes the upbringing of the narrator and Tyler in *Fight Club*. The narrator, a young man presumably in his mid-to-late 20s, describes himself as a "thirty year old boy" (51) and reveals that "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 every six years. This isn't so much like a family as it's like he sets up a new franchise. What you see at Fight Club is a generation of men raised by women" (150). Tyler, the split-psyche manifestation of the narrator's unconscious, claims never to have known his father, and yet he confesses that when he fights he

is really fighting his absent father. The absent father thus acts as a catalyst setting the narrative into motion, as Kevin Boon observes: “Fight Club and Project Mayhem seek to recapture the function of the father as the primary male mentor and model for manhood” (Boon). The narrator confesses to fighting himself, his inner demons. Palahniuk’s narrator is a nice, intelligent, middle-class young man who suffers from insomnia. He seeks the help of a physician who tells him that “Insomnia is a symptom of something larger. Find out what’s actually wrong. Listen to your body” (19), and as Kirster Friday observes, “What the narrator discovers . . . is that this ‘something larger’ is a crisis of masculinity in contemporary American culture—a crisis that produces conspicuous symptoms and necessitates even more conspicuous remedies” (Friday). When the narrator tells the doctor he’s in pain, the doctor tells him that if he wants to experience real pain he should visit a testicular cancer survivor support group called “Remaining Men Together,” a group of men who have literally lost their balls.

As Bly observes, in the absence of a nurturing father figure to act as mentor in the adult world, the “soft” male tends to nurture sensitivity and to look to women to validate and satisfy his emotional needs. Palahniuk’s novel exemplifies this phenomenon as the narrator attempts to cure his disorder by drifting from survivor support group to survivor support group, even though, except for the insomnia, he is perfectly healthy, but he sympathizes with others’ pain (and, vicariously, his own), yet he feels empty and unfulfilled. Clearly, his attempt to heal himself by exploring his sensitive side is insufficient to fulfill a deeper need or yearning. When Marla Singer begins showing up at these support groups, the narrator immediately sizes her up as a phony or “tourist” like himself and finds he cannot cry in her presence. Marla becomes the narrator’s anima, though initially, alienated from his true self, he does not recognize her as such. Later, he realizes that “From the first night I met her, Tyler or some part of me had needed a way to be with Marla” (198). After the narrator and Marla agree to divide the support groups between themselves, the narrator is able to sleep, but when he does, Tyler comes out to play, and Fight Club is born. Kevin Boon maintains that Tyler is “the animus, the male spirit within the feminized narrator. He surfaces to guide the narrator back toward his masculine legacy. He is the manifestation of idealized masculinity” (Boon). The narrator differs from Mailer’s hipster in that his obsession is not with orgasm, “Mecca” for the White Negro (349), but with Fight Club and his bromance with Tyler; indeed, the narrator prefers a

male-bonding relationship with Tyler to a sexual or romantic relationship with Marla Singer, a femme fatale figure, alluring but volatile. The three characters form a “triangle” (14) in which the narrator begins to see Tyler and Marla as surrogate parents, creating a kind of Oedipal family romance. He does desire Marla but finds it necessary to invent Tyler in order to gratify his sexual desire. He has split and compartmentalized the different parts of his psyche when what he really needs is a harmonious balance and sense of self.

Palahniuk cites *Iron John* in the Afterword to *Fight Club*, noting that one reviewer had interpreted the novel as a satire on the Men’s Movement, an interpretation Palahniuk rejects, as do I (216). He reflects that at the time he wrote *Fight Club*, three of the best-selling novels in the U.S. were *Joy Luck Club*, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, and *How to Make an American Quilt*, “all novels that presented a model for women to be together. . . . To share their lives. But there was no novel that presented a social model for men to share their lives” (214). He says of the way he conceived *Fight Club*, “It would have to give men the structure and roles and rules of a game—or a task—but not too touchy-feely. It would have to model a new way to gather and be together” (214). The problem is that, other than sports, fraternities, and the military, all of which tend to perpetuate violence, conformity, and authoritarianism, our culture offers few opportunities for young men to become initiated into manhood. Urban gangs perform initiation rituals, frequently violent, but as Bly writes, and as we find in *Fight Club*, boys cannot initiate boys; only men, especially older men, can function as true shamen and mentors. The narrator speculates that “Maybe we didn’t need a father to complete ourselves” (54), but in a culture that offers few paternal substitutes (older men are conspicuously absent in the novel) that speculation turns out to be unfounded.

