

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE EVOLUTION OF THE BYRONIC HERO IN
POSTMODERN FICTION THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF
FIGHT CLUB AND ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST**

MASTER'S THESIS

Güzide UYSAL

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

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July, 2021

ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study “The Evolution of the Byronic Hero in Postmodern Fiction Through the Analysis of *Fight Club* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*”, which I submitted as a Master’s thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (05.07.2021)

Güzide UYSAL

FOREWORD

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the years, the literary canon has introduced many characters who have captivated the reader with their acts of heroism. One such character from the nineteenth century is the Byronic hero. Having been created during a transition period in George Gordon Byron's literary career, the Byronic hero pattern has taken a very special place in literature, and it has influenced many other writers from different eras. This study takes special interest in how the Byronic hero is interpreted in the Postmodern era to examine the evolution of this heroic concept. Accordingly, this thesis analyses Randle McMurphy from Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Tyler Durden from Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* as postmodern Byronic heroes and emphasizes their contributions to Byron's heroic tradition in their own distinct ways. These characters are demonstrated as great examples for the postmodern Byronic hero depending on their leadership disposition, great diligence to defend their personal freedom against the authority figures, and rejection to be deemed as role models. Since Byron's heroes are typically known for their refusal to comply with the authority figures, the actions of the postmodern Byronic heroes are further analyzed through the guidance of the critical theories of Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, concerning power, knowledge, truth and self-mastery. At the end of the thesis, it is deduced that while many of the key characteristics of the Byronic hero have been preserved for years, the postmodern Byronic heroes have inevitably gone through an evolution in terms of character formation. Reflecting the significant political issues of their own times, the postmodern Byronic heroes are made to believe that they might be the savior of other people, which gradually gives them fascist tendencies. Finally, it is concluded that despite all the adverse characteristics of the Byronic hero, the reader sympathizes with him as his rebellion against delimiting authority figures provide a satisfactory experience for the reader.

Key Words: Byronic Hero, Romanticism, Postmodernism, power, self-mastery

***DÖVÜŞ KULÜBÜ* VE *GUGUK KUŞU* ROMANLARININ ANALİZİ İLE POSTMODERN KURGUDA BYRONİK KAHRAMANIN EVRİMİ**

ÖZET

Edebi kanon yıllar boyunca okuyucuyu kahramanlık eylemleriyle büyüleyen birçok karakter ile tanıştırmıştır. Bu karakterlerden birisi de on dokuzuncu yüzyılda ortaya çıkan Byronik kahramandır. George Gordon Byron'ın edebi kariyerinin bir geçiş döneminde yaratılmış olan Byronik kahraman modeli edebiyatta özel bir yer edinmiş ve farklı dönemlerden birçok yazarı etkilemiştir. Karakterin zaman ötesiliğinden yola çıkan bu çalışma, Byronik kahramanın yıllar içerisindeki evrimini incelemek için bu modelin Postmodern dönem çerçevesinde nasıl yorumlandığını mercek altına almaktadır. Çalışmada Ken Kesey'nin *Guguk Kuşu* romanından Randle McMurphy ve Chuck Palahniuk'ın *Dövüş Kulübü* romanından Tyler Durden karakterleri postmodern Byronik kahramanlar olarak analiz edilmekte ve bu karakterlerin Byronik kahraman geleneğine olan katkıları vurgulanmaktadır. Randle McMurphy ve Tyler Durden'in Byronik kahramana örnek olarak ele alınan özellikleri arasında liderlik eğilimleri, rol model olmayı reddetmeleri ve kişisel hak ve hürriyetlerine karşı olan hassasiyetleri bulunmaktadır. Byronik kahramanlar karakteristik olarak otorite figürlerine boyun eğmeyi reddetmeleriyle bilindiğinden, Tyler Durden ve Randle McMurphy'nin eylemleri, Michel Foucault ve Friedrich Nietzsche'nin iktidar, bilgi, hakikat ve benlik ile ilgili eleştirel teorilerinin rehberliğinde analiz edilmektedir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, Byronik kahramanın temel özelliklerinin birçoğunun korunmasına rağmen, postmodern Byronik kahramanların kaçınılmaz olarak karakter oluşumu açısından değişime uğradıkları neticesine varılmaktadır. Kendi dönemlerinin önemli siyasi meselelerinin bir yansıması olan postmodern Byronik kahramanlar, çevresindeki insanlar tarafından onların kurtarıcıları olabileceklerine inandırılır ve faşist eğilimler edinirler. Sonuç olarak, Byronik kahramanın tüm olumsuz özelliklerine rağmen, otorite figürlerinin kısıtlayıcı tutumlarına karşı başkaldıran tavırlarının okuyucu için tatmin edici bir deneyim sağladığı ve bu yüzden okuyucunun Byronik kahraman figürüne sempati duyduğu çıkarımına varılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Byronik kahraman, Romantisizm, Postmodernizm, güç, öz hakimiyet

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I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of hero in literature tends to transform in time depending on the impact of altering cultures, languages, social issues, and geographical locations on human life. It could be argued that there are no specific borderlines in defining a hero, and the definition may differ greatly. This study takes special interest in how Lord Byron defines and characterizes his own heroes with specific attributes in the nineteenth century, which are coined as Byronic Heroes. These heroes are created under the influence of various disciplines and movements such as Romanticism, Neoclassicism, Pan Heroism¹ and Byron's pattern for his unique characters has appealed to many authors from different eras and traditions². So as to assert the suggested reputation of the Byronic Hero's development as a unique character, as will be explained in further chapters, it is crucial to illustrate the conditions that have given rise to the Romantic Movement, and to elaborate Byron's involvement in it, since a certain part of Byron's literary career is typically attributed to the Romantic literary canon.

In his book *The Roots of Romanticism*, Isaiah Berlin provides a comprehensive insight on the development of the Romantic Movement starting from the early stages. He argues that the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offered three main propositions that constitute the basis of the Western tradition and the first sparks of Romanticism emerged as a head-on challenge to the scientific and aesthetic principles of the Enlightenment. Overall, these three propositions suggest that human beings are capable of addressing all the authentic questions as long as the answers can be discovered and learnt. If the answer is impossible to know, it is not a question at all. Furthermore, these answers must be consistent with each other. Otherwise, the contradiction between two propositions will result in a "chaos" (Berlin, 2013: 48). What Berlin consequently concludes from these principles is that, for the Enlightenment thinkers "virtue consists ultimately in knowledge; that if we know what

¹Pan Heroism is the common concept of a hero generally determined by society.

²Lennartz, N. (Ed.). (2018). *Byron and Marginality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

we are, [...] what we need, and [...] where to obtain it, [...] then we can live happy, virtuous, just, free and contented lives” (51).

In accordance with the reliance on science and knowledge, the aesthetic theory of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment depends on “hold[ing] up a mirror to nature,” since “nature tends towards perfection” (51-53). There is a certain pattern in nature, which hints at a rational interconnection between things, and the highest artistic ideal is to elicit these connections and to reflect them in a work of art. To support this theory, Berlin quotes from René Rapin, who is an important figure from the seventeenth century, saying that Aristotle’s *Poetics* is “nature reduced to method, good sense reduced to principle” (52). On the other hand, such determinism at every aspect of life was not acceptable to all and the first challenge to the Enlightenment ideals came from the Germans. Berlin argues that the reason why the Germans initiated the reaction was that while there was a continuous improvement in Europe, especially after the French Revolution, “there was no centre, [...] no life, [...] no pride, [...] no sense of growth, dynamism and power” in Germany (60). Therefore, the reaction was actually rooted in a sense of inferiority and the loss of national pride.

According to the Germans, the Enlightenment ideals that are primarily based on science, reason and the rational order of nature make everything too tidy, classified and arranged. However, trying to rationalize and classify human experience is to “offer a pale substitute for the creative energies of man,” and to exclude individuality and “the desire to create” in human beings (97). The idea that there is a limit to the questions and answers that can be explored by human beings is entirely unreal for the German thinkers such as Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder. What they mainly argue is that the scientific order suffocates people and it does not offer any solutions to the problems that actually disturb the human soul. Therefore, it may be suggested that while the Enlightenment puts science and order at the core of human life, the reactionaries feel the lack of individuality and self-assertion in these ideals, and they reject the idea that there is a certain symmetrical structure of life reflected by nature. Opposite to what the Enlightenment thinkers believe, they hold that human capacity is infinite and the creative energy of human beings should not be undermined. Throughout the history, humans have been able to create specific values, symbols and visions of the world, which means that exploring the nature of things and the universe is a creative process that entirely depends on individual insight. Berlin indicates that

the fundamental aspect of this view is Johann Gottlieb Fichte's philosophy that "your universe is as you choose to make it" (140).

In this sense, at the heart of Romanticism it is possible to see the traces of Kant's proposition of the "transcendental constitution of reality" (Žižek, 2012: 15). In contrast to the ideology that regards the philosophy of Being as the equivalent of any particular science, as the general belief was that there was a universal structure of things which mirrored the rational interrelated structure of nature, and that applied to human beings as well, Kant argues that "a priori network of categories [...] determines how we understand reality, what appears to us as reality" (15). Thus, Kant's philosophy individualizes the process of perceiving the reality depending on a priori categories that impose a certain way of intuiting the phenomenal world³. The proclamation of the Romantic Movement too emphasizes "the endless self-creativity of the universe," which means one does not necessarily have to adjust oneself according to a particular, universal perception of the world (Berlin, 2013: 140). The creative process is entirely subjective. Presupposing the idea that human capacity is infinite, it may be concluded that the Romantic pursuit of creating subjective reality is something inexhaustible as it requires discovering creative forces and nourishing imagination as well as enabling a link which Kant refers to as the sublime.

On the other hand, it is of great importance to highlight that Romanticism is a constantly shifting movement due to its subjective aspect. As philosophers and authors contemplate more and expand their imaginative forces in an attempt to pursue a self-created universe, they lead divergent paths within the same literary movement. Frederick C. Beiser agrees on this proposition since he states that Romanticism is "a profoundly protean movement, divided into distinct periods that are in some respects flatly contradictory" (Beiser, 1992: 224). In that respect, it may be argued that the early German Romantics differ from the later Romantics in their approach to politics, as they believe in the infinite capacity of human beings in creating an authentic universe including their own communities and societies. However, Beiser argues that the later Romantics "lost faith in the power of the people to develop a community through their own spontaneous efforts" and because of "the social disintegration created by the Revolution and advancing capitalism [...] they looked back with longing on the

³ Kant categorizes the world as phenomenal and noumenal. Phenomenal world, which is mentioned above, is perceived with sensations, therefore, it is present to the consciousness of an individual.

corporate order of the Middle Ages” (223). The discontent with their own modern-day political order leads the later Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel to conclude that “there can be no returning to the happy days of [...] the civilization of Greeks” (231) in contradiction to Schiller’s suggestion in his *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, “the Greeks are what we were; they are what we shall become again”⁴.

The idealization of the ancient Greek civilization grants the new path for the later German Romantics. Beiser explains this new Grecophile predisposition through the philosophies of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. He claims that Schlegel profoundly laments for the loss of community in modern life, attributing this loss to the increasing materialism and egoism of civil society. For Schlegel, the ideal community was that of Athens’, as everyone partook in the state and had affinity for their countrymen. Novalis similarly argues that the purpose of the Romantic art is to “reunite humans with nature” and the Greeks were endowed with this kind of unity (232). However, the main concern in romanticizing the ancient Greeks is that “their art was the product of their culture, which was gone forever” (257). For this reason, it is concluded by Schlegel that the aim of the Romantic art should not be mimetic; in other words, it should not imitate the ancient Greeks as they are, but to recognize and recreate the essential spirit of their art. The primary quest for the later Romantics, therefore, is to define their highest ideal and strive to achieve it. Even though they cannot entirely achieve their goal, they can approach it, which is still a way to reveal their greatness. Consequently in this period of Romanticism, it is possible to observe a tendency towards Greek heroism, which elevates “the courage to fight for a noble cause” (341). One of the most influential and greatest examples of this type of heroism is Friedrich Hölderlin’s novel *Hyperion*, whose protagonist leaves his lover Diotima to clash with the Turkish and Persian forces invading Greece. Diotima herself suggests Hyperion to leave her upon understanding that he cannot be pleased with what she can offer:

Your heart has found peace at last. I’ll believe it. I understand it. But do you really think you’ve now reached your end? Will you lock yourself up in the heaven of your love and leave a world which has need of you [...]? Down you must like the ray of light, like the all-refreshing rain you must descend into the

⁴ Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, p. 84.

land of mortality, you must illumine like Apollo, shake and quicken like Jupiter, or you are not worthy of your heaven. (Hölderlin, 2019: 75)

Hence, Hyperion's final acceptance of Diotima's suggestion is an indicator of his predilection for pursuing his high ideals, or fighting for a noble cause in Beiser's words, just as Greek heroism entails.

The development of Romanticism as a movement including all the changes and inconsistencies within itself influenced Lord Byron's literary career as well. Lord Byron was one of the significant and popular writers of the nineteenth century. However, at the beginning of his career when he published the collection of his poems *Hours of Idleness* in 1807, Byron was heavily criticized by *the Edinburgh Review* for being self-indulgent, which later led to the publication of Byron's satirical poem "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."⁵ However, he grew increasingly dissatisfied trying to fulfill the early German Romantic ideals of finding one's true self to create a subjective understanding of the universe, and he found himself in a predicament not exactly knowing what he wanted and expected from his art. Likewise, one of Byron's acquaintances, Lady Blessington, evaluates Byron's attitude towards Romanticism as inconsistent as well: "Byron seems to take a peculiar pleasure in ridiculing sentiment and romantic feelings; and yet the day after will betray both, to an extent that appears impossible to be sincere, to those who had heard his previous sarcasms" (Lovell, 1969: 33).

Byron's initial engagement in early Romanticism may be explained by his close relationship with the other Romantic poets, who influenced and urged him to write his poems in the Romantic style, yet deep inside Byron seems not to be satisfied with the stillness and the sentiments that were promoted by the Romantics. In "The Evolution of the Surface Self: Byron's Poetic Career," Jean Hall argues that the main opposition which caused Byron's dissatisfaction with Romanticism was the idea that one must turn toward innerness to find their true personal identity. Byron, unlike the initial Romantics, started to doubt the desirability and functionality of the Romantic search for self. Moreover, he was not sure about the attractiveness of his inner self and he feared to face his true identity, as the Romantics suggested. Hall further explains that for Byron, it was a futile effort to look for an inner-self, since he believed that

⁵ Allan Gregory's Lecture at the Blackrock Society, 8th October 2007

people lose their wholeness as they grow up, thus, wholeness is only possible in childhood. William Wordsworth also agrees with the idea that the loss of integrity is an inevitable consequence of growth, yet he believes poetry to be a way to compensate for this loss. Byron, on the other hand, considers poetry as a means to escape from the self. (Hall, 1987: 138). In his journal Byron aptly states that, “To withdraw myself from myself [...] was my sincere motive in scribbling at all” (Marchand, 1974: 225). Considering all the divergencies between the artistic expectations of Byron and the other Romantics, Byron seems to have felt the need to deviate from the path the early Romantics had created and this decision led him to the transition period in creating the Byronic Hero.

Byron’s lack of satisfaction with the Romantic stillness caused by self-reflection and transcendence led him to a new direction in his career. Reaching the understanding that stability is not something desirable for Byron, for his new attempt at poetry writing he decides to take the opposing stance to write about “heroic mobility” (Hall, 1987: 138). Therefore, it can be argued that the idea of creating the Byronic Hero stems from Byron’s desire to move away from the Romantic ideals which encouraged a passive search for self. In *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812), which is considered the first Byronic Hero by many scholars, Byron promotes “men of action⁶ who make an impact upon the world.” (138). Contemplating on the actions and the philosophies of Napoleon and Rousseau, figures who influenced Byron at that time, Childe Harold leaves everything behind as a member of English nobility to wander over Europe aiming to discover the truth about life, or about himself. In the “Addition to the Preface” written after the publication of the poem, Byron admits that Childe Harold is supposed to act more rather than self-reflect:

It had been easy to varnish over his faults, to make him do more and express less, but he never was intended as an example, further than to show that early perversion of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures and disappointment in new ones, and that even the beauties of nature, and the stimulus of travel (except ambition, the most powerful of all excitements) are lost on a soul so constituted, or rather misdirected. (Byron, 1812: 4)

⁶ The original term for man of action is the German word “*Kraftmensch*”.

The tradition of creating man of action, which also influenced Byron greatly, started in Germany in the eighteenth century with the proto-Romantic Movement, the *Sturm und Drang*. As aforementioned, what initiated the *Sturm und Drang* Movement was Germany's lack of contribution to the renaissance of the West, which created a sense of inferiority in German society. Though the initial German reaction was to imitate the French models and ideals, they later revolted against them and the "social oppression and stifling atmosphere of the German society, of the despotic and often stupid and cruel German princes and princelings and their officials" for degrading their nation in courts (Berlin, 2013: 232). This ferocious political atmosphere constituted the heart of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which was named after Friedrich Maximilian Klingler's play to express the anger and hatred towards the existing political order. In such plays, instances of characters with the urge of heroic mobility and action were seen. These violent heroes were produced with the influence of the *Kraftmensch* movement, which developed into the *Sturm und Drang* later. As the name suggests⁷, the *Kraftmensch* "celebrate passion, individuality, strength, genius, self-expression at whatever cost, against whatever odds, and usually end in blood and crime, their only form of protest against a grotesque and odious social order." (232). Berlin further suggests that the *Kraftmensch* celebrates anarchic freedom without any regards for an authority, exalted by the wild spirit inside them.

