Fight Club: Political Piece or Masterpiece?

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One of David Fincher’s most remarkable and debated films is *Fight Club*. It was adapted to the screen from the novel written by Chuck Palahniuk. While most of the cult following has given the movie infinite praise for its crazy, twisted storyline and its anarchist ideas, other critics have claimed there is more than meets the eye, and imply that the film reveals a supremacy theme that is hidden in-between the lines of the movie. Some do not believe the movie has a deeper, social meaning, other than its own “down with the regime” theme, however, the author’s interpretations present valid points.

King (2009) painted *Fight Club* as essentially a propaganda piece for white males covertly pushing for hegemony in society. The writer indicated that the essay uncovers a key strategy through which hegemonic systems follow, citing the abject body as a metaphor for the better understanding of the formation of the life of hegemonic ideologies (King, 2009). The writers say, “Fight Club pushes hegemony as a normality in society that people need to conform to,” and they conclude that, “this essay names hegemonic masculinity ‘abject’ in order to offer critical prophylaxis against white masculinity’s attempt to reproduce its cultural privilege” (King, 2009, p. 367). In other words, it is bad to push for a white hegemony establishment in terms of power. Although the structured society King argued was presented in the film was horrible, it seems unreasonable a movie could have such steep intentions, be driven by such controversial topics, and still be beloved by millions of fans who would probably disagree wholeheartedly with the aforementioned societal structure. The entire article seems like a contradiction, because if anyone has seen *Fight Club*, it is easy to see that the driving force behind the movie is bringing down the man, not reestablishing another regime.
Maybe the fans of the movie just do not see past the layers and enjoy it purely for entertainment.

Another radical idea that presents itself to some is the thought that the movie pushes a homophobic agenda, through conservative ideology. Westerfelhaus and Brookey (2004) discussed Fight Club’s narrative is based around religious rituals that reaffirm heterosexuality at the expense of homosexuality. Conservatives and religious people benefit from this because it promotes a heternormative lifestyle. (Westerfelhaus, Brookey, 2004) The writers argued that, “While on the surface Fight Club seems to challenge the traditional religious values embraced by the bible, we argue that the film's narrative actually serves to reaffirm conservative religious orthodoxy regarding gender roles and homosexuality” (Westerfelhaus and Brookey, 2004, p.308). This illustrated the authors belief that the purpose of the movie, is to promote a conservative, straight male as a power figure in this movie, and establish this as a norm. This portrayal in turn casts homosexuality in a negative light. This movie does the opposite with its anarchist themes; it establishes that the members of Fight Club go as far as to blow up buildings to send their message. The goal of Fight Club is to bring down the man, so to speak, not push for another agenda, which would be taking one step forward and two steps back.

Gender roles were also analyzed as an underlying agenda Ashcraft and Flores (2000) question in Fight Club. The authors call into question gender role hierarchy and how the film praises it. They explained Fight Club’s gender role hierarchy as a decline in masculinity, thus causing men to fight for it to be reestablished (Ashcraft and Flores, 2000), Essentially, they argued the reason for films like Fight Club is because the white males are trying to reestablish themselves as the dominant being. The problem with this
and the other criticisms like this is not because it is not clear where they are coming from. It is where they draw their points and form their conclusions. The problem lies in their assertion that a film can completely push an entire agenda on set of people, and have them conform. It is fictional work and that is a major point that the authors are missing. It is easy to say the audience and following is large enough to make some sort of statement, but at the end of the day, the majority of the fans and followers do not adhere to these so-called hegemonic ideologies.

In summation, it is easy to grasp where the authors of these articles are coming from, however, their points, while clear and well thought out, seem to be misguided. The authors are overlooking the fact that this is purely fiction. Their assertions are incredibly radical, and the idea that it is a movie about conforming to a specific agenda seems to be the exact opposite of that the film implies. While there are cases where people take *Fight Club* to a literal level, these cases are a mere fraction of society as whole. They are seeking attention on a grandeur scale, and their efforts are all for not in terms of actual influence they have. It is hard to interpret this film as racist or prejudiced as these analyses imply. If a person looks hard enough at something, that person can turn it into whatever they want. These assertions seem too extreme, and that is saying something for a movie that is about anarchy. Though these articles are insightful, and provide an interesting perspective and interpretation as to what they believe the film is about, this movie is nothing more than a wonderful, mind-bending entertainment piece, whose purpose is to provide an escape, and not to persuade to conform.
References