Palahniuk writes in the Afterword to his novel that

In the mountains of Bolivia . . . every year, the poorest people gather in the high Andes to celebrate the festival of ‘Tinku’. There, the *campesino* men beat the crap out of one another. Drunk and bloody, they pound one another with just their bare fists, chanting ‘We are men. We are men. We are men. . . .’ The men fight the men. Sometimes, the women fight one another. They fight the way they have for centuries. . . . Then,

when they're exhausted, the men and women go to church.
And then they get married. (218)

Bly refers to numerous cultures whose initiation rituals include the symbolic wounding of adolescent males. Living in a culture that does not offer him such initiatory rituals, the narrator must invent his own: *Fight Club* is an archetypal ritual post-modernized, generated not so much from existing cultural practices as self-created. The members of *Fight Club* compete for what Mailer in his essay calls the “sweet” (349), the experience of summoning the courage to meet the existential challenge. Competition or “lifemanship” (349) and violence are themes running throughout Mailer’s life and career, from his combative public persona to his interest in boxing, as in *The Fight* (1975), and in “The White Negro,” Mailer sees life as a zero sum game in which there are clear winners (hipsters) and losers (squares). One of the most controversial aspects of “The White Negro” is Mailer’s endorsement of violence as a form of both rebellion and existential growth. Like most middle-class millennials, *Fight Club*’s narrator has been taught all his life to abhor violence as a barbaric and outmoded means of resolving conflict, but “How do you know who you are,” Tyler asks the narrator in the David Finch film adaptation, “if you’ve never been in a fight” (*Fight Club*)? They fight as a way to acquire self-knowledge of the sort sought by Mailer’s “philosophical psychopath” (343) who can examine his own motives and act in a consciously anti-social way to gratify his desires, “liberating” himself, as Mailer said, “from the Super-ego of society” (354). Because the White Negro refuses to sublimate either sexual or violent impulses, Mailer declares that the “nihilism of Hip proposes as its final tendency that every social restraint and category be removed” (354). Unfortunately, once Palahniuk’s narrator has loosed his id, he releases a maelstrom of violence that threatens to engulf him.

Hipsters are Tricksters, either living outside and evading the system, as the Beats and hippies did, or, in the style of the Weather Underground or the Space Monkeys, subverting it through the creative destruction of anarchy. (Palahniuk himself has been involved with a group of anarchistic, anti-globalization tricksters called the Cacophony Society.) “Hip,” Leland says, “which validates troublemakers, is an engine of progress . . . [hipsters] loosen society’s grip on the certainties that prevent it from evolving” (165). Mailer similarly constructed his White Negro as his Nietzschean *übermensch*, or what

Frederic Whiting calls his “Third Man,” who would reinvent the meaning of being human. Hip, then, manifests as a form of Social Darwinism, but not in the sense in which the rich and powerful dominate because they are the most highly evolved; rather, hipsters promote societal growth because, as Leland says, “Darwinism favors contradiction and disruption” (165). Just as the 1960s’ counterculture opposed the establishment’s military-industrial complex through theatrical antics such as the attempt by Ginsberg and others to levitate the Pentagon to protest the war in Vietnam (recreated by Mailer in *The Armies of the Night*), “the typical trickster tale,” Leland tells us, “is of a weaker character . . . who uses superior wit and deceit to prevail over a stronger one” (165); thus, Tyler employs tricksterism to subvert corporate culture, using his job as a film projectionist to splice subliminal, pornographic images into family-friendly films and his job as a waiter in upscale restaurants to urinate into rich people’s vichyssoise. Tyler’s subversive pranks and his formation of Project Mayhem link Hip to anarchy in the sense that Hip is, according to Leland, “a system of order that incorporates chaos” and promotes “intellectual growth” (184), and as Mailer wrote in his essay, one must “grow or pay more for remaining the same” (350). Tricksterism connects Palahniuk’s characters to countercultural figures like Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, the subject of Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968). In a carnivalesque inversion of the social order, the Pranksters, including Neal Cassady, perform the archetypal role of Holy Fool, playing mind games and goofing on the Squares, those not metaphorically “on the bus.” Through the use of psychedelic drugs, the Pranksters had experienced what Wolfe calls the “Unspoken Thing” (111–132), a transcendent, spiritual awareness achievable only by an elite and beyond the power of language to express, just as Mailer argues that the meaning of the language of Hip is inaccessible to the unenlightened Unhip or Square. As Clarence Major writes in *Juba to Jive*, the root words of hip are the African Wolof words *hepi*, “to see,” and *hipi*, “to open one’s eyes”; the hipster, then, is a man or woman who is enlightened (234). The narrator claims that Fight Club is like Zen enlightenment: “After a night in fight club, everything in the real world gets the volume turned down. Nothing can piss you off. . . .” (49); he then feels like “the calm little center of the world” (64). However, in one of several paradoxes in Palahniuk’s narrative, despite their rejection of much stereotypical male behavior, like sculpting their bodies at the gym, the nar-

rator and Tyler still resort to violence as a way of validating and expressing masculinity.