The influence of the *Sturm und Drang* Movement on Romanticism is undeniable. The Romantics' disappointment with the French Revolution due to Napoleon's despotic tendencies was a reflection of what was happening in Germany during the *Sturm und Drang*. As explained before, there was a great disillusionment among the Romantics due to political figures' ending up in a bloodshed with overflow of revolutionary passion, which caused them to lose hope for the modern man's capacity to create an ideal society and prompted them to think that the only ideal society belonged to the ancient Greeks. This idea induced the Romantics' conception of heroism, putting the poet in the place of the ancient Greek hero in traditional epics. However, Paul Cantor argues that Romantic heroism excludes the narrator of the traditional epic who describes the noble actions of the hero and situates the poet at the center of the epic to turn it into a form of "self-expression and spiritual autobiography" (Cantor, 2007: 392). In this sense, it could be argued that the Romantics adapt the

⁷ Kraft means "force", "strength", "power".

Greek hero in their own ways rather than imitating it, as it would not be possible to replicate a character produced in a completely different culture. Cantor further explains that the main aim of the Romantics in this transformation is to show that the artist is superior to the martial culture on which the traditional epic is based.

On the other hand, if the Romantic hero and the Byronic hero are compared, it is possible to conclude that they are not radically different from each other. Both heroic traditions root in the desire to reject the established norms, trying to overcome the restraints of social conventions. However, as Cantor deduces, Byron's deviation from Romanticism resulted in a less individualized narrative style (393). The Romantic hero's autobiographical and self-expressive purposes in the poem are not desirable for the Byronic hero. In order to achieve the defamiliarization of the hero, Byron uses the third-person narrative in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Harold rarely speaks himself; the reader gradually gathers information about him through the narrator's impression of Harold. Thus, it can be deduced that it is not possible to go deeper into the Byronic hero's psyche, while the intention of the Romantic hero is to provide the reader with a reflection of the hero's innerness.

After Byron's creation of the archetypal Byronic hero starting with Childe Harold; dark, mysterious, rebellious, and distant characters turned into a pattern to be followed by many writers such as Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, Alexander Dumas' Edmond Dantes and more. Thomas Macaulay defines the Byronic hero as "a man proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection" (Macaulay, 1851: 125). This definition of the Byronic hero highlights some of the most important characteristics of Byron's heroic tradition, considering the characteristics of the Byronic hero might be related to those of a villain such as arrogance, violent tendencies, and egotism. Therefore, it might be possible to give the broadest definition of the Byronic hero as an arrogant person who, in spite of his troubled background, disregards oppressive power, constructs his own moral codes and principles, and lives self-sufficiently. Since he is an egocentric character, the Byronic hero may be claimed to be a villainized protagonist who does not intend to guide other people. Then again, it is essential to emphasize that this villainized hero does not seem to be produced with the intention of creating an antagonist, since the antagonist may be considered as the secondary character whose views and aims conflict with the protagonist's, while the

Byronic hero is the leader and the protagonist of a story. That is why it is evidently observed that anarchy is an indispensable part of the Byronic hero. Etymologically, the word anarchy originates in the ancient Greek word *anarkhía*, the combination of *an-* (not) and *arkhḗ* (authority, power), meaning the state of having no authority or leader(ship).⁸ In that case, the tendency to defy authority and fill the lack of authority with his individual autonomy could be demonstrated among the most critical aspects of the Byronic hero as a protagonist.

The popularity of the Byronic hero pattern and the reproduction of Byron's egocentric and anarchic heroes mark Byron's success in his new attempt in literature. Frances Wilson approves Byron's popularity claiming that

[...] even today, when Byron's work is known less well than that of other Romantic poets, more people are conversant with Byronism- the cult inspired by Byron and his heroes- and with the Byronic Romantic 'look'- than they are with the appearance and philosophy of Blake or Wordsworth, whose poetry they might know better. (Wilson, 1999: 5)

Judging from Byron's influential reputation, this study attempts to trace the effects of Byronism on the villainized protagonists that were created after the nineteenth century and examine how the Byronic hero evolves over time. It is possible to find many examples of the Byronic hero written after Byron's creation of the first archetype Childe Harold, but this study mainly focuses on the postmodern era, for it is a time period when people go through a lot of radical changes in their lives due to shifting social order and life-changing technological advances. The unwilling exposure to transformation in daily life urges some people to react against delimitating and standardizing social norms and act to claim their individuality, as the *Kraftmensch* roots of the conventional Byronic Hero require. Thus, two novels from the postmodern era will be analyzed to examine the evolution of the Byronic hero; *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) by Ken Kesey and *Fight Club* (1996) by Chuck Palahniuk. The time gap between the two novels will contribute to the analysis of evolution, as each novel provides reflections of different concerns in the postmodern era and demonstrates how the social institutions and surveillance mechanisms in the

⁸ Tótfalusi, István. *A Storehouse of Foreign Words: an explanatory and etymological dictionary of foreign words*. Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2005.

postmodern era stand all-powerful against individuals, limiting their basic human rights.

Randle McMurphy is the Byronic hero in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He has a lengthy criminal record including “street brawls and barroom fights and a series of arrests for drunkenness, assault and battery, disturbing the peace, repeated gambling, and one arrest for rape” (Kesey, 1962: 42). In addition, he breaks away from a Communist prison camp while serving for the army in Korea. As he instigates some trouble later again, he is sentenced to work at the Pendleton Farm. Nevertheless, Randle McMurphy is so self-reliant that he cannot comply with an external authority figure for a lengthy period. Since he is not willing to put in a lot of effort for the heavy labor at the farm, he acts as if he was mentally disordered by disrupting the order and peace among the other workers. Consequently, his aggressive behaviour is thought to be a symptom of psychopathy and he is sent to an asylum for therapeutic purposes.

McMurphy's characteristics embody the most influential aspects of the Byronic hero: self-assurance, a continuous desire for freedom, and appealing sexual power. Such dominant Byronic hero characteristics foreshadow the upcoming problems and challenges to be experienced as soon as McMurphy appears at the asylum, as he is exactly the opposite of the other silenced, restrained patients. The striking difference between McMurphy and the other patients distinguishes him as a character that needs to be pacified owing to his “disregard for discipline and authority” as he poses a threat to the Big Nurse’s authority (146). The tension between them is mainly based on the Big Nurse’s attempts to control him like the other patients and McMurphy’s refusal to be manipulated. The Big Nurse's rank, which grants her the authority to control the ward like a dictator, means very little to Randle McMurphy, and he does not have any respect for the institutional authority. To defy the Big Nurse's power, McMurphy takes an unruly stance against her by urging the other patients to vocalize their expectations more as a way to reclaim their autonomy. Though such unusual dynamism in the ward amuses McMurphy and the patients, it anticipates McMurphy’s end at the same time since the Big Nurse lobotomizes Randle McMurphy as a means to get him under control. In comparison to his initial self-sufficient and cheerful disposition, McMurphy is dormant and pacified by the end of the book.

In *Fight Club*, the Byronic hero figure is Tyler Durden. Tyler Durden is introduced to the reader through the narrator, who goes through an existential crisis and is lost in his search for meaning in life. Tyler Durden demonstrates to the narrator that it is possible to abandon the existing social order and establish a new one at a crucial stage in the narrator's life. While the narrator experiences claustrophobic feelings as a result of living in a consumerist society; Tyler Durden, as the Byronic hero, shows him how to refuse and resist the things he does not want to have in his life. The first step of taking action to have control over their own lives is a literal fight between the narrator and Tyler Durden, which gradually turns into an iconic sign for a group of people who want to confront the problems they have been too afraid to face before. Tyler leads the group, which is later named as Fight Club.

Tyler Durden's self-confidence, his desire to move others by inspiring them to do the things they enjoy, his self-sufficiency to live a life free of greater authority, and his lack of fear when he puts himself in risky positions are all indicators of his leadership skills. He is an idealized figure who can be followed without any questioning for the members of the Fight Club. And yet, apart from being an inspiring leader, he has a dark, violent and criminal side that manipulates others to participate in such destructive actions as well. Accordingly, being aware of his potential to influence large masses, Tyler Durden comes up with the idea of Project Mayhem to eradicate the entire socioeconomic order. However, since people get fixated on the destruction of the surroundings rather than considering the idea behind the project, the movement gets out of control and becomes too dangerous. The novel ends with the narrator's attempts to cease the destructive actions of the project, only to discover that he has a psychological condition known as dissociative identity disorder and Tyler Durden is his split identity.

In order to explore the deeper meaning behind the actions of the postmodern Byronic hero, critical works of Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche on power and authority are going to be used for purposes of analysis. Respectively, the first chapter will briefly mention different theories of power and power relations. The distinction between normalized and repressive power is going to be displayed to explain Foucauldian perception of disciplinary policies and docile bodies. Accordingly, the condition of the psychiatric patients will be discussed from Foucault's point of view, with a focus on the perception of the mad as moral offenders and the omnipotence of

the doctor at the clinic as the person who has control over the docile bodies of the patients. Following the explication of Foucault's theories, Nietzsche's term *will to power* will be explored as a genuine source of power to initiate experiences, which enables the self-overcoming of the individual. To exemplify such a concept, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* will be described in detail focusing on his mental and spiritual power. Finally, *Übermensch*'s nihilistic approach to life is going to be defined as active nihilism and it will be distinguished from passive nihilism in order to indicate the attributes which separate the Byronic hero from the other characters.

In the second chapter, Randle McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is going to be presented as a postmodern Byronic hero depending on his independence, disregard for authority and villainized aspects. As the novel is set in a mental institution, Foucauldian theories of power are going to be used to analyze the origins of the Big Nurse's authoritative power, which constitutes the main source of problem for the Byronic hero. The chapter will argue that compared to the Big Nurse's concurrently practiced repressive and normalized power, McMurphy's transformative capacity is more effective, since he is able to influence the patients in the ward more than the Big Nurse does. Furthermore, McMurphy's characteristics will be examined in accordance with Nietzsche's descriptions of *Übermensch* as a self-overcoming and self-mastered figure to reiterate the difference between Randle McMurphy's and the Big Nurse's types of power and to represent McMurphy as a foil for authority.

The third chapter will mainly focus on the diverse impacts of nihilism on Tyler Durden and the narrator as they have two contrasting identities sharing one body. In line with Nietzsche's definition of active and passive nihilism, the narrator will be presented as a passive nihilist, who has fallen into nihilistic extremes, while Tyler Durden will be presented as an active nihilist specifically with the description of his destructive power against God⁹, society and authority, supplanted by a creative replacement. Since active nihilism grants Tyler Durden with the Byronic hero aspects such as defiance and independence and the means to take over the body of the narrator, nihilism will be presented as the main factor in the creation of two separate identities.

⁹ Throughout the thesis, God is written with a capital 'G' as Tyler Durden refers to this word in the same manner.

The fourth chapter will attempt to conclude this study by comparing the archetypal Byronic hero and the postmodern Byronic hero to analyze how the Byronic hero changes over time, which features remain true to its origins and which features change. It will be argued that the postmodern writers' appreciation for the Byronic hero tradition is inherent in their fictional characters as the postmodern Byronic heroes adopt many of the nineteenth-century Byronic hero aspects. It will be showcased that the Byronic hero remains powerful, anarchic and charismatic, and they react against injustice, tyranny, and irrational strict rules. On the other hand, it will be argued that the constitution of the postmodern Byronic hero depends mostly on the political context of the time since authority and authority figures are indispensable parts of the Byronic hero narratives. It will be further highlighted that in both postmodern texts, the Byronic hero is put into the savior position by the other characters, though such big titles and duties are refused by the conventional Byronic heroes. The last chapter will move on to argue that as a result of accepting such a significant position, the postmodern Byronic hero acquires fascist tendencies as they tend to lead the other characters rather than to guide them. Consequently, it will be proposed in the conclusion that the postmodern reader still appreciates the Byronic hero despite all his villainized aspects and fascist tendencies as the massive effect of his personal reaction against the authority figures provides a satisfactory experience for the postmodern reader who is familiar with the repressive forces of politics.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As discussed extensively in the introduction, the most renowned and prominent feature of the Byronic hero is his opposition to authority. Thus, in order to analyze the intentions of the Byronic Hero in defying authority, it is necessary to study and elaborate the theories of power and power relations. Power is a phenomenon that is widely debated by myriad authors and philosophers. Though the first impression that the word “power” creates in relation to dominance and supremacy, the concept of power has varying connotations within different theoretical frameworks. Accordingly, this chapter will portray how the concept of power is perceived by a number of different theorists and it will specifically focus on the theories of power proposed by Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, who do not examine power as a phenomenon in its own right, but also touch on power relations and the exercise of power to provide a deeper analysis.

A. An Overview of the Concept of Power and Its Foucauldian Interpretation

One of the most explicit understanding of power which evokes the meaning of supremacy is perhaps the one that is offered by Karl Marx. In the Marxist discourse, power is divided into categories such as economic power, material power and political power. In his essay “Marxism and Power,” Aditya Nigam also mentions these diverse types of power in Marx’s and Engels’ writings, and he claims that while economic and material power refer to the control over the instruments of production, political power corresponds to the power that is held by the state. In that sense, political power has a straightforward implication of ruling and domination, which is also expressed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, when they assert that “political power, properly so-called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another” (Marx & Engels, 1992: 59).

Although the word power may have negative implications such as oppression and domination as in the Marxist discourse, some theorists argue the contrary, suggesting that power is liberating. For instance, Hannah Arendt distinguishes force

and violence from power, and suggests that power is correlative to collective action. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt explicitly states that power is not a property, or not a “monadic phenomenon” but it is “what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence” (Arendt, 1958: 200). Namely, for Arendt power exists when people manage to act together, and as long as the power emerges from the communal action, it counteracts the force and violence coming from the political power of the state. Similarly for Anthony Giddens, the concept of power is firmly linked to human action. He believes in the power of human capacity to change the order of things and in *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, he posits that power is “the origin of all that is liberating and productive in social life as well as that is repressive and destructive.” (Giddens, 1981: 51). Another theorist that connects the notion of power with society and social system is Talcott Parsons. In *Politics and Social Structure*, he introduces the idea that society possesses power as a whole. As long as collective goals are shared within a society, the efficiency of the social system increases and the society gets more powerful. In this sense, for Parsons power is a variable depending on social productivity.¹⁰

On the other hand, to make a distinction between the mentioned types of power (one in the oppressive sense and one in the social sense), Michel Foucault identifies two kinds of power: repressive and normalizing, which will be further explained in detail in the relevant paragraphs. Initially, it would be beneficial to emphasize that contrary to the traditional belief which suggests power is something that can be possessed or acquired, Foucault defines power as “transformative capacity, the ability of an individual to influence and modify the actions of other individuals in order to realize certain tactical goals.” (Heller, 1996: 83). In other words, for Foucault power is “a facility, not a thing” (83). Depending on this understanding, while the general tendency among the theorists is to analyze power as a concept on its own and provide an answer for the question of what power is, Foucault focuses on the power relations and the way power is exercised on the subjects. Within that context, Foucault makes a critical inquiry on the fundamental nature of power in many of his works including *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Order of Things* (1966), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and *The History of Sexuality* (1976).

¹⁰ Parsons, T. (1969). *Politics and Social Structure*. The Free Press, London, pp. 361-66.

Foucauldian perception of power as a facility rather than a resource that is possessed by a certain group and used to impose their own wishes and rules is what differentiates his theory greatly from the other theories. In “The Subject and Power,” Foucault states that “something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action” (Foucault, 1982: 788). Hence, Foucault’s theory of power requires an interdependent relationship between the subject of power and the facilitator of power. Though some power relationships may include violence, resistance, and opposition such as anti-authority struggles, opposition to male dominance over the female, and the governmental administration over people’s lifestyles, Foucault argues that what people resist in these cases is not the institution or any group itself, but the form of power which turns them into subjects “to someone else by control and dependence” (782). In Foucauldian terms, this type of power is repressive. Repressive form of power is typically associated with sovereignty, authority, violence, surveillance, the state and its exercises on people, however, it is also possible to encounter repressive power relationships in daily life such as the relationship between a boss and an employee in an office, or the police and the members of society. Each individual power relationship in the given instances imply superiority and inferiority, in which the superior dictates the inferior according to certain rules. Furthermore, Foucault explains that “the state is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth” (Foucault, 1980: 122), meaning that even the people who are in the superior position do not own the unique form of repressive power on their own. Their exercise of power is taken under control by the government while they serve for the sovereign state. In this sense, one should draw a distinction between owning power and the privilege to exercise it.

