The movie, *Fight Club*, is based on a novel by Chuck Palahniuk. With a unique style of narration and a remarkably creative spin on the audience point-of-view, *Fight Club* presents an effective characterization of consumer counter-culture. The underlying irony of the film is that society and the realm outside of society are at odds: society wants to maintain structured sense of order while allowing Capitalism to thrive and “the outside” wants to destroy that society; the outside wants to blow it up and start at zero with a new set of values.

Throughout *Fight Club*, the audience is addressed by a narrator. The narrator is also the character in the film who is never named. The narrator is the foil of himself, his *other* self, Tyler Durden.

The narration is interesting because it starts, in the actual timeframe of the movie, at the very beginning of the film and stops when we reach the end of the film. However, the narration as it is within the chronology of the story, starts in the middle of the story and takes us back through to the beginning of the main character’s troubles.

Another interesting thing about the narration is evident in the way that the movie starts. The narrator says “With the end of a gun barrel in your mouth, you speak only in vowels.” He speaks to the audience very clearly. When we hear the character on the screen speak, we hear only the vowels of speech as impeded by the gun.

As in the beginning scene, the narrator walks the audience through most of the events in the movie, even some of the simplistic and easily understood scenes. Fincher’s narration style is effective here in that he can take a scene that we can easily interpret and understand, such as speech being impeded by having a barrel in the mouth, and apply some interesting and off-kilter concepts that allow the audience to get into the character’s psyche.

The beginning narration truly sets the stage for what we are to expect from the character throughout the film, and I think it is very effective. We constantly hear the clarity of narration because the narrator is speaking from a future place of understanding and experience. The character that we watch on screen throughout the movie has not yet been confronted with the various complexities that the narrator has almost fully dealt with. Palahniuk and Fincher’s stylistic genius here, allows the narrator to speak coolly and dispassionately. The distance of the narrator from the onscreen emotion allows the audience to believe that the narrator, and thus the onscreen character, are credible individuals, which bypasses our first reaction to believe that the onscreen character is completely crazy.

Although the film starts *en medias res*, director David Fincher brings the audience back around to the beginning into the life of Edward Norton’s character: an automotive recall specialist and consumer goods addict.

The characterization of the film’s primary figure, “the narrator,” is of one who is on the *inside* of society, yet also at its fringes; he is an insider in the process of falling out. He flies solo all over the country, doing a type of math that balances corporate costs with the monetary value of human life.

Norton’s character perfectly illustrates those things in our society that are blatantly terrible. We can all agree that it is terrible to even attempt to compensate people for human loss, let alone create a formulary to calculate the cost of automotive recalls versus the cost of out-of-court settlements. Norton’s character is deeply entrenched in those aspects of a Capitalist society that no one wants to believe exist; he is fully involved with those parts of a free-market system that tend to overlook the human being and its needs and desires.

Norton’s character creates another personality, Tyler Durden. This other person within Norton’s character is that person that wants to rebel against Norton’s society. In fact, his character wants to tear apart Norton’s society, the “consumer-culture” and literally blow everything back to the stone-age.

Durden says he wants everything to return to zero. Durden wants a return to the primitive; he rejects all of the trappings of a modern, self-absorbed society.

Tyler Durden allows the audience a separate point-of-view from what we were experiencing with Norton’s character. One of the greatest things about experiencing Norton’s character in this way, is that at first, we don’t know that we are seeing the character, and the narrator, from a different point-of-view.

Fincher and Palahnuik’s vision on the separation of this character is incredibly unique and valuable to the film. I don’t believe that I’ve seen anything quite like this before. Instead of seeing two separate characters on screen, we come to realize that we’ve been watching the same individual, which truly changes a lot of what we come to understand about the “deconstruction” on consumer society.

Norton’s character is the epitome of the ideal consumer. He refers to a furniture magazine as “IKEA pornography” and wonders “what kind of sofa defines me as a person?”

A great irony, is that a completely counter-consumer emerges from the psyche of the ideal consumer. Tyler Durden counters Norton’s character with “the things you own, end up owning you.”

I don’t know if there are any other movies quite like this one, but I would say that it could compare to the movie, *The Beach* with Leonardo DiCaprio. In *The Beach* the characters seek an escape from modern society; they want to get on the outside. Like Tyler Durden, the travelers in *The Beach* reject the trappings of modern society.

In *Fight* Club, Tyler Durden builds an “army” that closely resembles a commune: the standards of living are the same for all, the labor is shared by all, and the individual identity is subordinate to the whole. *The Beach* is much the same in all of those aspects.

*The Beach*  is quite different in that the characters come to realize that people in groups always seem to create a society and subsequently destroy it. They realize that humans can never hold on to something beautiful without finding a way to destroy it. In *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden and his crew wish to destroy society to create something beautiful. *The Beach* ends on pessimistic note: we are doomed to repeat our past mistakes and build society that destroys the beautiful and natural world. *Fight Club* ends on a more optimistic note: we can start again and find something better in our primitive roots.