Unlike Mailer's hipster, whose dilemma lies in death as a result of the collective violence of the state or of the "slow death by conformity" (339), Palahniuk's hipsters face primarily the latter alternative, a meaningless, valueless, corporatized existence, and so they become obsessed with death, Freud's Thanatos, the regression to an inorganic state. "Maybe," the narrator says, "self-improvement isn't the answer; maybe self-destruction is the answer" (49). The narrator has already revealed that he has a death wish: as a frequent flyer for his company, he fantasizes about violent deaths in mid-air collisions; Marla states as her philosophy of life that she can die at any time, her tragedy (and the grim joke) is that she doesn't. Tyler, however, offers the narrator the same alternative Mailer extends to the hipster:

If the fate of twentieth century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence, why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that unchartered journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. In short, whether the life is criminal or not, the decision is to encourage the psychopath in oneself. To explore that domain of existence where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and exists . . . in that enormous present which is without past or future. . . . (339)

His condo reduced to rubble, the narrator moves in with Tyler who occupies the ramshackle mansion on Paper Street, a deserted, post-apocalyptic scene, and he devotes more and more time to Fight Club and to Tyler's other illegal schemes. The Trickster is frequently an outlaw, "placed literally outside the law," in Leland's words, inhabiting "a country within a country" (224) in which he creates a new (dis)order and ethos. While criminals are considered "regressive elements" in society, Leland claims that they actually form a "social vanguard" and a "creative force" (224). From the perspective of sociobiology, Leland argues that "society produces its outlaws for the same reason it produces Hip: to foment noise and conflict, the engines of evolution" (163).

In "The White Negro" Mailer speculated that as the hipster evolved he

could become the “perverted and dangerous front-runner of a new kind of personality which could become the central expression of human nature before the twentieth century is over” (345), and Tyler makes a similar prediction: “It’s Project Mayhem that’s going to save the world. A cultural ice age. A prematurely induced dark age. Project Mayhem will force humanity to go dormant or into remission long enough for the Earth to recover. . . . This was the goal . . . the complete and right-away destruction of the world” (125). Thus, we have the Romantic paradox of violence as creative destruction. When Tyler orders Project Mayhem members to start fights with total strangers but to let the strangers win, he creates a way for these “guerilla terrorists of the service industry” (81) to liberate other men, to provoke their aggression so they too can grab some of that “sweet” for which Mailer’s hipster competes, channeling their violent impulses in order to achieve catharsis and enlightenment. “What we have to do,” Tyler tells the narrator, “is remind these guys how much power they have” (120), namely, “the power to control history” (122). Or, as Mailer wrote about his *White Negro*, “in widening the arena of the possible, one widens it reciprocally for others” (354). However, in a paradox similar to the one Maggie McKinley explores in her recent study of violence and modern masculinity in contemporary American fiction, *Fight Club* degenerates into Project Mayhem, and the *Fight Club* members’ individual acts of violence escalate into collective acts of terrorism, and here the Beatster and the *White Negro* part company with Palahniuk’s protagonists. Tyler and his Space Monkeys end up recreating the same soul-killing, authoritarian structure he and the narrator originally sought to subvert. Palahniuk dramatizes Mailer’s dystopian vision that hipsters may become “the material for an elite of storm troopers ready to follow the first truly magnetic leader [Tyler] whose view of mass murder is phrased in a language which reaches their emotions” (355). Beginning with the litany of rules *Fight Club* and the Space Monkeys mechanically recite, as in Orwell’s 1984 *Oceania*, “The first rule of *Fight Club* is you don’t talk about *fight club*” and “The first rule of about Project Mayhem is you don’t ask questions about Project Mayhem,” Tyler gradually requires more and more conformity from his Space Monkeys.