Accordingly, although repressive power seems to constitute the fundamental aspects of social life, Foucault argues that internalizing the repressive power relationships within a society is problematic and it needs to be closely examined. In his own words, Foucault explains his concerns as:

Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure [...] A society without power relations can only be an abstraction. [...] [It] is not to say that those which are established

are necessary or, in any case, that power constitutes a fatality at the heart of societies [...] Instead, I would say that the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power and the 'agonism' between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence. (Foucault, 1982: 791-792)

In other words, Foucault's claim may be interpreted as, to think of power only in the form of repression and violence is a traditional way of thinking and it does not suffice in explaining how the modern society works. To exemplify, in daily life, the members of the society do not have to be reminded that they are supposed to comply with the laws, or there is no need for the police forces to control all the acts of every single individual. This is mainly because in the modern society being an honest and lawful citizen is normalized so extensively that, the majority of people do not even think about committing a crime. It does not mean that they live with the fear of the violent repressive power they might face upon breaking the law, but the idea of committing a crime is so out of their normalized standards that it is not even a thinkable idea which can randomly occur to them. Therefore, it might be possible to conclude that people are under the influence of a form of power, yet they are not aware of being affected by such a force. This is what Foucault defines as normalizing power, a form of power which determines what is seen as normal in life and constructs a certain view of the world.

In his own words, Foucault defines normalizing power as "a normalizing gaze [that] establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (Foucault, 2019: 175). Depending on this definition, it might be possible to say that normalizing power is a more genuine and effective type of power compared to the repressive one, because the influence of the normalizing power convinces people that it is actually themselves who decide on the right or wrong thing to do, while in reality they are deeply impacted by the normalizing effect of the society and make decisions depending on that influence. And because the normalizing power ensures the majority of the people be involved in the rules of the society willingly in order to avoid being considered a criminal, there is no need to resort to any violence or threat as in the case with the repressive power. Accordingly, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault claims that the methods used to discipline criminals in prisons have turned into an example for other institutions that are commonly encountered in

everyday life, such as hospitals, schools, and workplaces, so that the same discipline can be conveyed to the whole society. As stated by Foucault, people are all living in “carceral archipelago” (Foucault, 2019: 278).

To exemplify the new disciplinary methods that Foucault mentions in *Discipline and Punish*, Gary Gutting gives the example of the new approach to modern military training in his book *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*. He claims that the modern military training is intended to make common people ready and capable of killing the enemy. Premodern training, on the other hand, focused on finding the men that had the suitable material to be a soldier, such as strength, bravery and pride. However, modern soldiers were made into a soldier through intensive and advanced training whether they had the appropriate characteristics or not. Consequently, it could be argued that it is not the physical look that is significant for the modern military in choosing soldiers, but the regular training.

Gutting further suggests that “disciplinary training is distinctive first because it operates not by direct control of the body as a whole but by detailed control of specific parts of the body” (Gutting, 2005: 81). Though the main aim of the military training may look like teaching the precise steps of the entire military operation and seeing successful results, the main objective is actually to see the soldier achieve the results in the specific way that is instructed to him. In other words, it is not sufficient for a soldier to achieve his aim, he needs to achieve it in a particular way. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault also interprets this disciplinary policy as “calculated manipulation” resulting in a new “political anatomy,” which “define[s] how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines.” Namely, discipline is the main ground for the production of “subjected and practiced, ‘docile’ bodies” for Foucault. (Foucault, 2019: 132-133). As he further explains, this new political anatomy “dissociates power from the body” and transforms it into a capacity that is desired to be increased, yet the power that is derived cannot be freely used (133). It is closely kept under control and subjectification.

According to Foucault’s theory, the emergence of docile bodies occurs through three distinctly modern means, which are hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and the examination. Gutting provides an extensive exposition of these

three means by addressing Foucault's own reasoning in *Discipline and Punish*. He defines hierarchical observation as the idea that people can be controlled by close observation. Watchtowers, observatories, or even large lecture halls could be counted as classical examples of this method. The purpose behind these designs is to create "an architecture that would operate to transform individuals, [...] to make it possible to know them, to alter them" (Foucault, 2019: 164).

The second specific characteristic of modern disciplinary action is its evaluation of the normalizing judgement. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that the issue of punishment in the regime of disciplinary power judges individual actions in the "field of comparison, a space of differentiation" (173). Gutting contributes to this argument by adding that these judgements are not made by the inherent value of the actions, but they are graded on a scale which compares and ranks them among the actions of the others. Hence, it would be possible to say that the penalty system in the disciplinary institutions "differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*." (174). In that sense, the power of normalizing judgement is validated, and the authority of the normal is established on people in a subtle way because once the scale and hierarchy is constructed, there is no escape from the comparison which regulates what is socially acceptable and what is violation. In the modern world, people are continuously faced with the fear of being considered abnormal.

Finally, the examination is identified by Gutting as the combination of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement. In his own words, Foucault defines the examination as "a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish" (175). The examination constitutes a differentiating and judging visibility over the individuals, which is "highly ritualized" in all mechanisms of discipline. (175). Even in the universities and schools today, the examination is a primary method of control as it both reveals the truth about the people that take the examination and through its rules, it also controls their behaviors. Moreover, Gutting adds that the examination situates the individual in a specific place within "a network of writing," as it leaves a huge archive of documentation behind. (179). While the holders of power remain invisible and anonymous in such an environment, the objects are visualized and materialized through the storage of the

files and documents that are kept on behalf of their place within the aforementioned network.

The examination and the treatment of the mad creates a significant portion of Foucault's works on power and domination over an oppressed group. In *The History of Madness* and *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault evaluates how the examination and the medical treatment of the mad in clinics include its own intrinsic form of domination. He claims that madness is perceived as the opposite of reason, but "as an alternative mode of human existence, not a simple rejection of it" (Gutting, 2005: 72). Therefore, madness provides a significant source of observation in terms of understanding the limits of human psyche. However, perceiving the mad as the opposite of the reasonable still hints to the othering of the mad and excluding them from the society both physically and ideologically.

In *The History of Madness*, Foucault presents a general overview of how madness is distinguished and treated in different eras, with an emphasis on the classical and modern ages. For Foucault, the classical view perceives madness as the rejection of any humanistic approach towards the world and being seized by an absolute animality instead. The animalistic aspect of madness is a result of the domination of passions over reason, which might even lead to the misinterpretation of the unreal as the real. Such an experience of madness is deemed dangerous and worthy of confinement, and accordingly "the literary theme of 'Hospital for the Mad' is born" (Foucault, 2006: 41). On the other hand, the modern age sees the mad as "moral offenders (violators of specific social norms), who should feel guilt at their condition and need reform of their attitudes and behaviour" (Gutting, 2005: 73). Consequently, the modern treatment of madness requires the delivery of therapeutic sessions in addition to the seclusion from society. Gutting states that Foucault later attributes this change in the perception of the mad to the changing of the episteme (73).

On the other hand, Gutting highlights the fact that Foucault problematizes the treatment in the modern asylums due to "the apotheosis of the medical personage" (Foucault, 1988: 269). Foucault believes the doctors to stand for the social and moral expectations of the society, which provides another source of domination for them. Accordingly, while the doctor did not play an important role in the confined life of the mad before, in the modern age s/he turns into a central figure who is totally in charge

of the management and the peace of the asylum. In Foucault's own words, "it is not as a scientist that *homo medicus* has authority in the asylum, but as a wise man" (270). He claims that the madmen receive therapy in the asylum "as a juridical and moral guarantee, not in the name of science," which means any virtuous and scrupulous man that has experience in working in the asylum would function as well as a medical doctor (270).

Foucault's claims of dysfunctionality for the medical psychiatric treatment naturally paves the way for a new argument: is it never possible to create sensible communication with the madmen? Are they always silenced and marginalized by the voice of reason? In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault highlights the fact that the concept of madness could not be really deciphered by the doctors and there is not a clear difference between the symptoms of madness and the mere transgression of social rules. Consequently, "while the victim of mental illness is entirely alienated in the real person of his doctor," Freud is the first scientist to accept the nature of the relationship between the physician and the patient (277). He is fully aware of the necessity of investigating the relationship as it is, not attempting "to hide it in a psychiatric theory that more or less harmonized with the rest of medical knowledge" (277). A majority of the asylum structures were revolutionized by Freud and he enabled self-expression for the patient while he muted the voices of condemnation. However, Foucault still criticizes Freud for giving a "quasi-divine status" to the doctor, who listens to the patient in silence and who is transformed "into an absolute Observation, [...] a judge who punishes and rewards in a judgement that does not even condescend to language" (278). Therefore, Foucault believes that psychoanalysis cannot manage to heed what the madmen say, as long as the omnipotence of the doctor remains intact in the clinic.

Upon Foucault's analysis of silencing and oppressing the mad, Gary Gutting raises another question to be inquired: "If madness has been silenced, how has Foucault become, as he so obviously is, fascinated by its voice?" (Gutting, 2005: 75). The answer is provided by Foucault himself in *Madness and Civilization*, when he states that "the life of unreason no longer manifests itself except in the lightening-flash of works such as those of Hölderlin, of Nerval, of Nietzsche or of Artaud" (Foucault, 1988: 278). For sure, Foucault's interest and studies on the history of madness actually investigate the boundaries of reason itself while he also endeavors to offer a reflection

of how the mad perceives the world as opposed to the rational man. At the same time, his studies inherently demonstrate how the sane society deals with the insane, and this opposition allows the reader to see madness as an alternative to the sovereignty of reason.

Considering all, Foucault's theory is unique in its elaboration of power relationships in different fields, but it also would not be wrong to say that he is highly influenced by Nietzsche and his nihilistic approach towards life. In one of his interviews, "Truth and Power," Foucault argues that "The history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language- relations of power, not relations of meaning. History has no meaning" (Foucault, 2001: 116). Simply put, what Foucault proposes is that life is the sum of all conflicts, contradictions, struggles and strategies; a striving for power and asserting authority. In that sense, Foucault's statement sounds like a reflection of Nietzsche's ideas on the doctrine of materialism and power.

B. Nietzsche's Concept of the Will to Power and Übermensch

It is a widely known fact that Nietzsche denies the universal material representation of God as the meaning of life by his famous expression "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 2006: 5), and he defends the need for individuals to create their own values instead of letting spiritual and religious beliefs determine the meaning of life. One can explore the true meaning of life only through an analysis of personal experiences by turning inward. In other words, an inner driving force for action that will lead to unique personal experiences is a component of life, which enables the individual to reflect his/her own authority as the decision maker over their lives, and this force is identified by Friedrich Nietzsche as the will to power.

It could be suggested that for Nietzsche, the will to power is the basic will to live and survive; the desire of every living being to grow, seize and expand themselves in every possible way. While defining the will to power, Nietzsche demonstrates humans' inclination towards claiming their own domination and authority on the world stating that,

The victorious concept "force," by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be completed: an inner will must be ascribed

to it, which I designate as “will to power,” as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive. (Nietzsche, 1968: 332-333)

Defining the will to power as “creative” would illustrate the essence of this drive as the initiating force for experiences. To exemplify, it could be indicated that a person does numerous things unwillingly throughout a lifetime because of the pressure created by external forces. This could be working in an undesirable job due to the pressure of the need to earn money, or it could be getting a university degree just because of the pressure coming from family members. In those cases, the external force is the leading factor which causes these experiences to happen. However, Nietzsche’s will to power is the genuine initiating force itself, needless to be activated by any other external force. Namely, it is an internal drive that dictates the need to act on the individual, which eventually aims to declare its distinction and power over the world. Similarly in *The New Nietzsche*, Alphonso Lingis explains that what makes this internal force “individual and identifiable” is that “[it] marks a difference in the field of forces. It is only conceivable in a field of force, and it is itself *something* by marking a difference in that field” (Lingis, 1977: 51). Consequently, it could be argued that what is aforementioned as “a form of war” and “relations of power” by Foucault is correspondent with Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power, which is a striving for the manifestation of its distinction and legitimacy among the other forms of powers and forces.

Speaking of power as something to be willed and desired, it is crucial to emphasize that Nietzsche’s concept of power is not used in the sense of physical power, rather the mental and psychological aspect of power is favored as the controlling and motivating force. Therefore for Nietzsche, the ultimate purpose of life is growth since he declares that “To have and to want to have more—*growth*, in one word—that is life itself.” (Nietzsche, 1968: 77). With his introduction and elaboration of the term will to power, Nietzsche aims to explore how human beings can escalate their growth and reach their highest potential, manifesting their power as an individual “not to preserve [themselves] but to become more” (367). However, the idea of setting a goal to grow and “to become more” is a bit vague and controversial, which requires more explication. Accordingly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche provides an insight into what he means by growth, writing that “And this secret life itself spoke to

me. ‘Behold’ it said, ‘I am that *which must always overcome itself*’” (Nietzsche, 2006: 89).

The idea of self-overcoming is a prominent concept in Nietzsche’s works as the ultimate form of power, since it is an indication of having power over one’s own self. As discussed before, the will to power is an endeavor to assert authority and the desire to be the decision-maker of one’s own life. However, achieving these desires, taking correct decisions and establishing authority over life is only possible through discovering one’s own self, one’s own limits and potential. Therefore, it is essential to set a lofty goal to be pursued and consistently strive for it, so that the obstacles and the struggles confronted during the process can empower the individual. Though fulfilling the purpose is the desired end, it is necessary to accept that resistance against the adversities is an intrinsic part of growth, and without suffering, self-overcoming or happiness cannot be achieved. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche justifies the necessity of struggle by claiming that “the question ‘for what’” is a lot more significant than “whether we feel well or not,” since the answer is “a goal for which one does not hesitate to offer human sacrifices, to risk every danger, to take upon oneself whatever is bad and worst: *the great passion*.” (Nietzsche, 1968: 19).

The significance of self-overcoming and being independently minded is perpetually emphasized by Nietzsche as he believes that such human beings stand out among the others in the society with their authenticity and individuality. He values self-reliance so much that he believes these individuals to be superior than the others. It is possible to observe Nietzsche’s philosophy towards life in all his writings, yet he specifically provides the details of what kind of qualities an ideal human being should own in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He names his ideal human being as *Übermensch*, which is translated into English as overman or superman. However, the implicated superiority of *Übermensch* does not depend on any biological or racial concept, but it rather relies on mental and spiritual power.

In his own words, Nietzsche introduces *Übermensch* as “the meaning of the earth” (Nietzsche, 2006: 6). His Zarathustra advises people to “remain faithful to the earth” and not to “believe those who speak [...] of extraterrestrial hopes” (6). Clearly, when Nietzsche claims *Übermensch* to be “the meaning of the earth”, he refers to the will to power as a creative drive. *Übermensch* is someone who does not rely on values

and purposes dictated by an external force. Rather, he commits himself to the goals he sets individually. Therefore, the most prominent aspect of *Übermensch* is being able to manage the will to power and direct the creative drive in the correct way rather than absorbing the preset values imposed by his culture.

The ability of abandoning otherworldly sources and to rely solely on oneself is another aspect of *Übermensch*. When Zarathustra proclaims that “once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God [...] and all these desecrators died”, he points out to the mankind’s autonomy, and their capability of eliminating God as the source of all values and morality. *Übermensch* is the creator, philosopher and the actor of his own life himself, because of that, the idea of a divine creator and to esteem a superior being would limit his self-government and restrict his creative drive. Consequently, as *Übermensch* is not influenced by cultural values, he does not adopt any religious doctrines either. William M. Salter similarly describes *Übermensch*’s self-reliance stating that “They will choose themselves, and, so to speak, put the crown on their own heads.” (Salter, 1915: 427). In that sense, *Übermensch* is the only one who masters his own life.

It is for sure that evolving oneself into the position of *Übermensch* is not an easy task, since it requires denying all the preconceived notions and pursuing a self-created life. The act of denying and resisting against the teachings of culture, therefore, necessitates a certain involvement in nihilism. Because, as Nietzsche also states, the universe may seem to have lost its meaning and everything may feel too vague, but it is “only a transitional stage” (Nietzsche, 1968: 11). At that stage, there might be a general inference that there is no true meaning of life at all and it is a futile effort to spend one’s whole life in search for it. Depending on this ambiguity, Nietzsche identifies two different forms of nihilism: “Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as active nihilism [and] nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as passive nihilism” (17). This is the point where *Übermensch* and mankind are differentiated from one another. *Übermensch* are those who can overcome nihilism and turn this process into an advantage by contributing to their self-growth. In other words, *Übermensch* is an active nihilist. The passive nihilists, on the other hand, sink deep into the blank feeling and do not have the courage to explore their potential. Rather than creating their own values, they tend to attach themselves into mass movements, which is a form of readopting preset values.

The conscious act of destructing everything that gives meaning to life is actually a painful process that requires the individual to go through many struggles. While some would fear such a demanding task, *Übermensch* is not afraid to face adversities and suffer for the sake of his growth. Salter suggests that Nietzsche “saw the place of insecurity, peril, and danger in educating the race and bringing out its higher qualities,” and he asserts that Nietzsche exemplified Greek and Roman life to demonstrate the teachings of insecurity and discomfort on people, quoting that “they were the outcome of a long continued struggle for power – it was in this way that they reached their giant stature” (Salter, 1915: 431). Similarly Nietzsche’s Zarathustra mentions the necessity of suffering and sacrifice, “so that the earth may one day become the [*Übermensch*]’s” (Nietzsche, 2006: 8). Hence it could be inferred that the *Übermensch* does not give up on the way to pursue his goals even if he suffers and struggles, because overcoming these struggles is a part of the achievement awaiting him at the end of the road. No matter how challenging the journey is, it must be acknowledged by the *Übermensch* that suffering is an enabling condition for self-overcoming.

To conclude the abovementioned theories proposed by Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, it might be argued that both theorists regard the real power as the facility to create one’s own life and values, which is significantly different than oppressive forms of power that depend on political or economic supremacy. In the following chapters, the analysis of the postmodern adaptations of the Byronic hero will accordingly show that the Byronic hero actually canalizes his power to be the master of his own life, and since he denies the rules imposed by culture and social institutions, he is labeled as rebellious and even criminal most of the time. The juxtaposition of the Byronic hero who is in pursuit of self mastery and the mediums of oppressive power will reveal the fact that it is actually possible to destruct cultural values and preconceived notions as long as the individual is ready to pay the price and take the responsibility. As the Byronic hero creates an awareness on the idea of self-mastery and encourages people to claim their own free will, he is also put in the position of a leader though the initial intention is not to lead a group of people. Such theories and analysis will be exemplified and expanded more in the following chapters, focusing on the main characters of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and *Fight Club* respectively.

III. THE ANALYSIS OF *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*

Like many of his descendants belonging to Byron's heroic tradition, Randle McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a rebellious character with a troubled past. He is accused of many crimes including barroom fights, gambling and statutory rape. However, what gives him the most prominent Byronic hero aspect is his resistance against the authority figure, the Big Nurse (or Miss Ratched), who manages the ward like a tyrant and assimilates her patients into submissive agents. McMurphy has a great distaste for the Big Nurse's way of providing peace in the ward with excessive restrictions and he challenges her authoritative power in many ways, mostly by breaking the rules and corrupting the order in the ward. Therefore, the most significant aspect of Randle McMurphy as an adaptation of the Byronic Hero is his rejection of the authority figure, which interferes with his individual autonomy.

To understand the essence of the clash of power relations in the novel, it is necessary to go further into the definition of power, why it is so important and with what purposes it is used in the asylum. In a general sense, power implies superiority, a force used on the inferior by the superior to prove its precedence. However in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, power is not used to create such a connection, because there is an already established superior-inferior relationship between the Big Nurse and the patients, who readily accept their inferiority. Therefore, for the Big Nurse, power is more than the egotistical contentment of proving to be the superior. In order to see beyond such an individualistic approach, a Foucauldian reading of power would clarify the motivations behind the Big Nurse's will to have power, for Foucault identifies power as "transformative capacity" (Heller, 1996: 83). As aforementioned, Foucault regards power as the individual capacity to affect and alter others' actions and behaviours, aiming to achieve specific goals. In other words, it is something that needs to be exercised rather than owned. Parallel with that definition, the Big Nurse wants to have the Foucauldian "power" to be able to transform the patients into ordinary healthy people by imposing the norms that are socially accepted as true. However, the problem with the Big Nurse's method is that she ignores the

characteristic differences of the patients and tries to put everyone in the same shape, which is the reason why there is a big clash between the Big Nurse and Randle McMurphy from the very beginning. As an adaptation of the archetypal Byronic hero, McMurphy does not accept to be put in a regular shape, since “he essentially defines and creates himself [...] , embodying the ultimate development of the individual” (Stein, 2009: 8). McMurphy constantly reminds the Big Nurse of his own personality by revolting against her transformative actions.

The Big Nurse's first transformative attempt on McMurphy starts with a semiotic play on his name. Although the doctor pronounces McMurphy's name several times, she mispronounces it on purpose:

Perhaps, Doctor, you should advise Mr. McMurry on the protocol of these Group Meetings.

Ma'am, have I told you about my uncle Hallahan and the woman who used to screw up his name?

I beg your pardon. Mack-Murph-y. (Kesey, 1962: 45)

At first sight, it may look like a mere mistake, but naming has been interpreted as having authority over the named object since Adam named the animals around him in the creation myth *Genesis*. By giving names to the animals around him, Adam defines each one of the animals according to his own will as the superior being. In the same way the Big Nurse tries to have authority over McMurphy, but McMurphy rejects to be defined by the Big Nurse, showing a precise reaction against the mispronunciation of his name. Later, he also gets involved in this semiotic game in a similar way by mispronouncing the Big Nurse's name on purpose: “Good morning Miss Rat-shed!” (93).

Inevitably, a conflict stems from this rejection of redefinition. As indicated before, The Big Nurse establishes her authority by using her transformative capacity on the patients. It would not be wrong to say that both the Big Nurse and Randle McMurphy are powerful characters, in the sense that they have the facility to change things in their own way. However, it is important to pose a question as to where their power comes from, because the Big Nurse's and McMurphy's sources of power are very distinct. Though the Big Nurse is the most authorized person in the asylum, she

does not form that authority solely by herself or her transformative capacity. An important outside factor provides the essential power to her, since she is only one part of a larger system. Another bureaucratic authority assigns her to the asylum with the aim of “modify[ing] the actions of other individuals” (Heller, 1996: 83). Thus, the Big Nurse belongs to the “dominant class, whose dominance is not a privilege, acquired or preserved [...] but the overall effect of its strategic positions” (86). In other words, “it's not just the Big Nurse by herself, but it's the whole Combine, the nation-wide Combine that's the really big force, and the nurse is just a high-ranking official for them” (Kesey, 1962: 181). The Big Nurse is just a deputy and though she experiments her own transformative capacity to keep everything in order in a particular asylum, the authority to make regulations in a mental institution comes from the “Big force” (181).

In that sense, the Big Nurse's power is both repressive and normalizing, considering that she is the authoritative figure who decides on the rules to be followed in the ward, but at the same time, she regulates the ward rules to adjust the patients according to what is considered normal in the society. She also manages to normalize her rules in the ward to such an extent that her employees perform “her bidding before she even thinks it” (29). There seems to be a calculated manipulation behind her mechanic smile, which is also visible to the patients in the ward, but the Big Nurse's therapeutical methods are mainly based on pointing out how the patients' behaviours are different from what is considered normal outside in the civil society, which gives the patients the impression that they are in need of being manipulated. Cheswick, one of the patients, admits that she “grinds [their] noses in [their] mistakes” and even if noone ever hears her accuse the patients of anything, “it seems [they] have been accused of a multitude of things” (60-61).

Accordingly, it could be argued that the Big Nurse's therapeutical methods are a reflection of Foucault's suggestion that the medical personage is apotheosised in the ward as a socially accepted, wise man rather than being respected for their professional competency. In a similar way, by pointing out how the patients transgress what is socially accepted as normal, the Big Nurse hints that her ultimate aim is to normalize the patients, specifically by turning them into “subjected and practised, ‘docile’ bodies” (Foucault, 2019: 132-133). Moreover, the strategic arrangement of the ward and the Big Nurse's political position provide the means that enable the practice of docile bodies, which Foucault lists as hierarchical observation, normalizing

judgement and the examination. The Big Nurse's room is located in the middle of the ward, enclosed by big glass windows, which allows her to observe the actions of the patients, and which also lets the patients see that they are being observed by the Big Nurse. In the group meetings, she constantly imposes her normalizing judgement, reminding them that they are in the hospital "because of [their] proven inability to adjust to society" (Kesey, 1962: 158). Finally, her authoritative position in the ward gives her the power to examine the patients' progress in the normalizing process, thus, "the length of time [one] spends in [the] hospital is entirely up to [the Big Nurse]" if the patient is committed (150).

On the other hand, McMurphy does not have any connection to an institutional authority. He is the only source for his power in the sense of transformative capacity thanks to the ability of quickly adapting to the changing situations in his life. Rather than transforming the others in favor of a particular aim, McMurphy transforms himself according to the changing circumstances, "embodying the ultimate development of the individual" (Stein, 2009: 8). He doesn't let anyone "twist him and manufacture him." (Kesey, 1962: 153). Therefore, as a Byronic Hero, McMurphy "def[ies] institutional authority, and is able to do so because of his [...] self-sufficiency and independence." (Stein, 2009: 8). Meantly, the source of McMurphy's power is the very opposite of the Big Nurse's, since he creates the man he is by disregarding any kind of greater authority other than himself, by developing his character. He rejects and defies the rules coming from the dominant class, including the efforts of the Big Nurse to turn him into a docile body. For instance, he brushes his teeth with soap powder just to go out of the time limits set by the Big Nurse for personal hygiene, and he destroys the means that put her in the position of hierarchical observation, namely by breaking the glass windows of her room, pretending that he did not see the windows in the first place.

It is obvious that McMurphy is a new type of patient the Big Nurse has not experienced before. Not only does the Big Nurse see that, but also the patients in the ward are able to realize his difference: "But the new guy is different, and the Acutes can see it, different from anybody been coming on this ward for the past ten years, different from anybody they ever met outside." (Kesey, 1962: 89). The existence of such a different character is a great threat to the authoritative power of the Big Nurse,

revealing the truth that there is someone in the ward she can neither transform nor scare.

In accordance with the tradition, the story of the Byronic Hero is told by a third-person narrative, which is Chief Bromden in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. He closely observes the unique character of Randle McMurphy and questions what is so different about him. He concludes that “[McMurphy] never gave the Combine a chance, just like he never gave the black boy a chance to get to him with the thermometer yesterday morning, because a moving target is hard to hit” (89). “A moving target” is a very appropriate way to describe Randle McMurphy, since he adopts an active life-style, always working for his personal development to shape his own life. Though he cannot be considered an ideal citizen whose life is full of success and pride, it is clear that he is the decisive factor in his own life. Considering this aspect, it would be possible to argue that he fits Nietzsche's definition of the *Übermensch*: “What does it matter that you are failures! How much is still possible! So learn to laugh beyond yourselves!” (Nietzsche, 1968: 245). As suggested in the quotation, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* encourages people to make effort in preserving their free will and unique personality in the traditional civilization, in which a person's value is dependent on certain social norms. *Übermensch* also inspires people to project their individuality fearlessly and not to be afraid of making mistakes, which is the only way to attain individual freedom. Only through their efforts of maintaining an authentic self, will it be possible to develop themselves and they will feel more free to display their unique personality. Accordingly, *Übermensch*'s approach to self development is quite existentialist, which promotes the idea that “man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. [...] Thus, [...] the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders” (Sartre, 2001: 29).

McMurphy seems to have adapted the existentialist ideology successfully, considering that he can still be happy with himself although he was a prisoner once, accused of rape, and now he is in a mental asylum diagnosed with psychopathy. He is not ashamed of himself, because that's how he enjoys his life, acting freely according to his own will. In reference to McMurphy's stories, which amuse the other patients in the ward so much, McMurphy has always been active in the development of his character by remaining true to himself, by “laughing at the things that hurt [him] just to keep [himself] in balance,” just like Nietzsche's *Übermensch* does, or raising his

voice when it's necessary even when he was a child, reminding that he exists in this world too. Unlike the other patients in the ward, who are called the Acutes throughout the novel, McMurphy doesn't hide himself for the fear of being marginalized by the society. He makes the man who he is, only responsible to himself for his actions and he disrespects the “high-ranking official” who tries to put him in a certain shape (Kesey, 1962: 181). Parallel with the early examples of the Byronic hero, McMurphy's “refusal to kneel or to submit to authority reveals his essential self-reliance” (Stein, 2009: 4). He is a self-mastered man and he respects himself.

Self-mastery enables McMurphy to control himself, his emotions, while the Big Nurse controls all the other patients. If they are too excited, for instance, she takes them under control either by pills or electroshock. McMurphy is aware of the fact that if he cannot manage himself, the Big Nurse will manage him instead. That's why he creates the illusion that he is comfortable even if he is not at ease in reality. Chief Bromden, as the narrator of the novel, observes that “he's making sure none of the staff sees him bothered by anything; he knows that there's no better way in the world to aggravate somebody who's trying to make it hard for you than by acting like you're not bothered” (Kesey, 1962: 113). Similarly, as a way of empowerment, the Big Nurse can also control her emotions or at least conceal them under her smile very professionally. However, her self-mastery stresses out the patients because of the ambiguity of the real emotion under her mechanic smile. She dehumanizes herself and turns herself into a kind of machine with the lack of emotions and the monotony of the things she does. On the other hand, McMurphy shows the other patients that an alternative life is possible with self-mastery, which bothers the Big Nurse because he simply corrupts the order she has created in the ward for years.

As a consequence of the continuous clash between the authority figure and the Byronic hero, the patients in the ward inevitably start to compare the Big Nurse and McMurphy as the domineering power figures. The evident truth that has remained unspoken until McMurphy's arrival in the ward starts to manifest the fact that the Big Nurse's efforts to adjust the patients to the society through normalizing judgement does not have any therapeutical effect on the patients. The patients start to realize that the system, which seemingly keeps them “safe,” does not provide any cure at all and the main aim of the regulations in the ward is to keep them in order (59). Moreover, the Big Nurse's group meetings focus on how the patient's behaviours are out of the

normalized standards of the society and by discussing the patients' deficiencies in a crowded group, she intentionally makes them ashamed of their past actions, which may make the patients realize how they have transgressed the social rules, but also causes them to turn into introverts, lose their self-respect and confidence, hence prevents their growth. Therefore, as Foucault describes in *Madness and Civilization*, in the Big Nurse's ward,

Everything was organized so that the madman would recognize himself in a world of judgment that enveloped him on all sides; he must know that he is watched, judged, and condemned; from transgression to punishment, the connection must be evident, as a guilt recognized by all. (Foucault, 1988: 267)

Correspondingly, one of the patients claims to see the motive behind the Big Nurse's actions, defining her as a person who weakens them by "gettin' [them] where it hurts the worst" to make them "follow their rules, to live like they want you to" (Kesey, 1962: 58).

On the other hand, unlike the Big Nurse, McMurphy demonstrates the patients how they can be safe in the world outside the ward as well, and how they can stand in the society without being ashamed of themselves just because they do not comply with the normalized standards of the society. When he tries to organize a fishing trip, which is an initiative step in adapting the patients to the outside world, the Big Nurse starts "steadily bringing in clippings from the newspapers that told about wrecked boats and sudden storms on the coast" (197). She also tries to prevent the basketball games McMurphy organizes, but for the first time the doctor rejects her by saying "A number of the players, Miss Ratched, have shown marked progress since that basketball team was organized; I think it has proven its therapeutic value" (193). It starts to be vocalized that McMurphy has succeeded in something that the Big Nurse could not.

The patients also start to realize the Big Nurse's failure and the fishing trip becomes the milestone of their self-awareness that they don't have to hide themselves in an asylum just because they are considered abnormal in the society. Harding confesses that "never before did I realize that mental illness could have the aspect of power, power. Think of it: perhaps the more insane a man is, the more powerful he could become" (226). This epiphany brings courage and awareness that they have the power to transform and handle their own lives. They can also be self-mastered men.

Setting an example for the Acutes and encouraging them, McMurphy is an active participant in the process of the Acutes' reconciliation with their selves, as well as with the society and the outside world.

As a result of the change in their conception of power, the Acutes reconsider their position in the bigger system: "Maybe the Combine wasn't all powerful. What was to stop us from doing it again, now that we saw we could?" (292). This question is the first instance of the effects of Acutes' transformation. The patients were even afraid of questioning the Big Nurse's authority formerly but after the fishing trip, they put themselves in a position to question the whole system. A political consciousness arises in the Acutes, since McMurphy shows that the shackles are their own imagination and they can break the rules which restrict their individual will. Throughout the years they have spent in the asylum, none of the treatments the Big Nurse has applied could create the effect of one-day spent in the outside world, without being reminded of their "proven inability to adjust to society" (158). The Big Nurse's opposition to these arrangements to socialize patients can be explained by the unwillingness to give up on the routine she has created, which is a part of her authority. Thus, as a microcosm of a multi-layered political system, the Big Nurse shows that "the dominant class" may not always work for the good of all, if the administrative power is at risk (Heller, 1996: 86). In these situations, the priority becomes the preservation of power rather than the common good. Apparently, the Big Nurse's priority also becomes the continuation of her authority in the ward, since her therapies are proved to be inadequate by Randle McMurphy. As a result of this clash, the patients come to the realization that complying with the expectations of the authority figure is not a requirement, but a choice.