The Space Monkeys’ terrorist acts committed in the name of Project Mayhem reveal the darker side of masculinity. Bly addresses men’s “dark side” destructive acts and impulses in this way:

The dark side of men is clear. Their mad exploitation of earth's resources, devaluation . . . of women, and obsession with tribal warfare. . . . Genetic inheritance contributes to their obsessions, but also culture and environment. We have defective mythologies that ignore masculine depth of feeling, assign men a place in the sky instead of earth, teach obedience to the wrong power, work to keep men boys, and entangle both men and women in systems of industrial domination that exclude both matriarchy and patriarchy. (x)

In the wake of the industrial revolution, the men who had once stewarded nature began to wreak havoc upon it by dumping waste and chemicals into the environment. Palahniuk's hipsters fantasize and romanticize a violent return to the primitive, imagining hunting wild game in a post-apocalyptic Times Square, just as Wenke claims that the White Negro's "romantic rejection of society" signifies "a liberation of instinct to regain for oneself an identity of Adamic innocence" (72). Here, though, we need to draw on Bly's crucial distinction between the wild man and the savage man because the members of Fight Club and Project Mayhem seem to devolve from one to the other. Bly writes that the wild man, who has examined his wound, resembles a Zen priest or a shaman, he is fierce and confident, but, as Bly says, fierceness does have to be expressed as dominance or exploitation. The White Negro fights or kills as a means of achieving "catharsis which prepares for growth" (355), and while the Fight Club members fight to win, what they feel after fighting is not boastful machismo, but enlightenment, an existential transcendence won through violence, purging, but only temporarily, those violent impulses civilized man cannot act upon. Contrasting the wild man to the savage man, however, Bly says that the latter "does great damage to soul, earth, and humankind; we can say that though the savage man is wounded he prefers not to examine it" (x). Tyler casts the narrator's shadow, that part of himself he has suppressed but is still savage enough to wreak total destruction on the earth and on all human institutions (123). The narrator says, "that's how I felt. I wanted to destroy everything beautiful I'd never have. Burn the Amazon rain forests. I wanted to kill all the fish I couldn't afford to eat. . . . I wanted the whole world to hit bottom" (124). This apparent nihilism is really a thinly-veiled Romantic yearning for a return to an uncorrupted natural world. Project Mayhem ups the ante, redi-

recting the hipster's violent impulses from fist-fights with each other to the destruction of property and the propagation of mass fear and confusion. What Mailer says about African-Americans being a "cultureless and alienated bottom of exploitable human material" (348), Tyler says about the members of Project Mayhem being the "crap and slaves of history" (123). By extension, they too are White Negroes, and, as Mailer's hipster does and the Weathermen did, they vent their rage against the capitalist system. In another cruel irony, however, despite Tyler's identification with the white male proletarians who subordinate themselves to Project Mayhem, this anarcho-terrorist group mutates into a form of totalitarianism, against which Mailer wrote and fought for his entire career; further, Tyler, now assuming dictatorial powers, devalues their lives as inconsequential to the greater goal of reinventing the world and thus dehumanizes them. Once Tyler takes over, he increasingly distances himself from the narrator, or rather, the narrator, learning that Project Mayhem led to the deaths of both his boss and of his friend Bob and then being threatened himself with castration, distances himself from Tyler.

Once *Fight Club*'s narrator discovers that he has been leading a double life as himself and as Tyler and that Tyler has taken over, he decides to purge himself and to eliminate Tyler by blowing his own head off, but just as Tyler claims, neither he nor the narrator really die. The dramatic structure of Palahniuk's novel is comic and its conclusion open-ended. Prankster to the end, the narrator ends up not in heaven, as he claims, but in a hospital. He had said that "We wanted to blast the world free of history" (124), but the novel's conclusion simply puts history on reset. From his hospital bed, the narrator says

every once in a while, somebody brings me my lunch tray and my meds and he has a black eye or his forehead is swollen with stitches, and he says. 'We miss you Mr. Durden. . . . Everything's going according to plan. . . . We're going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world. . . . We look forward to getting you back.' (208)

Tyler lives, but he is not a demonic spirit the narrator needs to purge; he represents that ever-present darker side that Jung would argue the narrator must successfully integrate into his own personality, as Mailer's "philosoph-

ical psychopath” consciously and deliberately expresses his own violent and anti-social impulses. No matter how dark that dark side might be, it must be acknowledged, and in a way honored; following Freud, Mailer understood, as Palahniuk seems to understand, that if we repress these impulses we become neurotic, depressed and empty, civilization’s discontents. Palahniuk’s narrator cannot utterly destroy his alter ego, who will return in *Fight Club 2*, a multi-part graphic novel; rather, he has to learn to live with his Inner Tyler, as do we all.

NOTE

1. The 1950s hipster evolved into the 1960s hippie, who mutated into the 1980s yuppie, but in the meantime the 70s punks arrived on the scene, echoing themes of anger, rebellion, and anarchy. Today’s hipsters are white, affluent, urban millennials who live in gentrified neighborhoods. Tech-savvy, stylistically eclectic, and politically progressive, they now share little of their Hip heritage. These are not Palahniuk’s hipsters.

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