Considering all the conflicts between the Big Nurse and Randle McMurphy, it could be suggested that the Byronic hero functions as a foil character for the authority figure. Just like he rejects the oppressive authority of the Big Nurse, McMurphy rejects to adopt the normalized moral values she imposes on them. Since the Big Nurse is the decisive agent in conceptualizing things in the ward, she creates the standards of morality too. The perception of "moral" is solely dependent upon her vision of the world. However, as the Byronic hero defies the authoritative power, he defies the moral codes originated in the authority figure as well. Instead, "he defines his own

moral code [...] defying oppressive institutional authority” (Stein, 2009: 8). Nietzsche's term “master morality” explains how this formation works:

The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values, he does not need to be approved of, he judges 'what harms me is harmful in itself', he knows himself to be that which in general first accords to honour things, he creates values. (Hollingdale, 1977: 107)

As McMurphy and the Big Nurse cannot come to terms on the perception of morality, McMurphy employs his individualistic approach to the morals. What is normal or enjoyable for McMurphy is generally immoral for the Big Nurse, and she expects the patients to follow her own moral codes, as they are adjusted according to the social norms. However, McMurphy is his own master and doesn't look for the definition of moral anywhere else, “he creates values” (107). This is a great problem for the Big Nurse, but “it is just as absurd to ask strength not to express itself as strength, not to be a desire to overthrow, crush, become master, to be a thirst for enemies, resistance and triumphs, as it is to ask weakness to express itself as strength” (Nietzsche, 2007: 26). McMurphy has the power and potential to create his own values, and it would be unnatural to expect him to obey certain rules, because creation of his own values is a natural part of the Byronic hero. And since neither of the authority figures - McMurphy and the Big Nurse - has the intention to compromise, the clash between them goes on continuously.

To exemplify, gambling is a way of entertainment for McMurphy. There is nothing else to engage himself in the ward. On the other hand, Miss Ratched tries to prevent his entertainment, which is gradually turning into a habit by keeping the patients' cigarettes to herself, so that they can not have anything to bet on. Observing that the other Acutes also develop an interest in gambling, which means a collective disregard for her moral codes, she tries to impose its inconvenience to the patients while McMurphy is absent:

I have various other bets he made listed here, if any of you care to look, including something to do with deliberately trying to upset the staff. And all of this gambling was, is, completely against the ward policy and every one of you who dealt with him knew it [...] And this recent fishing trip? What do you suppose Mr. McMurphy's profit was on this venture? As I see it, he was

provided with a car of the doctor's, even with money from the doctor for gasoline, and, I am told, quite a few other benefits-without having paid a nickel. Quite like a fox, I must say. (Kesey, 1962: 253)

She does not directly comment on McMurphy's acts as immoral but by indicating he is going against the ward policy and making a similarity between him and a fox which has connotations about slyness, she tries to create a certain perception about McMurphy's acts by manipulating the way the Acutes think. She may not criticize him openly, but her rendering of the events gives the patients only one choice, that is to think of McMurphy's actions as wrong or immoral. The Big Nurse is aware that the Acutes are feeling a kind of idolatry for McMurphy thinking that he is "too big to be bothered with something as measly as money" (255). By pointing out his vices, she reminds them that they have to think twice before they follow his moral codes. She manages to influence them as the Acutes start to moralize McMurphy among themselves the other day.

On the other hand, fondness of money and gambling is nothing to be ashamed of for McMurphy. "Repeated gambling" is a part of the Byronic hero's troubled past, and he maintains this criminal habit in the ward for entertainment (42). When Chief Bromden expresses their latest concern about how he is "always winning things," McMurphy defends himself in surprise by saying "You damned moose, what are you accusin' me of? All I do is hold up my end of the deal. Now what's so all-fired?" (257). Winning things or losing things do not matter much for him as they've always been a part of his ordinary life. However, after talking to Chief Bromden, McMurphy realizes how much he is worshipped among the other Acutes, although he has never had such an intention.

Another immoral thing for the Big Nurse, perhaps the most intolerable one for her, is how McMurphy is so much into sexuality. Like the archetypal examples of the Byronic hero, Randle McMurphy is a charismatic person who has the power of seduction and sexuality. The Big Nurse's thoughts about McMurphy's sexual appetite is shaped by what she reads on his file: "Followed by a history of street brawls and barroom fights and a series of arrests for Drunkenness, Assault and Battery, Disturbing the Peace, repeated gambling, and one arrest- for Rape [...] Statutory, with a girl of -" (42). Though she does not look like she's judgemental of her patients' crimes, she still

implements her own moral codes in a subtle way. In this case, what writes on the paper is “with a girl of” fifteen, since she says so while she is reading the paper. Then, after the doctor's interruption, she changes the word “girl” and continues “with a child of fifteen” (42). For her, rape is clearly a foul act, which goes against the laws of society as well as the moral codes. Changing of a word, remarking that a fifteen-year-old girl is just a child, she emphasizes the criminal aspect of the rape even more.

On the other hand, for McMurphy, the rape is not a crime at all as the girl “said she was seventeen and she was pretty willin’” (42). The way he tells the story makes it clear that he does not believe what he's done is wrong. McMurphy has the ability to justify his actions by caricaturing events. In that case, he undermines the seriousness of the crime with his indifferent narration. Though his style is far too reckless to make Miss Ratched laugh, the doctor “smile[s] a little as he turns through the folder, just as tickled by this new man's brassy way of talking right up as [the Acutes], but [...] he's careful not to let himself come right out and laugh” (43). Apparently, McMurphy doesn't care about the moral codes of the society and he doesn't judge himself for not complying with them. The Big Nurse tries to correct McMurphy's immoral behaviours by shaming him, yet she cannot impose the moral codes on McMurphy: “Aren't you ashamed? He says he guesses not and tells her to get on with it” (268).

Bearing a distaste for McMurphy's rebellious character, the Big Nurse tries her best to destruct his self, which makes him so different from the patients she has dealt with so far. However, McMurphy's self-mastery is far too developed to allow the Big Nurse to reshape his character. Moreover, because of his self-confidence and independence, the other patients start to see him as a leader figure and follow him in his rebellious way. As Atara Stein argues, “you'd [...] better follow [the Byronic hero], because he knows what he's doing, and you don't” (Stein, 2009: 4). Though the Acutes were afraid of the Big Nurse at first, they eventually develop trust for McMurphy because he seems to know what he's doing. Through the end of the novel, they readily accept to have a party in the ward, knowing that it's against the Big Nurse's rules. The struggle between the Byronic hero and the authority figure turns into a rivalry for domination. In order to remind her authoritative position in the ward, the Big Nurse punishes Billy Bibbit after she finds out his relationship with a “cheap, low, painted” prostitute:

What worries me, Billy, is how your poor mother is going to take this. Mrs Bibbit's always been so proud of your discretion. I know she has. This is going to disturb her terribly. You know how she is when she gets disturbed, Billy; you know how ill the poor woman can become. She's very sensitive. Especially concerning her son. She always spoke so proudly of you. (Kesey, 1962: 300-301)

She uses Billy Bibbit's weakness for his mother to punish him. However, the Big Nurse's shaming method gets out of control and causes Billy's suicide. In this case, Billy Bibbit's suicide is the climax of the novel, because McMurphy completely loses his self-control when he sees Billy covered in blood. His suicide because of the Big Nurse's psychological abuse on him and her hypocritical attitude when she says "It's all right Billy. It's all right. No one else is going to harm you. It's all right. I'll explain to you mother [...] Poor boy, poor little boy" go beyond the limits of McMurphy's forbearance (302). Upon Miss Ratched's accusations against McMurphy about "playing with human lives," McMurphy completely loses his self-mastery, he cannot control the excessive anger towards the Big Nurse and attacks her (304).

Atara Stein argues that Byron "transforms [the hero's] isolation, pride and aspiration into admirable, if self-destructive, attributes" (Stein, 2009: 62). In McMurphy's case, his self-mastery is both admirable and self-destructive. Namely, self-mastery gives him a distinctive characteristic feature, but it also makes him a character that cannot live without his own rules. In other words, self-mastery is both creative and destructive, or a "pharmakon" in Derridean terms. According to Jacques Derrida, pharmakon bears its own opposite within itself; it is both poison and cure.

The 'essence' of the pharmakon lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no 'proper' characteristics, it is not, in any sense (metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a substance [...] It is rather the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced. (Derrida, 1981: 125-126).

In this sense, McMurphy's self-mastery bears opposites in itself. It appeals to the self-creative aspect of the Byronic hero, but when his own values are violated, he tends to lose his self-control. As argued before, his defiance of the Big Nurse seems to be a cure both for himself and the Acutes considering the self-confidence most of the

patients acquire, yet he disregards the fact that his insubordination might not be an actual cure for all the patients who are not psychologically ready to take the responsibility of acting independently. For this reason, McMurphy's self-mastery and his encouragement of the other patients' self-mastery turns into the poison when Billy Bibbit commits suicide after going against the Big Nurses's rules and being threatened by the Big Nurse to report his disobedience to his "poor mother," which "is going to disturb her terribly" (Kesey, 1962: 301). Such dreadful consequences also poison McMurphy himself when he loses his self control and assaults the Big Nurse, which provides her with the excuse to use lobotomy on him.

After the lobotomy, McMurphy is merely a docile body. By restraining McMurphy in this way, the Big Nurse overcomes the clash between them in an unnatural way, since she can not mentally transform, or correct McMurphy as the state demands from her. Rather, she subdues him physically. However, it is an obvious fact that the latest events in the ward reveal her prevalence for power and authority rather than the well being of the patients, which cause them to discredit the Big Nurse and her position. For instance, Harding verbally attacks the Big Nurse, saying that "Lady, I think you are full of so much bullshit" (307). In this sense, though the Big Nurse has put McMurphy out of sight, "she couldn't rule with her old power anymore" (307).

On the other hand, McMurphy seems to have disseminated his Byronic hero values among the other patients. After the lobotomy, Chief Bromden thinks that McMurphy "wouldn't have left something like that sit there in the day room with his name tacked on it for twenty or thirty years so the Big Nurse could use it as an example of what can happen if you buck the system." (308). In other words, McMurphy has managed to teach the Acutes that the Byronic hero cannot live without his own values. He has been rebelling against the authority of the Big Nurse since he arrived at her ward, but now his pacified body is used to intimidate the other patients who have the potential to rebel against her. Chief Bromden knows that McMurphy would prefer to die rather than serve Miss Ratched's aim. In order to sustain the Byronic hero spirit, Chief Bromden kills McMurphy, which shows that his influence will remain forever even if his physical body disappears.

IV. THE ANALYSIS OF *FIGHT CLUB*

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (Adams, 1931: 404)

James Truslow Adams explains the fundamental aspects of the American Dream as such in his work *The Epic of America*. As it is stated in his description, the American Dream mainly consists of social and political ideals, demanding equality and justice for each individual, making it possible for everyone to use their full potential in life. In other words, the American Dream imagines America as a dream land, in which prosperity, peace and opportunities are provided by the rejection of privileged positions and acquired power through class distinction. Therefore, the American Dream actually imagines a creative and productive society, which is freed from the obstacles they experienced in the past, enabling everyone to build better lives for themselves through hard work and perseverance. The American Dream is intended to allow each individual to pursue happiness and believes that the happiness of each individual will contribute to the well being of the state.

On the other hand, the expectations from a better life not only varies from person to person, but also according to the changing time period. Namely, what is considered a successful, happy life in the 1920s America is not the same in the 1990s America. The idea of the American Dream gradually shifts over the years and turns into a radically new notion. The new interpretation of the American Dream and creating a better life tend to be linked with living a good life, having great wealth and possessing things with the outcomes of the capitalist economic system and mass-production. People start to believe that the source of wealth is also the source of

happiness. The collective tendency towards materialism standardizes the pursuit of happiness to such an extent that it cannot be considered an individualistic experience anymore. To fulfill the society's expectations of a complete, accomplished life, one initially needs to get a degree, have a prestigious job, and then start a family. Especially after that point, having wealth and earning a lot of money is considered even more important as supporting and extending one's family is considered as the required steps to a happy life. Considering all, it could be argued that the evolution of the American Dream drags people into a very repetitive and dull lifestyle, and the pre-set standards of happiness create a conformist society. Most of the Americans are tranquilized by their adherence to the American Dream, equating this with the notion of freedom and not setting any goals or ideals for themselves other than having a financially stable and prosperous life, as it is considered the highest accomplishment one can achieve in life.

One of the victims of the abovementioned consumerist and conformist lifestyle is the narrator of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*. He perfectly fits the standards of the postmodern interpretation of the American Dream, as he is employed as a "recall campaign coordinator" and owns a fashionably decorated condo (Palahniuk, 1996: 31). Nevertheless, his successful career and the things he possesses do not satisfy him at all. Instead, he hopelessly needs a purpose in life to feel like himself again. He is so desperate and alienated from the world that he attends the support groups of people who are host to cancer, just to feel alive again. In other words, he does not consider what he truly expects from life or what he personally needs to be satisfied in life. He acts according to the expectations of the society, which only results in self-alienation. The narrator is not acquainted with himself enough to create an enjoyable life, rather, he feels suffocated in the monotony of everyday life. Having no motivation and being lost in the void of meaninglessness, he attempts to occupy himself and fill the void by consuming and spending, which is actually what the majority of people do as well. The personal living spaces, as the narrator also complains, do not reflect individuality anymore. The houses are full of the same IKEA furniture, "the same Johannesov armchair in the Strinne green stripe pattern [...], the same Rislampa/Har paper lamps made from wire and environmentally friendly unbleached paper [...], the Vild hall clock made of galvanized steel, [...] the Klipsk shelving unit," the objects which the narrator admits to have spent his whole life to buy (43-44).

Apparently, people gradually lose authenticity in their lives and the emergence of the Byronic hero with his unique character in such a society is quite notable. As typical, the Byronic hero stands against the society, and rejects to adopt the social norms. The first encounter of the Byronic hero of *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden, and the narrator occurs while the narrator is on vacation. When the narrator takes a break from his chaotic everyday life, he encounters Tyler Durden “pulling driftwood logs out of the surf and dragging them up the beach” (32). Tyler turns out to be forming “the shadow of a giant hand,” which can only have a perfect shape for a minute “at exactly four-thirty” (33). “One minute was enough, Tyler said, a person had to work hard for it, but a minute of perfection was worth the effort. A moment was the most you could ever expect from perfection.” (33). With his unique approach towards perfection, Tyler Durden provides the narrator with a new perspective, which seems much more plausible juxtaposed with the American society who sees perfection as a life-long expectancy. The narrator suddenly realizes that Tyler’s perception of perfection is much more simplistic and modest compared to widely-accepted ideals which push people into spending more and expecting more.

Considering Tyler as an artist and evaluating his attitude towards the final product of his labour, which is perfect for just one minute, it could be argued that his exceptional approach becomes a sign of his position in the capitalist system of the postmodern society. Capitalist system is based on the commodification of human labour, which is a

[...] mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. (Marx, 1957: p. 97)

As Karl Marx explains, the capitalist society treats the commodities as if the objects had values innately in themselves, rather than in the amount of labour put into it. Contrary to this system, Tyler rejects to give materialistic value to his labour by objectifying and commodifying it, since the final result of his labour is just a shadow, whose ephemeral perfection can be enjoyed for a limited time by people who know

how to look at it. Therefore, Tyler's artwork is not a corporeal product that can be commercialized at the end. Mark Pettus similarly argues in his essay that,

The temporary quality of his art makes its commodification difficult. Because of the image's imperfection before and after its minute of perfection, it indicates the ability to imagine a qualitative difference. The difference between the signifier, the shadow, and the signified, a modeled hand, complements the signifier's presence and the signified's absence. Both differences indicate a refusal of the dominant system. Contrarily, the material object, the collection of logs, is separated from the signifying process, an exclusion that mimics the dominant system, which exchanges signs against signs. (Pettus, 2000: 115)

Contrary to Tyler Durden, the narrator spends the money he gets in return for his labour on Ikea goods to furnish his condo, but experiences a feeling of entrapment in his "lovely nest" because "the things [he] used to own, now they own [him]" (Palahniuk, 1996: 44). On the other hand, Tyler enjoys the momentary bliss of his labour's product, sitting in the "palm of a perfection he'd created himself" (33). It is clear that Tyler refuses to be a part of the misinterpreted American dream and the refusal process presents the Byronic hero as a foil for the society, which consists of active participants of the capitalist system.

Tyler's resistance against the social norms brings out the foremost aspect of the Byronic hero, but he also has a specific kind of rebellious character, which can be attributed to Byron's heroic tradition. Tyler is not only discontented with the social system but also with the whole life itself; even with God. Peter Thorslev explains this particular characteristic of the Byronic hero as:

The Byronic Hero may be only rather tenuously related to the tradition of the heroic which culminated in Wagner or possibly in Fascism, but he is most intimately related to that other tradition, also originating in Romanticism [...] -the tradition of "metaphysical" or "total" rebellion. It is total rebellion because it is a rebellion not only on a political level, but also on the philosophical and religious level- and sometimes, in nihilistic extremes, against life itself. (Thorslev, 2010: 197)

Depending on Thorslev's description, it is possible to argue that Tyler Durden follows the Byronic tradition and sinks into the "nihilistic extremes" (197). While he is

questioning the social norms and building resistance, he cannot find meaning in them and he destroys the values traditional social structures have created. The reason for his rejection of the political system is not because he has a predilection for any other system. As Thorslev underlines, his rebellion has a philosophical aspect, for he cannot find a point in being one part of a political system that restricts human behaviour. "A law is a law, Tyler would say. Driving too fast was the same as setting a fire was the same as planting a bomb was the same as shooting a man. A criminal is a criminal is a criminal" (Palahniuk, 1996: 142). Accordingly, if all the lawbreakers are put in the same category as "criminal," Tyler chooses the destructive and violent crimes, and accepts the criminal label. At least in that way, he can find a way to express his anger towards life and find the means to destroy the things he does not believe in. That is how Tyler starts to express his nihilistic approach in life, by destroying things to show the purposelessness of life and his disbelief in the moral, political and social structure of the society.

At this point, it is possible to find a common aspect between Tyler Durden and the narrator, who is also tired of the meaninglessness of his miniscule life. As a result of the narrator's existential angst and frustration, his psychological state is disturbed and it surfaces as insomnia. To feel better, the narrator attends the support groups for people who have serious diseases, and attempts to witness real misery:

Crying is right at hand [...] when you see how everything you can ever accomplish will end up as trash. Anything you're ever proud of will be thrown away. And I'm lost inside [...] This is when I'd cry because right now, your life comes down to nothing, and not even nothing, oblivion. (17)

Therefore, it could be suggested that the narrator also sinks into nihilism, in the sense that he believes in the meaninglessness of life and everything that is considered significant will be reduced to nothingness in the end. However, there is a fundamental difference between their nihilism, which makes Tyler a Byronic hero and the narrator a psychologically weak person. As formerly discussed, Nietzsche identifies two types of nihilism; active nihilism "as a sign of increased power of the spirit" and passive nihilism "as decline and recession of the power of the spirit" (Nietzsche, 1968: 17). In other words, the passive nihilist is in a weary state of mind as he has unsuccessfully searched for the meaning of life and stopped looking for it at one point. On the other

hand, the active nihilist believes that he ought to continue looking for the meaning, but the destruction of the old values, which are not working for him in his search - in Nietzsche's words, transvaluation of values¹¹ - is a fundamental requirement to create new ones.

The narrator is a victim of the postmodern world and he sinks into a hopeless and desperate existential crisis, while Tyler has the exact opposite stance towards life. Thus, the contrast between the narrator and Tyler Durden as active and passive nihilists is quite obvious. After the narrator meets Tyler, he fosters the idea that creation through destruction is possible: "Maybe self-improvement isn't the answer [...] Maybe self-destruction is the answer [...] Maybe we have to break everything to make something better out of ourselves" (Palahniuk, 1996: 49-52). Considering the truth revealed at the very end of the novel that Tyler and the narrator are actually the same person, it may be possible to suggest that the narrator defies and destroys himself in a Nietzschean way by "hit[ting] upon the idea of tyrannizing over certain parts of [his] own nature, over, as it were, segments or stages of [himself]" (Nietzsche, 1977: 215). He is lost in the turmoil of the capitalist society as he says: "I am helpless. I am stupid. And all I do is want and need things... This is how bad your life can get" (Palahniuk, 1996: 146). The frustration of his state of mind and passive life leads him to "will a self- active, successful natures act not according to the dictum 'know thyself', but as if there hovered before them the commandment: will a self and thou shalt become a self" (Nietzsche, 1977: 232). So the narrator creates his split identity by willing a new self, and this new identity is defined by what he is not: "I love everything about Tyler Durden, his courage and his smarts. His nerve. Tyler is funny and charming and forceful and independent, and men look up to him and expect him to change their world. Tyler is capable and free, and I am not" (Palahniuk, 1996: 174). In other words, the narrator tyrannizes over a certain part of his nature, his passive nihilism as Nietzsche describes, and the new self emerges as Tyler Durden, who is an active nihilist and has the power to create his own values. Therefore, active nihilism gives Tyler Durden the Byronic hero aspect as stated earlier, since "the Byronic hero is an outlaw and outsider who defines his own moral code, often defying institutional

¹¹ Nietzsche elaborates this term in his book, *The Antichrist* (1895).

authority, and is able to do so because of his [...] self sufficiency and independence, and egotistical sense of his own superiority” (Stein, 2009: 8).

Tyler Durden's self sufficiency and independence originate from his rebellion against God. For him, God does not help people to make life purposeful. Therefore, he does not rely on any divine power in his search for meaning. Tyler Durden expresses his distrust for God by saying

If you're male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model for God. And if you never know your father, if your father bails out or dies or is never at home, what do you believe about God? [...] We're God's middle children with no special place in history and no special attention. (Palahniuk, 1996: 141).

Therefore for Tyler Durden, God is neglectful of human beings, leaving them unattended on Earth. Thus, God is irrelevant. Tyler has to trust his own abilities to survive, to create a new world with his own values. The defiance of God provides him the free space in which he has full control, and the freedom to give direction to his own life.

Tyler's nihilistic world-view is similar to that of Nietzsche's madman, who claims “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” (Nietzsche, 1977: 203). For people who believe in the existence of an all-powerful divine figure, God stands at the center of power, knowledge and justice. However, this notion seems to change as time progresses, as a result of the scientific and philosophical progress. The intellectual pondering upon the existence of God begins to transform into a crisis of faith. All these questionings generally have destructive consequences, which push people into a void and the human beings need to involve in creative replacement and become the measure of all things to recreate the destructed values. This is what Nietzsche's madman means by “God is dead. And we have killed him”. Tyler Durden, similarly, kills the God and instead of falling into a hopeless nihilism, he “reflects the hope that the madman offers, namely that the death of God is a great opportunity in which we can rejoice in the power of our own responsibility and creativity” (Irwin, 2013: 675).

As a result of having no respect for a greater authority, neither political nor divine, Tyler gets to be the only authoritative power in his life. However, to be able to

use his active power effectively, Tyler is aware of the need to explore himself initially. This is how the idea of Fight Club emerges in his mind. He explains this to the narrator as “not wanting to die without any scars, about being tired of watching only professionals fight, and wanting to know more about himself” (Palahniuk, 1996: 52). For the members of Fight Club, therefore, the act of fighting functions as a break from the recurrent daily life, and most importantly, it urges the fighters to think about what they actually fight against deep inside. In a way, it is a way of self-exploration, including the discovery of the things they want to destroy in life. For instance, after the first fight between the narrator and Tyler, Tyler says that he actually fights against his father. Considering that he formerly suggests our fathers to be the models for God at the same time, he actually fights against God, who has no special attention for him. In this regard, he transforms his nihilistic thinking into a “violent force of destruction” (Nietzsche, 1968: 18). Fighting turns into the medium of providing freedom from the repressed violent impulses, and as William Irwin indicates accordingly, it is presented as a “cathartic” experience (Irwin, 2013: 680).

Regarding the act of fighting as a cathartic experience demonstrates the fact that the emergence of Fight Club actually does not aim to be the milestone of a revolution; rather, it aims to create a personal space for meditation and free thought. For this reason, it is not possible to consider Tyler Durden as a political leader at that point just because he is the creator of Fight Club. Because the Byronic hero is “far too individualistic ever to be involved seriously with nationalism, and he is also too passionately concerned with individual freedom” (Thorslev, 2010: 195). Similarly, Tyler starts the Fight Club because he wants to know more about himself through sensory experiences. On the other hand, what starts as an individualistic experience between Tyler and the narrator turns into something larger than the initial intention. Fight Club gets immensely popular, mainly because “most guys are at fight club because of something they're too scared to fight. After a few fights, you're afraid a lot less” (Palahniuk, 1996: 54). Though the primary concern of Fight Club is individual freedom, seeing the immense interest in exploring oneself through the experience of fighting and the potential to evolve it into a bigger project, Tyler Durden acquires the leader position “to teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history” (122).

Inevitably, Tyler Durden's leadership endorses a political aspect when Fight Club turns into Project Mayhem, since he supervises other members of the project and starts to consider himself as a "liberator who [...] is fighting to save [...] spirit[s]," or a "teacher who clears all possessions from [the] path [to] set [people] free" (110). Tyler Durden's dogma spreads very fast and there are people everywhere who repeat his words:

How Tyler saw it was that getting God's attention for being bad was better than getting no attention at all. Maybe because God's hate is better than his indifference [...] Unless we get God's attention, we have no hope of damnation or redemption. Which is worse, hell or nothing? Only if we're caught and punished can we be saved. "Burn the Louvre" the mechanic says, "and wipe your ass with the Mona Lisa. This way at least, God would know our names."

This is all Tyler Durden dogma. (141)

In his essay, William Irwin similarly argues that "in reaction to the death of God, Nietzsche's madman asked, 'What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?' Destruction is only a first step; creative replacement must follow" (Irwin, 2013: 682). For Tyler Durden, Project Mayhem is the creative replacement for God. It is clear in the quotation above that Tyler does not care about the physical damage Project Mayhem causes, because destruction is the first step of creating something new. Burning the Louvre is the symbol of the destruction of the past since the aim of the Project Mayhem is to show people their potential of changing the world and creating new history. Thus, it could be proposed that Project Mayhem is a new way of existence. People need to realize that they do not need to rely on a divine power to construct their lives. By means of Project Mayhem, they will "break up civilization so [they] can make something better out of the world" (Palahniuk, 1996: 125).

This project seems to be convenient in theory, but in practice it does not work well since the group members cannot really get involved in the creation part of Project Mayhem. The aim of the project is to make people aware of their potential to transform their own lives. However, people take part in the destructive acts of the project to break up civilization, whereas they don't get involved in the creation part to make something better out of the world and accept Tyler's teachings as the ultimate truth. Therefore,

manifestations of the Project Mayhem remain as Tyler Durden dogma. In that sense, “Tyler has engaged in creative replacement, but he has not encouraged his followers to do the same” (Irwin, 2013: 682). Tyler is no longer a liberator, but merely a cult leader, and the Project Mayhem turns into “organized chaos, the bureaucracy of anarchy” (Palahniuk, 1996: 119).

Considering the dysfunctionality of Project Mayhem, it is questionable whether Tyler's anarchical assignments for the group members help them feel empowered or simply turn them into vandals. Nevertheless, “the Byronic hero [...] is not supposed to serve as a role model. Instead, the hero is supposed to be viewed as the ultimate leader, who must be followed without question” (Stein, 2009: 3). Tyler Durden is, therefore, the Byronic hero who is followed without a question, as Stein suggests. “What comes next in Project Mayhem, nobody except Tyler knows. The second rule is you don't ask questions [...] No questions [...] No excuses and no lies. The fifth rule about Project Mayhem is you have to trust Tyler” (Palahniuk, 1996: 125). *Fight Club* is based on the idea of exploring the self and questioning the world, while Project Mayhem does not allow the members to question Tyler's commands. The project members have so much trust in Tyler as a leader that they don't realize they embrace the system they have rejected formerly. They are completely controlled by Tyler Durden as a cult leader: “Now, I am going to walk away so don't turn around. This is what Tyler wants me to do. These are Tyler's words coming out of my mouth [...] Everybody in Project Mayhem is part of Tyler Durden” (155).

In that case, Tyler deviates from being a liberator and turns into an authority figure. Though he doesn't like the rules himself, he sets a long list of rules about *Fight Club*, first of which is “You don't talk about *Fight Club*” (140). He also talks about other guys breaking the rules by saying “you're here because someone broke the rules. Somebody told you about *fight club*” (54). Tyler Durden, as a Byronic hero, exists through breaking the rules and resisting the authority, but he is disturbed when his own rules are broken. This situation becomes very problematic because while Tyler is trying to reject the mentality of the present social system, which drags people into the capitalist craze and turns them into a type with a certain ideal, he creates the same system himself. With him giving assignments to the project members, such as purchasing a gun or drawing someone randomly into a fight and, then losing the fight intentionally, without explaining why they are doing these things, his project is not

much different from the existing social order. All those people have one single ideal in their minds, which is not theirs but Tyler's. Tyler's ideal is to destruct the old order and create a better world instead, in which everyone will be free and happy. However, he imposes his ideal on people and everyone becomes the same as each other. In Irwin's words, Tyler "calls for men to self-define [...] gradually he becomes a cult leader who strips them of their identity and self-definition [...] the rejection of conformity becomes its own conformity, as the man becomes nameless 'space monkeys', skin-headed, unquestioning, drones" (Irwin, 2013: 682-683).

On the other hand, the real persona of Tyler Durden, the narrator, realizes that Tyler Durden is a separate identity he has created, who tries to take over his life. Tyler has already taken over the leadership of Project Mayhem and the project becomes uncontrollably violent. After he finds out about his psychological disorder, the narrator decides to take care of Tyler Durden, who is the source of all the chaos and disorder. The revelations about the narrator's disorder illuminates why Tyler has excessive tendencies towards vice. According to Foucault,

After the Renaissance, 'madness no longer lies in wait for mankind at the four corners of the earth; it insinuates itself within man, or rather it is a subtle rapport that man maintains with himself'. This relation with himself, self-attachment, provides the foundation of the vices, and thereby, madness's source. The self-attached person willingly accepts error as truth. (Mahon, 1992: 36)

Tyler Durden, as "the self-attached person," also "willingly accepts error as truth" to justify anarchy (36). As it has been seen so far, Tyler does not have any limits concerning destruction and it is not an error for him, since he aims to make the world a better place. For instance, he stops a randomly chosen victim named Raymond Hessel one night, and threatens him with death in order to teach him a lesson:

"If you aren't back in school on your way to being a veterinarian, you will be dead [...] Get out of here, and do your little life, but remember I'm watching you, Raymond Hessel, and I'd rather kill you than see you working a shit job for just enough money to buy cheese and watch television" (Palahniuk, 1996: 155)

He consciously imposes force and violence to spread the new system created by himself. What he does is illegal, but after that incident, Tyler believes that Raymond

Hessel will open a new page in his life: “Raymond K.K. Hessel, your dinner is going to taste better than any meal you've ever eaten, and tomorrow will be the most beautiful day of your entire life” (155). Therefore, as argued before, he “willingly accepts the error as truth,” believing the consequences of the incident will be better for the victim (Mahon, 1992: 36).

For anyone apart from Tyler’s unquestioning blind followers in Project Mayhem whom he calls space monkeys, what he does is disastrous. Upon that realization, the narrator thinks that “The second [he falls] asleep, Tyler takes over and something terrible will happen [...] So maybe during the day, [he] can rush around and undo the damage” (Palahniuk, 1996: 175). However, he cannot take the control of his life back and things get a lot more serious after Tyler kills the narrator's boss. Because the narrator realizes that he has given permission to Tyler himself to do that when he complained about his job. At that point, the narrator knows that he has to get rid of Tyler Durden to prevent more serious crimes. As the first attempt to destroy Tyler Durden, the narrator tries to shut down Fight Club, and put an end to Project Mayhem. On the other hand, the Byronic hero he is, Tyler cannot live without his own rules and moral codes. Project Mayhem is the embodiment of the rules he has created, and he will “kill anybody who threatens Project Mayhem” – even if it's himself (196). The Byronic hero is not afraid of death, because he prefers death to a life he doesn't want to live. In a similar sense, Tyler would destroy the narrator -or himself, if he had to turn back to the life he detested. Moreover, death would make him a martyr. It is “not like death as a sad, downer thing, this [is] going to be death as a cheery, empowering thing” (203). If the narrator kills himself, he will turn into a legend for his bravery. After all, he has nothing to lose since he has already hit rock bottom and reduced his life to nothingness.

Then again, death is an escape for the narrator from Tyler Durden and Project Mayhem, because “only in death are we no longer part of Project Mayhem” (201). The dichotomy between death and life becomes the symbol of the two contrasting identities in one person and the contest for manipulating the shared body. Ever since the narrator created Tyler Durden, he has been the dominant part of his identity, and he has taken over his body. The narrator wants to take the control of his life back, but Tyler does not let him prevail. Not surprisingly, the ending of the book also serves Tyler Durden, due to the fact that the narrator attempts to destroy the shared body, yet he fails. Still,

even if the narrator cannot manage to gain control over his split identity, his detrimental attempt to demolish the system Tyler has created is the first instance of the narrator's taking action against the things that bother him. In this sense, through the end of the novel, the narrator does not give the impression of a passive nihilist anymore. Upon the realization of his psychological condition, he acts in accordance with the core values of Byron's heroic tradition and develops into a man of action. The narrator's self-destructive act also reflects the Byronic hero's attitude towards death and complies with Tyler's aim of exalting the body by the way of martyrdom. Even after the narrator is taken to a mental hospital, he encounters people who say: "We miss you Mr. Durden [...] Everything is going according to the plan" (208). And because the body is still alive, there is always a possibility for Tyler Durden to come back and take over the body again with the aim of "making something better out of the world" (52).

V. THE EVOLUTION OF THE POSTMODERN BYRONIC HERO

Having provided the impact that Byron has on different literary characters produced at different times, it might be possible to argue that Byron's place in literature is distinct and remarkable. Though he is mostly associated with the Romantics and his contributions to the Romantic movement, Byron's notoriety does not solely depend on his literary success; he also gained his fame for his intriguing private life, scandalous love affairs and his aristocratic family that provided him with the Lord title. While touching upon Byron and his reputation, Robert Morrison remarks that it was not enough to describe him as famous, rather, "he was what we would call a 'celebrity'" (Morrison, 2019: 133). Moreover, Morrison adds that there was not a specific name attributed to the influence of any other Romantic authors, but for Byron's influence on literature, there was a specific label as "Byromania", coined by Byron's wife Annabella Milbanke (134). Accordingly, it could be claimed that such evidences of Byron's extensive fame at his own time actually hinted the posthumous success Byron has acquired as well, since Byron's literary works, starting with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), celebrated the demise of conventional literary characters and the emergence of celebrity culture in the industry. The analysis of Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden as postmodern Byronic heroes in the previous chapters similarly support the idea that the influence of Byron extends over his own time and the Byronic hero manifests itself even years after its initial emergence.

Given the Byronic hero's widespread popularity at the time of its creation and its impact that still demonstrates itself even in postmodern literary works, one of the key questions this study endeavored to answer at the beginning was, what is so special about this specific type of hero that makes him so famous and what makes him so appealing to the reader? Accordingly, it was proposed in the introduction that Byron's heroic legacy was centered on the desire to oppose existing authoritative powers and this political aspect of the hero actually gifted a timeless appreciation based on its dynamic rise and reaction against conformity. Correspondingly, in *The Regency*

Revolution, Robert Morrison argues that the Byronic hero seems to be an admixture of Milton's portrayal of Satan and gloomy, dark Gothic villains, but what makes it so famous among the readers is the broadly accepted opinion that the Byronic hero is "a spectacular self-projection of Byron himself" (135). As Byron's private life got out of control, rumours of depravity and corruption reached such a point that, Byron and the Byronic hero were considered the same person. His dark and mysterious heroes were famously attributed some villainized aspects, and just like his heroes, Byron was infamously described as "mad, bad and dangerous to know" by his over enthusiastic fan, Lady Caroline Lamb (135). Additionally, Byron's aristocratic title in opposition to his close relationship with the Whigs indicated that "in political terms, he was associated with defiance rather than power," just like the Byronic hero (134). Therefore, the famous conventional young, charismatic, dark and rebellious hero created by Byron proliferated its popularity in a short time, and the appreciation for this villainized hero has been so broad that Byron's heroic tradition has reappeared many times in different decades, creating a lasting impact especially on young people. For instance, among the most famous adaptations of the Byronic hero in the mid-twentieth century could be shown as "Marlon Brando, James Dean and Elvis Presley, as well as [...] self-destructive rock stars" (137).

On the other hand, it is obviously not possible for a character that has been adapted and reappropriated for many years to be preserved in its original form. For the Byronic hero as well, it could be suggested that though the main characteristics of the hero remain intact, such as the rebelliousness, mysteriousness and independence, it needs to go through a certain evolution process to be readapted to the twentieth century. Initially, the defiance and the opposition which give this hero its most significant features need to transform according to the changing time period, since the political characteristics and social structures also shift as time changes. Most naturally, the issues that distress and provoke the Byronic hero to act for his individual freedom are divergent in different time periods, which requires the redefinition of defiance and rejection, depending on the oppressive authority figure of the relevant time span. Hence, to analyse the evolution of the Byronic hero in postmodern literature, this chapter is going to focus on the similarities and the differences between the conventional Byronic hero and the postmodern Byronic heroes examined in the previous chapters, Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden. The thirty-four-year time

difference between *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and *Fight Club* (1996) will also contribute to the analysis of the evolution as it is going to highlight the difference even a short period of time might create in terms of character formation.

A. The Importance of Political Context in Adapting the Byronic Hero

It has been already stated in the previous chapters that the Byronic hero is mostly famous for being an outcast, for being a man who fails to tolerate the present world because of its superficiality and ordinariness as opposed to the Byronic hero's expectations and search for a world, in which he can feel belonged to a specific ideal. However, as Isaiah Berlin proposes, there are two values that push writers or the characters into the "Byronic syndrome," which are "the will and the absence of a structure of the world to which one must adjust oneself" (Berlin, 2013: 154). Especially after the Enlightenment, exaggerated forms of order, laws and rules, which inevitably led to an "extremely tight and well-organised form of life" restricted the personal sphere and created an invisible controlling mechanism (155). Therefore, the Byronic syndrome in Berlin's words, is actually rooted in the desire to "break up the nature of the given" (155). It was the wish to demonstrate that behind the perfect surface of things, there are people who refuse to take things for granted and who would like to show their greatest efforts to break the prejudice which presupposes that what is given is unalterable.

If these basic values of the Byronic syndrome are inspected in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Fight Club*, it is seen that both Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden refuse to accept unalterable rules that are imposed upon them. For McMurphy, there are clearer lines that restrict his behaviour since he is a former prisoner and a committed patient in a mental hospital. On the other hand, he looks so conscious of what he is doing that, the patients in the ward believe his acts to be "*planned* violent acts" in order to get away with the heavy work at the farm, which is assigned to him as a form of punishment for his previous disregard for authority figures (Kesey, 1962: 146). He is so self-conscience while transgressing the rules that the other patients see him as "a Napoleon, a Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun" (146). However, the Big Nurse, as the authority figure, is aware of the need to project McMurphy as an ordinary man instead of giving big reactions to his refusal to adjust to the ward rules, since that would only turn McMurphy into a "martyr" in the other patients' eyes (149). In that sense,

the clash between the Byronic hero and the authority figure in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* remains true to its origins as it roots in the hero's desire to reject what is presented to him as unalterable.

On the other hand, it is essential to emphasize how the dominant authority figures change and transform throughout the years depending on the political context of the time. In the case of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), the Big Nurse and her cold, almost inhumane treatment against the patients is a reflection of the anti-psychiatry movement which emerged in the 1960s as a way to express the displeasure with how people in the mental hospitals were treated and institutionalized. The main criticism against the asylums was how they turned into exceptionally powerful institutions, and according to Zbigniew Kotowicz, the supporters of the anti-psychiatry movement believe that "psychiatric diagnosis [...] is a way of labelling undesirable behaviour, under the guise of medical intervention" (Kotowicz, 1997: 5). In other words, facilitating an institution with the authority to state some people as "unfit to live in an 'ordinary' community" and institutionalizing them under coercion cannot be a solution for any kind of mental disease (5). Instead, this system allows the society to repress and eliminate the undesired social elements that are accepted as immoral with the help of psychiatry. Depending on these reasons, many significant scientists and psychoanalysts including David Cooper and Ronald D. Laing researched about the impacts of well-known psychiatric practices such as lobotomy and electroshock therapy. As stated by Kotowicz, one of Cooper's essential findings in his book *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* is that "psychiatry is founded on violence, the hierarchical structure of a mental hospital is a structure of power" (79). Supporting the idea that such frightening methods of treatment are against human rights, the anti-psychiatry movement gradually spread over the world and became one of the most important movements at the beginning of the postmodern era.

Consequently, the influence of this significant movement projected itself in literature as well. As suggested earlier, the Big Nurse is a great counterpart of the power given to medical staff working at asylums. When the narrator Chief Bromden defines her, he says that she is a "real veteran at adjusting things" and her authority is so unbreakable that she even "fixes" the doctors. (Kesey, 1962: 26-27). Her main method for adjusting the patients is "grind[ing the patients'] noses in [their] mistakes," imposing the idea that they are in the hospital because "[they] could not adjust to the

rules of society in the Outside World” (60, 188). In other words, she does not hesitate to weaken the patients’ will by addressing their vulnerabilities. Moreover, the Big Nurse’s authority to take a decision on using electroshock therapy provides her with exceptional power, which causes tension and fear among the patients. However, failing to intimidate McMurphy as the other patients shatters the Big Nurse’s authority, and being able to influence the patients turns into a silent battle of power between the two. As the Byronic hero of the novel, McMurphy does everything he can in order to subvert the authority of the psychiatric institutions. Nevertheless, he is taken under control by the excessive force of the state by going under lobotomy against his will at the end of the story. Still, lobotomizing McMurphy does not make him disappear; on the contrary, it serves the purposes McMurphy. The teachings of the Byronic hero spread even more and he grows “almost into a legend” (278).

When *Fight Club* is considered, in the 1990s, what encouraged Chuck Palahniuk as a writer to create a character that rejects the idea of being full and perfect by possessing things was probably the immense impact of consumerism and media-saturation on society, as the latest phase of postmodernism is mostly identified by a great shift from “production to consumption,” which eventually leads to capitalist societies (Strinati, 2004: 223). Engaging people in the consumption process by advertisements, the continuous proliferation of the marketing field and influencing people through the medium of media culture constitute the characteristics of the postmodern societies in the late 90s. Consumerism has become so important that it has created new occupations which are centered on encouraging people to “consume, more frequently, a greater number and variety of commodities” (225). However, as Strinati argues, such important changes in the society have led to “the erosion of identity,” since the traditional references for personal identification such as “social class, the extended and nuclear family, local communities, the ‘neighbourhood’, religion” etc. have disappeared (226). The offerings of capitalism and globalisation cannot compensate for the lack of these references, and people fail to construct their own identities in these new cultural forms. The more they fail, the more they are pushed into the consumerist media culture. As there are no other alternative frames of reference for identification, mass media and popular culture remain the only source available for the “construction of collective and personal identities” (227).

On the contrary, in *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden stands out with his resistance against what is presented as unalterable by people who were raised and brainwashed by media culture. Throughout the novel, the narrator reflects his own frustration with the culture which forces people to have the same houses, the same clothes and the same expectations from life. In that sense, what was actually being marketed in the late 90s was not the objects or properties, but the idea of being full and complete, in other words, being perfect. On the other hand, Tyler Durden as the Byronic hero does not really feel the need to adjust his world view according to the society and he twists the idea of perfection by claiming that “a moment was the most you could ever expect from perfection” (Palahniuk, 1996: 33). The purpose of attaining a perfect society in which all human desires are fully satisfied is just an unrealistic ideal for the Byronic hero, as it is impossible to create compatible ideals for everyone in such a plural world. Therefore, as the origins of the Byronic hero requires, the notions of “incompatibility [and] plurality of ideals” are employed “against the notion of order, against the notion of progress, against the notion of perfection, classical ideals, and the structure of things” (Berlin, 2013: 158-159).

B. The Saviour of Man

In a great number of the sources that study the Byronic hero, it has been compromised that these characters are all known for taking themselves as a priority in life, since they are mainly interested in their own self-development. Many of the other conventional aspects of the Byronic hero also depend on this individualistic interest. For instance, the rebellion of the hero is basically because of the authority figure’s interference with his individual will. For that reason, the Byronic hero is known to be an outcast, and mostly self-exiled in order to distance himself from the society to prevent any kind of intrusion on his life. Depending on these reasons, Peter Thorslev defines the Byronic hero as not “socially concerned” and not “a savior of man” (Thorslev, 1965: 188).

For the postmodern Byronic hero, it is not very easy to isolate himself completely from the society, because compared to the nineteenth century, the lifestyle changes in the postmodern era compel them to stay within a group of people to work, to reside, to communicate, in other words, to survive. Even if they move to a scarcely populated area of cities, the society follows them wherever they go due to mass media

channels. As a consequence, the postmodern Byronic hero is made to involve more in the society for he cannot escape from it. To exemplify, Randle McMurphy needs to live in a group of patients in the ward and Tyler Durden needs to work at daily jobs such as being a waiter or a projection operator.

When the Byronic hero goes out in the society, it is for sure that the difference between him and the other members of the society is evidently felt. The society mentioned in this case is known to be a mass society that has gone through some radical changes in the recent past such as “the eradication of agrarian work tied to the land, the destruction of the tightly knit village community, the decline of religion and the secularisation of societies” (Strinati, 2004: 5). Strinati names the individuals in such societies as “atomised individuals” since the relationship between the people are “contractual, distant and sporadic rather than close, communal and well integrated” (5). He moves on to argue that the decline of meaningful social interactions and the loss of mediating community groups such as family, religion etc cause people to feel like they have lost their frameworks for identity, and render them available for manipulation.

In such societies, when the Byronic hero demonstrates that they do not need any framework for identification, as they believe their actions to constitute their identity rather than belonging to a specific community, the other people tend to see them as a potential leader who might provide them with the framework they have been looking for. For instance in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Chief Bromden believes McMurphy to be “a giant come out of the sky to save [them] from the Combine” (Kesey, 1962: 255). Similarly in *Fight Club* the narrator expects Tyler to “rescue [him]” from the desperate emotional state he is in (Palahniuk, 1996: 46). Accordingly, it might be argued that though the postmodern Byronic hero has no intention to be a savior of man initially, as Thorslev puts it, seeing people around who are suffering from identity problems deifying the Byronic hero gradually generates the idea that he might indeed be the leader that can save those people. That is why Randle McMurphy involves the other patients to organize collective acts of disregard for the Big Nurse's authority, and why Tyler Durden decides to transform fight club into something bigger and global as Project Mayhem.

C. Fascist Tendencies¹² of the Postmodern Byronic Hero

It has been demonstrated so far that the main motive of the Romantic Movement, which has also led to the creation of the Byronic hero, is rejecting the existence of an omnipresent pattern of an ideal world, in which everyone feels fulfilled and satisfied. No matter how they may contradict each other at different times, the principal notion that is embraced by all the Romantics is breaking the order which encourages people to spend their whole lives to feel accomplished at the end. The main reason for this rejection is that, feeling accomplished and fulfilled will stop the individual from going further- the inner drive that perpetually pushes the individual to move forward will not have the same impact upon them; it will stop the movement after feeling satisfied. Therefore, as summarised by Isaiah Berlin, the heart of Romanticism is “will, and man as an activity [...] there is no self, there is only movement” (Berlin, 2013: 158).

On the other hand, Berlin moves on to argue that, if the most significant aspect of Romanticism is will, we must accept the idea that “motive counts more than the consequence. For consequences cannot be controlled, but motives can.” (159). Thus, it could be accordingly proposed that for such an ideal, the greatest virtue is to be sincere in motive. It does not matter what one believes in, if they are sincere enough to sacrifice everything they have for the thing they support, it is considered a respectable virtue. The insignificance of the thing that is strongly believed in is specifically emphasized here, because for the Romantics, there are no “objective criteria which operate between human beings” to evaluate matters related to ethics, morals and politics, as they are products of a specific culture that have been “compromised,” while in terms of scientific subjects such as physics and mathematics, the truth is “obtained” (160). That is why we can still interpret the actions of some important historical figures from different perspectives today. For instance, Berlin exemplifies “Frederick the Great or Kemal Pasha” and their motives in resisting and defying military forces to provide a higher quality life for a large number of people of their own nation as the founders of a new state, but on the other side, these great leaders

¹² In this chapter, the word “fascist” is used depending on Isaiah Berlin’s description of Fascism as an inheritor of Romanticism, which owes its core values such as “the hysterical self-assertion, and the nihilistic destruction of existing institutions because they confine the unlimited will” to the Romantic tradition (Berlin, 2013, pp. 165-166).

were “undoubtedly guilty of” “exploit[ing] other people for one’s own benefit” (160-161).

Consequently, what Berlin theorizes is that, Romantic assertiveness in expressing the individual will freely without any interference and the desire to demolish the established systems in order to wander freely in the reign of their own self-expressive world, which are also the main Byronic hero characteristics, actually hint an inheritance relationship between Romanticism and Fascism. The roots of Fascism are based on the inconsistent and unforeseeable will of a specific man or a group, who wishes to destroy the existing system thinking it to be distorted, or inferior to their own desired system. In that sense, it inherits this basic value from the Romantics, since the idea of a self-created, self-expressive, individualistic world in which one can live free from any shackles enforced by the social structures owes its roots to Romanticism. But for sure, Fascism is an extreme, uncontrolled interpretation of this notion. As mentioned before, Romanticism appreciates the plurality of ideals. It does not aim to compel anyone to believe in a particular idea, the only virtue that is considered important is sincerity. However, Fascism is a way of “hysterical self-assertion,” supporting an idea so strongly that it is eventually considered to be “one single solution to all human ills” (165). Inevitably, supporters of such radical ideas end up being oppressive tyrants themselves, as the imposition of their own ideals and eliminating any kind of obstacles to achieve their own aims do not make them any different from the system they have rejected formerly.

The books that have been analysed in the previous chapters set great examples for how the unbridled level of self assertion may lead individuals into the realm of Fascism. To be precise, it would not be correct to identify Randle McMurphy and Tyler Turden as fascists, but it is undeniable that they have fascist tendencies. In accordance with the process explained by Berlin, which focuses on the misinterpretation of the Romantic ideals, at the beginning of both novels, the Byronic hero’s own perception of ethics and morals generally clashes with the authority figures, which are actually the substitutes of widely-accepted social values, and their self-assertive behaviours put their individual characteristics in the foreground. Like all the conventional Byronic heroes, it is impossible to see through them, it is impossible to reach their mind and the fact that they are observed and narrated by a third person narrator increases the aspect of unpredictability.

On the other hand, these characters are the products of postmodern culture, which specifically has an enormous impact on the environment the Byronic hero lives in. In the most general sense, postmodernism is described as a time when “the mass media and the popular culture are the most important and powerful institutions, and control and shape all other types of social relationships” (Strinati, 2004: 211). Especially with the influence of technological advancements and new means of communication, people are more inclined to see what others do and they tend to get affected by each other quite easily. In that sense, people’s perception of reality is highly dominated by the media-saturated culture in the postmodern era, which inevitably leads to problems with identifying the self. In addition to being directed by the media, people have difficulty in identifying their true selves among many different titles, such as being a white-collar worker, a consumer, a parent, a friend and a citizen at the same time. In such an environment, the Byronic hero’s fearless self-expression against the domineering figures is actually a way of rejecting a particular identification, and standing up for their own individual will and personal expectations from life. Therefore, the postmodern Byronic hero is quite individualistic at the beginning. However, as argued before, when a group of people suffering from the problems of the postmodern world idealize them and give them the impression that their own self-created world or system might be a salvation for a larger group of people, they believe in their right to remove any obstacles in their own way, and they gradually acquire fascist tendencies.

In the case of Randle McMurphy, he acquires his fascist tendencies while developing a defence mechanism against the Big Nurse. Initially, McMurphy only breaks simple rules in the ward, such as brushing his teeth outside the scheduled time, gambling for cigarettes etc. Yet later on he realizes that the Big Nurse is more than just a state official. Her power is so totalitarian that even for the simplest activity as watching television, they need to have the permission of the Big Nurse. McMurphy determines that being compliant with the demands of such a domineering figure just adds to her power. Instead, he believes the solution to be ignoring her authority and rejecting her rules in every way possible. The problem is, he gets fixated on this idea so much that he obsessively tries to convince the other patients of the necessity of refusing the Big Nurse’s manipulations without paying much attention to the psychological conditions and the readiness of the patients. As a man of action, he

cannot understand why the other patients need to feel safe and he “keeps trying to drag [the patients] out of the fog, out in the open where [they would] be easy to get at” (Keseey, 1962: 123). Indeed, his efforts might be evaluated in multiple ways. On the one hand, he really helps the patients by instilling self-confidence in them. On the other hand, by expecting the patients to act like himself, he also imputes the responsibility of bearing the consequences of their rebellious acts as comfortably as he does. This is the point where his “passionate level of self-experience” turns into a fascist tendency, because when Berlin explains the Romantic influence on Fascism he states that, if one specific ideal is regarded to be the ultimate solution for a large group of people and supported passionately, “it will end by destroying those creatures for whose benefit you offer the solution” (Berlin, 2013: 166). Likewise in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, McMurphy’s insistence on defying the Big Nurse’s authority is actually intended to be for the benefit of the patients, but it eventually costs Billy Bibbit’s life as he commits suicide upon learning that his mother would find out about his disobedient behaviour, thinking it will “disturb her terribly” (Keseey, 1962: 301).

If Tyler Durden is taken into consideration, it is possible to claim that his fascist tendencies are much more evident than Randle McMurphy’s. Because first of all, he is not confined in a specific place which enables him to be physically free, and secondly, he willingly creates his own movement Project Mayhem to manipulate a large group of people. At the beginning of the novel, the function of the Fight Club is to reject everything the media-saturated culture has presented so far, and accept the truth that they may “never be complete, [...] content [or] [...] perfect” (Palahniuk, 1996: 46). Fighting, therefore, is a short period of meditation during which the fighters question their true identities and true expectations from life. The reason why Fight Club gets so immensely popular in a short time is actually because of the prevalence of some common problems in the postmodern era, such as “the erosion of identity,” as mentioned before, and the lack of authenticity in the consumerist world (Strinati, 2004: 226). In such an environment where people cannot find any references to identify themselves with, Tyler Durden compensates for this lack with Project Mayhem and provides new means of identification. According to Tyler, the goal of this project is to remind everyone of their own inner drive, to “teach each man in the project that he had the power to control history” (Palahniuk, 1996: 124). Though this is the claim, with the space monkeys repeating Tyler’s words all around the city and accomplishing the

tasks that Tyler has assigned to them, the project does not seem to be teaching men how to control history. Rather, Tyler himself attempts to control history, and he manipulates a large group of people in accordance with his own aims. In that sense, he turns into a despotic leader himself at the end, disregarding the importance of plurality of ideals, which he supports so passionately when he first invents the fight club.

VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Fight Club* in the previous chapters has shown that the nineteenth-century Byronic hero has had a major influence on the postmodern adaptations of the Byronic hero. Although Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden are products of the postmodern era, many of the conventional Byronic hero characteristics remain unchanged. If these characteristics are briefly reviewed again, it is possible to see that the villainized character of Byron's archetypal hero is retained for years as it is the most remarkable feature that individuates the Byronic hero. Accordingly, both Ken Kesey and Chuck Palahniuk introduce their heroes to the audience with their dark and villainized sides. The very first scene of *Fight Club* depicts Tyler Durden holding a gun in the narrator's mouth. Similarly, Randle McMurphy's criminal background is the first information that is presented to the reader. He has a lengthy list of charges against him, and he has been convicted many times. Both authors highlight the dark sides of the Byronic hero by portraying them as criminals from the beginning. This ensures that they do not promise an average, conventional hero, since the Byronic hero is not known for his virtue or grace.

The defiant nature of the Byronic hero is another aspect that is emphasized in each book. Byron's archetypal hero has a great distaste for authority and disapproves being forced to follow strict rules. For that reason, the postmodern Byronic heroes follow Byron's route and defy the authority figures, mostly by pushing the limits to break the rules which are designed to put them in a certain shape. In Randle McMurphy's case, this authority figure is the Big Nurse, while in the case of Tyler Durden, it is the whole social structure which has transformed the world into a large capital. It is significant to note how other people view the postmodern Byronic hero as uncontrollable and unpredictable to illustrate the heroes' defiance of authority figures and their laws. In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the Big Nurse aims to standardize the lives of the patients within the confines of her laws, she does not allow them to do anything unscheduled, including not even making the slightest noise, and she also trains her employees in the same manner. However, for the employees, Randle Murphy

is “a moving target” which is “hard to hit” and depending on this perception, the black boys do not even try to restrict McMurphy’s behaviour because “they *know* he’s out of control” (Kesey, 1962: 89). Tyler Durden, likewise, is considered to be unlike anyone the narrator has encountered so far in his life, and this uniqueness is based on Tyler’s outlook on life. Although the postmodern society encourages many people to use all their potential to live a full life, especially in terms of owning property, Tyler Durden chooses to ruin everything he possesses. This is his way of defying social conventions and “wanting to know more about himself” as he puts it (Palahniuk, 1996: 52). In this sense, the main struggle for both Tyler Durden and Randle McMurphy is to put themselves as the measure of everything in their lives. Because for the Byronic hero, all the norms and values that are accepted by the society are simply the rules enforced by the authority figures. Therefore, rejecting authority is actually a way for claiming individuality for the Byronic hero. While most of the people are afraid of deviating from the standards of the majority, the Byronic hero does not dread being in the minority position. Accordingly, it could be claimed that McMurphy’s constant confrontation with the Big Nurse and Tyler Durden’s attempts to build a new, alternative society depending on his vision of the world can be interpreted as conventional Byronic hero characteristics.

At this point, it is essential to restate the slight difference between Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden in terms of their approach to defiance, though they are very similar in character. Since Ken Kesey’s Byronic hero is confined to an asylum, there is a specific, narrow definition for the authority figure in McMurphy’s world. For him, the Big Nurse embodies the authoritative power. She claims the patients to be unable to adjust to the society and she commits herself to fix them in her own way. Therefore, McMurphy defies the authority of a specific person. Tyler Durden, on the other hand, does not have a particular opponent, and his rebellion is rather philosophical. Thorslev defines his defiance as “total rebellion,” since Tyler’s rebellion is not only on the political level (Thorslev, 1965: 197). He reacts against the whole life, he rejects the authority of God as well as the social norms. Thus, his rebellion is more intense and more aggressive. He is even ruthless with himself, since he believes that only through reaching the bottom he will be able to liberate his soul and build up his life again.

The *Kraftmensch* origins and *Übermensch* conception of the Byronic hero should be addressed at this stage once again, since the main influence on the development of the Byronic hero as a self-reliant character is the intention to create a man of action, who primarily acts to fulfill his individual will. The Byronic hero, compliant with the teachings of the original *Kraftmensch* movement, which was a proto-Romantic movement that began in Germany, promotes individual freedom and self-expression as a means of rebellion against the social order, even if it results in bloodshed and violence. Considering the ending of both books, one resulting in a collective act of revolution for anarchy and the other resulting in the death of one patient and the lobotomization of Randle McMurphy, it might be possible to assert that similar to the *Kraftmensch*, the Byronic hero values his individual freedom above all else, although his actions result in violence. Furthermore, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* also reinforces the idea that rather than consuming the predetermined ideals imposed by the society, it is more important to control the will to power and guide the creative drive in the right direction. In line with the perception of *Übermensch*, the Byronic hero is not affected by widely-accepted cultural practices. He does not embrace any religious doctrines either. As William Salter argues, they "put the crown on their own heads" and they become the only authority in their own lives (Salter, 1915: 427).

As a consequence of defying the authority and ignoring the governance of the others, Byronic heroes live on their own principles. In this sense, they are quite self-confident and self-mastered, just as the archetypal Byronic hero. The lack of authority in their lives prompts them to make a "creative replacement" as Irwin suggests, which provides the means to create their own set of rules (Irwin, 2013: 682). For sure, it is easier for Tyler Durden to make a creative replacement since he is physically free and there is not a certain authority figure that observes everything he does. On the other hand, Randle McMurphy is under the surveillance of the Big Nurse and even for a simple activity such as brushing teeth, he is expected to follow the ward rules set by her. Moreover, McMurphy's perception of ethics and morals is definitely not the same with the Big Nurse's, since McMurphy does not think about the rectitude of his actions as long as he gets satisfaction from his finite life. The Big Nurse, on the other hand, strictly adheres to the moral codes of the society and requires the patients to comply with them as well in order for her to allow patients to go out in the society again. Conforming to the conventional Byronic hero characteristics, McMurphy abides by

his own rules instead of any other greater authority, which can be regarded as the creative replacement for the Big Nurse's inordinate dominion, even if it costs him his freedom at the end. Tyler Durden, similarly, rejects to blend in the existing social structure so strongly that he attempts to replace it with a completely new society by Project Mayhem.

Depending on the aforementioned characteristics of Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden, it could be possible to suggest that there are conspicuous similarities between them and Byron's conventional heroes. Nevertheless, the lengthy interval between the creation of the archetypal Byronic hero and the postmodern Byronic heroes inevitably causes an evolution process rather than simply imitating the conventions of the original Byronic hero. Initially, it is crucial to restate that the emergence of Romanticism and Postmodernism as literary movements root in similar reasons. The Romantic movement is mostly known for promoting intuition, emotions and the return to nature to explore one's own self. The reason why these ideals are accepted inspirational by the Romantic poets is because they break the conventions of the Enlightenment and it allows them to experiment something new. In other words, the Romantics advocate the idea of embracing nature since it stimulates the creative energy of the human beings, in opposition to the idea promoted by the Enlightenment, which suggests that there is a perfect scientific structure reflected in nature. The Romantics reject to accept the traditional perception of being and existence. Similarly, Postmodernism is a movement that depends on breaking the structures and conventions which have raised a hapless and depressed generation, especially with the influence of urbanization, new technologies, and the radical, dreadful political environment. As a result of these, the postmodern literature is known for its experimental forms. In this sense, Romanticism and Postmodernism are similar in the way they depart from the old, outdated conventions, which fail to satisfy the expectations of the new generation.

As the dissatisfaction and disappointment with the existing social structure is the key driving force in the postmodern world, the environment postmodern Byronic heroes live in reflects the controversial social and political issues that are widely discussed during their own times, and the authority figures against the Byronic hero vary accordingly. For instance, the 1960s was a time when the exceptional power given to mental institutions was being highly criticized and the institutionalization of the

patients in the asylums was being considered as excluding people from the society under the disguise of medical treatment if they show undesirable behaviour according to the ordinary community. Correspondingly, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a reflection of the anti-psychiatry movement in terms of criticizing the empowering of mental institutions with the right to declare certain individuals as incompetent to live in the society. This disapprobation can be clearly seen in the way the Big Nurse approaches the patients, reminding them of their inability to adjust to the widely accepted social norms, and how they “refused to face up to them, because [they] tried to circumvent them and avoid them” at every chance (Kesev, 1962: 188). The postmodern Byronic hero's confrontation with such an authority figure corresponds to the political context of the time and supports the idea theorised by the anti-psychiatry movement that with the aid of psychiatry, this institutional system helps to repress and eradicate undesirable social elements that are considered immoral by the majority of the society.

On the other hand, the most significant issues that affected the late 90s were the constant proliferation of consumerism and the rapidly-changing lifestyle due to technological advancement. The fact that media culture started to influence every aspect of people's lives and the shift from living in small, local communities to cities led to one of the most serious problems of the postmodern era, which is described as “erosion of identity” in Dominic Strinati's words (Strinati, 2004: 226). What Strinati means by erosion of identity is the steady loss of conventional and highly appreciated frames of reference by which people identify themselves and their position in the society. Family, neighborhood, nation, faith, and other traditional sources of identity have all been known to deteriorate as a result of the inevitable social shift that emerged with capitalism. As a result of this social shift, the environment of the postmodern Byronic hero in *Fight Club* is shaped according to the new system of the world which depends mostly on consumerism, describing how people lose their identity and just imitate each other without considering their own expectations from life. In this sense, Tyler Durden's aforementioned total rebellion is especially against the society which gradually and stealthily assimilates everyone to become the same person. Thus, it is evident that Tyler Durden's concerns are compliant with the problems of the late 90s, when the book was first published.

It has been revisited throughout the chapters that the Byronic heroes are renowned for prioritizing themselves in life, and they are mostly concerned about their own self-development. Because of this aspect, Peter Thorslev argues that the Byronic hero is not created to be a “savior of man” (Thorslev, 1965: 188). Though this also applies to the postmodern Byronic hero at the beginning of the novels, people who have been manipulated by the authority figures and who have lost their frameworks of identity have such great expectations from the postmodern Byronic hero that, over time, Randle McMurphy and Tyler Durden are convinced about their potential to be the savior people have been waiting for. In other words, the people around them gradually convince the postmodern Byronic heroes about their potential to be a savior; they do not charge themselves with such a responsibility on their own.

Although the savior position McMurphy and Tyler have acquired could be regarded as a positive evolution for the Byronic hero figure, things spiral out of control when they start to lead other people rather than guide them. The reason why people expect salvation from the Byronic hero is because he values self-expression extensively, which gives the impression that he will redeem the people in need of help and create a world in which everyone can freely define themselves as a unique identity. Yet, as previously stated in the last chapter, both McMurphy and Tyler Durden feel that their own approach to coping with greater authority figures is a great solution for all, and they are so committed to their own values that they are unable to anticipate the consequences of the imposition of their self-experience on other people. In this sense, the postmodern Byronic hero develops fascist tendencies, as they consider their ideals to be the ultimate solution for a large group and they end up causing greater harm on the people for whom they were supposed provide the solution. To give an example, the sexual intercourse between Billy Bibbit and one of the prostitutes Randle McMurphy has invited to his last night party seems to be the first instance of Billy's reaching beyond his boundaries, as McMurphy suggests them to do, and he does not seem to be ashamed of it, since he does not make “any move to get up and button his pajamas” when he sees the Big Nurse the next morning (Kesey, 1962: 300). However, when he learns that the Big Nurse is about to inform his mother about the situation, he is unable to cope with the idea of taking the responsibility of his action and commits suicide. Tyler Durden, on the other hand, claims to wage war against the capitalist system by stealing liposuctioned fat, mixing it with “lye and rosemary, and sell [it]

back to the very people who paid to have it sucked out” (Palahniuk, 1996: 150). The income he receives from the soap manufacturing is used to fund Project Mayhem, a project which is supposed to free people from their limits. However, as time passes, Tyler's Project Mayhem is shown to be no different from the capitalist system in terms of steering people in one direction. Tyler manages to break away from capitalism, but he begins to force his own values on others, which is what Tyler criticizes the most about the capitalist society.

When the aforementioned aspects of the Byronic hero are considered, such as being self-centered, proud, anarchic, isolated and villainized in general, the question raised in the introduction emerges again. Why does the reader sympathize so much with the Byronic hero despite all his villainized and antisocial characteristics that it has been reproduced even centuries later? The answer may be posited to lie in the *Kraftmensch* origins of the Byronic hero. As the literal meaning of *Kraftmensch* (man of action) implies, when the Byronic hero disapproves a situation, he takes action against it rather than complaining, just like McMurphy's defiance of the Big Nurse's authority and Tyler's coming up with the idea of fight club when he feels lost in life. Thus, for the reader, it must be impressing to see the Byronic hero's ability to take prompt actions without looking for a large group of supporters. Because considering the readers of the Byronic hero as a group of people from the nineteenth century onward, they must be aware of the fact that it is inevitable to have political divide in the society. As the nature of politics splits people into groups based on the values they share, there is always a majority group that takes the authority position and minority groups whose views conflict with the ruling class. Therefore, as the readers of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Fight Club* are aware of the difficulty of upholding an ideology against the majority, reading the rebellion of the Byronic hero seems to provide a satisfactory experience for the reader, as the hero fulfills the desires of those who are hesitant to act against the circumstances that frustrate them. Even if the rebellion does not bring the expected social change, it is still satisfying for the reader to witness the act of situating oneself in an alternative place in society. Depending on this satisfying experience, though the Byronic hero has been reproduced for years and despite all the evolution he has gone through, it is observed that his *Kraftmensch* roots have remained the same.

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